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TRAIL

The Bulletin of the TRF, the National Club for all who wish to ride Legal Motorcycles on Legal Carriageways. EDITOR: Fred Ellison.

JANUARY 2005 No. 317



Kevin, Simon & Tim about to ride the Millennium Way on the Isle of Man

Photo by Clive Perrior

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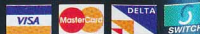


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The views expressed in 'Trail' are those of its correspondents and not necessarily of the editor or the T.R.F.

EDITOR

Happy New Year,

It was good to receive an email from Brian Thompson, Northern Region RoW Contractor, the other day confirming my belief that TRAIL reaches ALL TRF members not just those who are avid web scanners or even active group members. They are however in most cases dedicated to saving our National Heritage of green lanes. To quote Brian: "My appeal for help in E. Yorks has been amazing. TRAIL really works...There are now six volunteers to help and even put in Byway claims. A few weeks ago there were none and I was about to write off East Yorks as no hope.. All six volunteers seem to be from the eastern side of the county and are individual members who are not aware of each others TRF membership and willingness to help save lanes...Ron Walker on ronw@zetnet.co.uk is willing to coordinate TRF interested members in the Hull, Beverley, Drifffield, NYMNP area."

Lastly in answer to one or two queries about December TRAIL cover photograph. No, it was not taken using a SLR or even an expensive camera, just a 5-6 year old Canon 35-70 Sureshot 35mm now cheap enough to risk on the trail and not too bulky. Two shots were taken; the first a straight shot which was not bad, but only showed the bike and rider as silhouettes and the second using fill-in flash giving the result as printed.

Fred Ellison

Voyager

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Thanks to all who submitted entries for the 2005 Calendar Competition and congratulations to Clive Perrior of Southern group, who should have received his voucher for 1 year's free membership, for an excellent photograph portraying the fellowship found within the TRF

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All Contributions to the Editor, Fred Ellison, Sheepcote Farm, Moor Lane,
Wiswell, Clitheroe, Lancs., BB7 9DG. editor@trf.org.uk
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PUBLIC INQUIRY, DUNTON LANE - BEDFORDSHIRE

Bedfordshire County Council have finally announced the date for the Public Inquiry into the reclassification of Bridleway No. 9, Edworth, known variously as Dunton Lane, Green Lane and Ashwell Lane.

This attractive route which crosses the boundary between Beds and Herts is already a BOAT in Hertfordshire. However, despite strong evidence of public vehicular rights on the Bedfordshire side the proposed modification order has sparked considerable opposition from local NIMBYs.

While the Historical evidence should speak for itself there is every danger that if the order gets made the Authority will immediately bow to the pressure for a TRO. In order to demonstrate the strength of feeling in support of this Byway order I would ask all members with an interest in this area (certainly Beds, Herts and Cambs) to try and find time to attend the inquiry.

BOAT No. 9 Edworth and BOAT No. 18 Dunton, Modification Order 2003. Public Inquiry to be held on Tuesday 15th February 2005 at 10.00am Dunton Memorial Hall, Biggleswade Road, Dunton, Bedfordshire, SG18 8RL.

Richard Sugden,
Cambs Group, RoW Officer
Contact 07889 756701 or
Email home@rlsugden.fsnet.co.uk

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOI) AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS FOR THE TRF AND ITS MEMBERS

Before you all switch off, please stay with me as this article gives an overview into the above government legislation which came into force on January 1st 2005. Included are some pointers on how they will prove useful to the TRF as an organisation, and to its members as individuals, in our crusade to maintain our right to ride this country's un-surfaced rights of way where vehicular rights exist, so please read on.

What is the rationale behind these pieces of legislation?

As part of the government's programme of constitutional reform, they are a reflection of commitment to greater openness in the public sector. Allowing the public a closer relationship with both local and national government authorities in discussions about service provision and policy development ultimately leading to better decision making. *Well that's the government spin over, lets look at it more closely.*

What do they say?

They place an obligation on public authorities and government departments (both local and national) to make information available on both a proactive and a reactive basis.

The proactive obligation is for each public authority to maintain a Publication Scheme, which can be likened to a catalogue of the type of information they publish. This includes reasons for decisions, the facts and analysis of the facts considered important in framing major policy proposals and subjects which would be expected to be of interest members of the public, parliamentarians, interest groups, and the media. *Examples are the results of the infamous MPV 'consultation' exercise, minutes of Local Access Forums or county council policy on rights of way.*

The reactive provision is a general right of access to ALL recorded information (regardless of age and format so this includes items held on a file, a data-base, as a printed report, on disc, in the form of a photograph, video or any other medium). This includes information generated by a third party but held by the public authority. *Examples could include the Faber Maunsell study into byways (INCLUDING the various drafts), maintenance details and repair budgets of byways, historic evidence of vehicular rights and claims of alleged 'problems' supplied by third parties. So 'behind the scenes' correspondence which lead to inexplicable and unjustified TROs in your local area or your favourite National Trail as well as DEFRA's reasoning to reclassify all RUPPs en-mass into Restricted Byways are also included!*

Who can apply for information?

Any person or organisation world-wide can make a request and must be informed whether the information is held and if so, be supplied with it within 20 working days. No reasons have to be provided as to why the information is needed, even if the public authority knows what the information will be used for, it cannot be

withheld. So no longer can searching (or potentially embarrassing) questions go unanswered if someone decides it is 'inappropriate' to answer them!

How will people request information?

FOI requests must be made in permanent form, including e-mail, (whereas requests under the EIR can be in any format, including verbal) contain a name and address for return correspondence as well as describing the information wanted. *You do not need to mention the specific files or documents that you need (or the FOI and EIR) when making a request; the onus is on the authority to supply what has been requested. So a request for 'all correspondence relating to the TRO on xxxx byway' is quite acceptable.*

What if it is difficult to find the requested information or the information is not held?

Given that tax payers' money is used to maintain records the Information Commissioner (who is overseeing compliance) will not be sympathetic if information cannot be swiftly and efficiently provided, or if the public authority does not know what information they hold. There is no obligation to create information. If the information requested is not held, then the applicant will be informed. *However the authority should provide assistance in establishing whether any other information could be of use to the applicant.*

What about exemptions?

There are no exemptions under the EIR, but 23 absolute exemptions exist for the FOI, including; defence, national security, international relations policy and commercial interests. Personal information, which would not be disclosed under the Data Protection Act 1998, is also outside the scope of FOI and EIR. *This does not exclude you from asking questions on these matters; it only reduces your chances of getting all the information.*

Who will be responsible for weighing the public interest in disclosure?

This will be the organisation that supplies the information and they will need to consider the balance of the public interest. This will often involve difficult issues of fine judgement and each case will have to be considered on its merits. Because this judgement could be appealed by an applicant to the Information Commissioner, great care will be needed in deciding to cite an exemption and withholding information. Note that even if it is decided that the information cannot be released now, circumstances may dictate that if

asked again at a later date, the information can be made available.

What about information where release could embarrass?

There is no exemption for embarrassment. Inevitably on some occasions disclosure will embarrass the government department (or Minister?), but the Act is intended to increase openness and the exemptions cannot be used to avoid this. The Information Commissioner will have the power to ensure that the exemptions are not abused. *This could make life interesting for any that harbour close relationships with certain pressure groups and foolishly committed correspondence to file!*

Who will oversee compliance with the Act?

The Information Commissioner will oversee compliance and promote good practice, approve Publication Schemes and enforce the requirements and standards set out in the Act. They are also required to make an annual report to Parliament on the way the Act is operating. Any failure to comply with its terms will be highlighted and Ministers will be answerable for any actions or omissions. *So things might get hot if there is any evidence of malpractice!*

Will the public authority be able to charge for releasing information?

At the moment there have not been any published guidelines on this subject and there is also a feeling within government that charging is actually going against the spirit of openness. Indeed Lord Falconer, the Constitutional Affairs Secretary has stated that for information which costs local authorities less than £450 to retrieve and collate, will be offered free of charge. National government departments will only be able to charge where the costs rise above £600, which equates to about three and a half days work.

Summary

So as you can see, this legislation is quite powerful and has the potential to allow all sorts of information into the public domain which previously would never have seen the light of day as well as allowing some awkward questions to be asked. Across the board it is rumoured that ministers are unhappy with this new spirit of 'openness' these regulations bring. Would this indicate that there is something to hide at local and national government level? Armed with these pieces of legislation we can find out, so let's use it wisely. Further details can also be found at www.dca.gov.uk/foi/index.htm.

Richard Collins

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RoW News

BYWAY CLAIMS IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES (SETTLE AREA)

A total of 19 byway claims (with more to follow) are being put together in the Settle area of North Yorkshire in the name of Cumbria Group TRF, with around 12 lanes already filed with the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

We need user evidence for all the lanes, so if you can offer 5 to 25 years user evidence, then please contact me and I will send you user evidence forms that have been tailored for each individual lane, including grid references. My e-mail address is: stuart.monk@arlafoods.com or write to Cumbria TRF (byway claims), PO Box 36, Settle, North Yorkshire BD24 0WZ.

We need to get moving with claims to beat any possible 1 year government deadline for filing.

The lanes are: Thwaite Lane; Long Lane/Clapham Lane/Borrins, Clapham to Selside; Hale Lane/Stinking Bank Lane; Stockdale Lane & 'Grizedales'; Lodge Rd, Settle; Ewe Moor to Lower Tarn House; Arncliffe Cote to Street Gate (new evidence); Foxup Road & 'Hesleden Bergh'; Cam End Road; Dub Cote; Winskill Road; Greenfield Road/Langstrothsedale Road/Harber Scar Lane; Knowle Fell. With more to follow.

Stuart Monk, Cumbria Group TRF

THE NEW COUNTRYSIDE CODE

The penultimate point in the TRF Code of Conduct is:

Honour the Country Code

Respect the countryside and those who live, work, and play in it. Green lanes can be valuable habitats, so take special care in spring and early summer.

The new version created by the Countryside Agency and launched on 12th July 2004 is called the Countryside Code. The old and new Codes are shown below:

COUNTRY CODE

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Fasten all gates
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Used gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home

- Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

While the old Code was self explanatory, the new Code is explained on a 420 mm x 420 mm, double-sided, three-fold leaflet. In due course the new Code could be adopted into the TRF Code of Conduct.

My comments on the new Code:

1st point - written mainly for foot traffic, especially when travelling far to use open access, which may be closed for up to 28 days per year. It cautions about preparation and changeable weather, but motorcyclists tend to be almost infinitely more prepared than walkers. When motorcycling in a remote area a group of four is ideal for safety: one person can stay with the injured person (or person with broken motorcycle), while the other two go for help. It refers to obeying signs and

symbols: unfortunately for horse-riders, cyclists, horse-drawn carriage drivers, and people driving motor vehicles the signs are often misleading and have been erected illegally by the Highway Authority. These 'higher-rights' users have to check the true status with the Highway Authority!

2nd point - the fourth item in the TRF Code of Conduct has long asked us to leave gates as we find them. Trail riders, unlike people on foot, tend not to interfere with property. The leaflet says: "don't interfere with animals even if you think they're in distress. Try to alert the farmer instead." Trail riders have a better understanding than this: we have often rolled in-lamb or fat sheep off their backs, waiting a few minutes to see if they are OK; and released lambs with their heads stuck in wire fences. In my experience it can take hours to find the



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farmer. Further, the nearest habitation is often the people living in barn conversions, and they don't care about the animals and haven't a clue where the farmer lives.

3rd point - this includes guarding against fire. Trail riders in general have a higher than average understanding and appreciation of the natural countryside.

4th point - not applicable but there are big problems with walkers' dogs.

5th point - again, this can easily be met by motorcycle trail riders. We are careful near animals, and are well appreciated for our care near horse-riders. The leaflet suggests: "Support the rural economy - for example, buy your supplies from local shops." The custom of trail riders is well appreciated in rural areas, for example in mid-Wales while walkers just erode the paths; the trail riders purchase petrol, lunch, evening meal with drinks, and stay in bed and breakfast accommodation.

A quarter of the leaflet gives advice for land managers - remind the occasional awkward landowner the next time you meet.

Try and obtain copies of the new Countryside Code, I suggest local Tourist Information Centres. The Code and other information is on the internet at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk for England; www.ccw.gov.uk for Wales; and www.snh.org.uk/soac for Scotland.

Overall, the new Code contains little new to trail riders, but is a useful reminder of how we can protect the countryside and aim to keep other people happy.

Mark Holland

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED - GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS

Volunteers are required for maintenance sessions of Gatescarth Pass, Lake District (and Garburn if there is time) on 22/23 Jan, 19/20 Feb, 26/27 Feb, 13/13 March & 2/3 April. If you can help please complete the Route Maintenance Volunteers Organisation Sheet on the next page saying which days you plan to attend and return to Geoff Wilson, details on inside front cover. Note that 27 February is National Green Lane Day. Please especially note the INSURANCE NOTE at the foot of the sheet.

It is important that anyone willing to help completes the organisation sheet so that we may have an approximation of the numbers of volunteers available on each day.

If anybody wishes to stay overnight on any of the weekends then the nearest accommodation is the Haweswater Hotel (halfway down the lake), or the Mardale Pub at Bampton, or any number of pubs and B&Bs at Shap village or Tirril.

Geoff Wilson

Chairman HoTR in the Lake District Group

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Insurance Note: All volunteers will be covered by the Lake District National Park Authority's public liability cover whilst working as members of these scheduled work parties, as long as each person has signed-on and has been present at one of the tool training sessions that will be conducted at the start of each day, and works as directed by a team leader. All volunteers should bring a pair of working gloves (compulsory), protective steel toed footwear (strongly advised if you are not to be confined to tea-making duties), and be prepared to get dirty. If possible please also bring some tools (shovels, pick axes, crow bars, strong buckets) to supplement a minimal supply that will be provided. Also for insurance purposes we'll need to check that any tools brought along are safe and for the purpose. A limited number of 4x4s will be designated service vehicles for the purpose of tool transport up the track and for winching stone.

Please return to: Geoff Wilson, 4 Scour Close, Lazonby, Penrith, Cumbria, CA10 1BT. E: GeoffMoto@aol.com Tel: 01768 898584

YORKS SHOWS THE WAY

S.60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 requires all highway authorities to prepare and publish a *rights of way improvement plan* (ROWIP) by November 2007. As part of a Countryside Agency 'demonstration project', the City of York Council was one of nine authorities selected to prepare an 'exemplar' ROWIP, with a view to providing examples of good practice to other authorities.

The Council has now produced its draft 'exemplar' (for copies ring 01904 613161). This wide-ranging 70-page document, after setting out the legislative framework and the local background, considers "access users and their needs", "use, demand and reasons for access" and "current provision". It draws fourteen 'conclusions' from this survey, coupling these with 'key actions', each of which has a proposed completion date and an estimated cost. For example, conclusion no. 5 is that "there is a lack of off-road provision for both horse riders and the rural recreational cyclist". The related key action is to "identify possible links to improve network through upgrading or new access", with a proposed completion date of September 2006 and an estimated cost of up to £40,000. Again, conclusion no.6 is that "there is a lack of information with regard to the demand for routes for off-road cycling, carriage driving or off-road driving in York", and the corresponding key action is to "carry out a survey to establish demand, current and potential". The proposed completion date is again September 2006, with no cost cited.

The final section of the plan points out the need to prioritise these 'key actions'. Many of them, it is explained, will require much time and funding to deliver, and it is important to forge ahead with the 'quick wins' - those actions which can be delivered within a shorter timescale and within current resources. However, it is emphasised that "definitive map work is still a high priority" (there is no definitive map for the former county borough of York, and for the other areas of the authority "there is a backlog of work equivalent to 50 years worth of path orders"). Much of this work, it is explained, "is costly and requires long and complex legal procedures to implement. It is clear that these actions will take the longest to complete, as they will have to be phased in over a number of years. It is important to realise that this section of work has to be completed in its entirety before the 2026 cut off date implemented by the CROW Act 2000. Although this may seem a long way off at present, it must be considered to be a priority considering the slow progress made so far, due to lack of resources, funding and the low priority this area of work has received in the past.

Byway and Bridleway 2004/10/77

BMF IN 2005

The TRF is affiliated to the British Motorcyclists Federation (BMF) and therefore so are its members: this offers a number of advantages to both the TRF as an organisation and you as an individual.

The greatest advantage to the TRF of belonging to a federation of motorcyclists with 160,000 members is that it offers the opportunity for far greater political influence than our 3,000 members could ever attain alone. A small but very active team of full time officers pick up on, and respond on our behalf to, proposals for legislation with far reaching effects for our interests as motorcyclists. This has been particularly true since the introduction of the CROW 2000 Act where the BMF has been very supportive of trail riding. TRF Group membership also enables us to participate in an advantageous civil liability insurance scheme.


Your affiliate membership via the TRF entitles you access to the Biker Legal Line where you can receive free legal advice in the first instance from a number of firms of solicitors who are themselves motorcyclists. However, should your claim be taken forward an affiliate member is expected to take up individual membership.

Showing your affiliate membership card will entitle you to a £2 discount on the entrance price to the annual BMF SHOW the biggest event of its kind in the UK which will be held at the East of England Showground, Peterborough on 21st & 22nd May in 2005. Other major shows are: GEMS SHOW: 11th - 12th June at Hop Farm Country park in Kent; KELSO SHOW: 17th July, at Springwood Park, Kelso, Scotland and the TAIL END SHOW: 17th - 18th September which will also be held at Kelso.

Each year, as an affiliate group the TRF are offered a free site at the BMF SHOW to promote ourself - last summer the TRF stand won the prize for best club stand at the show.

For the many TRF members who own a 'road-bike' as well as their trail mount there are many more valuable offers for the individual member particularly if you enjoy travelling abroad. For further information please phone: 0116 284 5380 or look at www.bmf.co.uk

Dave Giles, BMF Liaison Officer for the TRF



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ENTRY FORM FOR Coast-to-Coast 2005

The weekend's ride runs from Scarborough to Hawes and from Hawes to Morecambe on the weekend of 7th and 8th May 2005. The ride covers varied terrain, therefore a degree of competency is necessary. All riders will receive a T-shirt and run leaders will receive a free sweatshirt. Anyone else requiring a sweatshirt can buy one for £14.

- Places will be limited and will be on a first come, first served basis.
- This ride is intended for those whose aim is to ride the full two days and not to finish part way through day two.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE PHONE NUMBER

(NOT MOBILE)

MACHINE TRF MEMBERSHIP NO.

T-shirt size Large (40-42) XL (42-44) XXL (44-48)

I am willing to lead Day One Day Two

I am willing to back-up Day One Day Two

Please indicate skill level and type of riding preferred
It is best to be realistic as your weekend might not be as enjoyable if you end up in the wrong group.

Accommodation information required? If so, please tick the box

Scarborough Hawes

Entry Fee 25.00
Sweatshirt 14.00

Only cheques made payable to TRF accepted, no cash. Please send this entry form along with your cheque and S.A.E. to:

Phil Fawcett, 15 Taunton Vale, Guisborough, Cleveland, TS14 7NB

FOR MORE INFORMATION TEL: 01287 634972

INDEMNITY

I declare that I am physically and mentally fit to participate and am competent to do so. I confirm that I understand the nature and type of event and the risks involved and agree to accept these risks even if such risk may involve negligence on the part of the organisers or officials, the landowners, or other bodies or individuals connected with the event in respect of any damage to my property regardless of the cause, I confirm that my motorcycle is road legal and effectively silenced.

RIDERS OF NOISY MOTORCYCLES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE.

Signed: Date:

KENT TRF REPAIR A BYWAY



and of course the surface would need repairing. Soft ground would give way and ruts would eventually have to be backfilled by the local lengthsmen and navvies of the time.

The green lanes we all know and love are a dynamic entity, ever changing from one season to the next. More so than other types of highway they are more closely coupled with nature than are tarred roads. Green lanes are undeniably a man made feature of the landscape, created by the passing of vehicles. Over times past, horse drawn carts gradually carved out the road network

Today it is no different, but the usage is by walkers, horses, trail bikes, mountain bikes and various four wheeled vehicles from the farmer's Range Rover and tractor to the occasional passing of a GLASS enthusiast's Mk 1 Land Rover or Suzuki jeep.

Sometimes a route gets into a state where repair is needed and often a highway authority pleads poverty and complains that the amount of usage is too great and threatens closure. Much time is wasted whinging and agonising about muddy ruts; who is responsible and who is not. Horse riders blame 4WD users, all wheel drive clubs blame the farmer, cyclists blame the horses, the horse riders blame trail riders and the "Ramblers" blame everybody else.

Thus in Kent we decided that the

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vehicular user groups (TRF, All Wheel Drive Club, Green Lane Association, Land Rover Owners Club and others) should have a go at repairing a lane. Being into things mechanical, fiddling about with shovels and wheelbarrows was not the way to do it. A couple of the 4WD club members are council contractors and trained to use dumpers & diggers. So after a few months



of planning we selected a lane in deepest Kent that needed repairing. Nothing too dramatic, but about half a mile of rutted soggy byway near Rolvenden called AT64 on the definitive map. The national TRF gave us £1000 to purchase materials and hire plant. We bought 80 tonnes of hard core and 20 tonnes of "type one" for surface dressing.

Sunday 28th November 2004 dawned wet and soggy. Over 30 vehicular users turned up and proceeded to shovel hard core into ruts aided to no small degree by a 3 tonne dumper truck. By just after midday we had moved about 60 tonnes of material and the lane was again passable. A fuel blockage in the dumper put paid to the last 20 tonnes but we'd already planned for this event in that Kent CC had agreed to pay for one day's contractor fees to put in the finishing touches.

So what had we achieved? Well I think we have proved that with mechanical aids and an appreciable amount of road material, user groups can repair byways at a relatively minimal cost. Shock horror tactics by the anti's can be shown in most cases to be a fuss about nothing. For the sake of some hard physical work, albeit made much easier by the use of the appropriate plant/byways can be made sustainable to sensible light vehicular use. This time we paid for it ourselves but in future we'll try to get the council to dip into its huge highways budget and fix up some of our other lanes; we'll also make sure they don't make them too good. After all a little bit of mud to play in is more fun than smooth tarmac, isn't it boys and girls?!!!

Post script note: Rumour has it that this lane used to have another alignment but it was changed by the notorious farmer Hughie Batchelor, nemesis of historic trees and woodland throughout Kent. Apparently this lane was wooded but is now boggy because there are no trees to draw up the water. Lots of rushes growing in the surrounding fields though!

Steve Neville

letters

THINGS JUST AIN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Over the Christmas break Cornwall group held four 'official' runs. 28 members enjoyed a total of over 2000 miles of trail riding and nothing, yes, nothing, went wrong. You'd have thought we could have at least managed a puncture or perhaps a minor misfire, but no, other than Howard's bike deciding to stop in the middle of a three feet deep river crossing (though sadly the only pleasure to be derived from this was seeing Curly wade in to the freezing waters to help push him out – the bike even restarted without ado) all the machinery behaved impeccably.

What has become of motorcycling I ask? Gone are the days when you towed your mate home with an ever lengthening scarf or found the Group pitting their wits and contents of their bum bags in a Scrap Heap Challenge style session just to get someone home. Looking back, trail riding was just so much more interesting then. I can well recall one hapless individual falling from his Bonneville engined Maico and seeing it tumble down a rocky climb, the carbs and manifold being neatly sheared from the cylinder head on the descent. We collected the bits at the bottom and with the help of a bungie or two and some baler lashed the manifold back onto the cylinder head (retaining studs all now missing) – the bike started and ran for the rest of the day (folk lore declares that it actually ran better, but I'm not so sure).

I recall the same chap losing a chain one day. Examining the evidence revealed that the chain had not broken, the split link had merely pinged off. The rider, clearly an optimist, suggested that we walk back the way we had come and look for the split link. We did and we found it.

We all knew the value of Mole Grips locked in various positions as surrogate gear levers or broken cable pullers, we knew how to start a bike when the rider turned up for the run without his keys and I can even recall one guy who reshuffled his clutch plates every thirty or so miles to achieve the desired effect (he was, mercifully, adept at this).

We had riders start runs having forgotten to put the fresh oil in during an oil change and we have pushed bikes for miles only to discover that the kill switch had been inadvertently rocked to off. Best of all was the chap who had so comprehensively water proofed his bike by silicon sealing the air box top to the seat that it only managed half a mile before suffocation set in.

The knowledge that we were out there with only the contents of our bum bags and our resourcefulness to get us home was surely a factor in the enjoyment

of a days riding. The mobile phone has a lot to answer for and I have to conclude that it has spoiled somewhat that pioneering spirit of motorcycling.

Of course it didn't always work out; I do recall a chap with a Tiger Cub that fell in half. It really did too, the head stock broke clean off, the only point of attachment for the front of his machine to the back was the front brake cable.

We just don't invite him out any more.

Sally Madgwick, Cornwall Group

WHO KNOWS?

When speaking to Monmouthshire's RoW department they were insistent that BOATS were maintained by the Highways Department "because they are used by vehicles".

I telephoned the Highways department and the only person available was an administrator, he had not heard of a BOAT or Byway Open to All Traffic! He gave me the contact details of the person to speak/write to on maintenance etc. My letter (reproduced below with the Council's reply) asks open questions with plenty of clues to the answer. My thoughts were that if they had responsibility for BOATS they would first answer all the questions for BOATS and then for County Roads on the 'List of Streets' (LoS). They do not admit any responsibility for BOATS!

Question 5 has been skirted - or has it? They probably assume all highways on the LoS are 'general purpose highways'. Question 9 alludes to footpaths, bridleways and RuPPs recorded co-incident with a County Road. They appear to operate in isolation. There can also be private rights along a public highway (in case it is down-graded) but maybe these have no relevance. Question 10 also intends to ask about signing on BOATs - few are signposted "byway" or "BOAT".

I feel another letter coming on.

Mark Holland
Gloucester Group

Letter to the Council:

To Monmouthshire County Council, Traffic and Development, County Hall, Cumbria, NP44 2XH.

Dear Sir

Please let me know the types of routes (sealed/tarmac and un-sealed) under your responsibility - i.e. Monmouthshire County Council.

What area do you cover? Is today's Monmouthshire the same area as the former county of Gwent?

I would be pleased if you could explain other points about these routes such as:

1. Where is information kept, and in what format(s)?
2. Can information be viewed by the public?

3. Where and when can information be viewed by the public?
4. How can the public tell the status?
5. How can the public tell what rights exist?
6. What is the maintenance standard(s)?
7. What are the source(s) of maintenance money?
8. Where are maintenance tasks and expenditure recorded?
9. The situation when a route has more than one status?
10. How the route is sign-posted and waymarked?

Yours faithfully

Mark Holland

Reply letter from the Council:

Dear Mr Holland

Re: Monmouthshire Highways

I refer to your letter dated 27th October 2004 and to your enquiries regarding highways in Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire County Council administers the eastern part of the former Gwent County Council. The western half is administered by Torfaen Borough Council, Blaenau Gwent Borough Council, Newport City Council and Caerphilly Borough Council.

Monmouthshire County Council is the Highway Authority for all adopted highways in the County i.e. highways maintained at public expense. All public highways are metalled except 'green lanes', which are generally not metalled.

With regard to your specific questions (1-10) I will answer them in the order listed, viz:

1. Highway network information is held in the Highway Register and the Highway Adoption Plans. The Highway Register records all County roads in classification order and identifies their classification, road name, road description, speed restrictions and start and finish OSGR.
- 2.-3. The Highway Register and adoption plans can be viewed by the public by appointment with the Highway Manager. It is planned to provide this information on the Council's website shortly but this is not available at present.
- 4.-5. The status of highways can be determined from the Highway Register and/or adoption plans.
6. The maintenance standards are provided in accordance with those prescribed in the Council's Highway Maintenance Plan. This will shortly be available on the website.
7. Highway maintenance is funded from two sources, revenue and capital funding. Revenue funding is provided by Council Tax (25%), Central Government grant (60%), Business Rates (15%). Capital funding is sourced from borrowing from the private market.

8. Maintenance tasks are recorded by Highway Inspectors following their scheduled inspections and maintained on a computer spreadsheet. Expenditure is recorded and maintained on a computer spreadsheet.

9. Not aware of a route having more than one status.

10. Class 1 and 2 routes are usually signed by route number and destination, whereas Class 3 and unclassified roads are not always signed.

I hope this information is of use to you.

Yours sincerely

Paul Frampton

Highway Manager

MOAN

Moan one

I know all the Southern lot are going to say "he's off again on his hobby horse" but all these "BOATS/RUPP/UCR" etc etc are fine when you know what they mean, and after being in the TRF for some 12 years I do know most BUT, in the letter from Brian Thompson in this month's comic (page 19), he mentions an "ORPA". Now, I have asked all around, all to no avail. Just what the **** does that stand for. Why can't we put a list in every issue as to just what these abbreviations stand for. If I am still having trouble after all these years, how do you expect new members to understand what we are talking about. I have asked for this before but it fell on deaf ears.

Moan two

So we in the TRF do it right at all times. Yes, we all ride to the TRF code of conduct at all times. OK, with me so far? Please tell me then why do we picture 3 of our upright citizens (riders) on our calendar with between them 3 unreadable number plates and, by the look of it, 2 "not fit for road use" back tyres. Not a good advert.

And lastly could you please clear up a point of Law for me.

I rode for many years with a "tame copper" who was adamant that if a TRO sign was missing or damaged in any way whatsoever, it was deemed in Law not to be "upheld" and therefore could be legally ignored. Yet on page 9 of this month's comic, Brian Thompson (yes him again) when referring to Mastiles and other lanes, says that this is not so.

I would be grateful if you could clear this up before we once again lift our bikes over the "Bike traps" on one of our local lanes.

OK, I feel better now. No, on second thoughts I must go and have a lie down first. It must be my age you know.

Keep up the good work

DOG (Daft Old Git) (John Grew)

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YAMAHA XT225 SEROW 1996, T&T, Renthals, Barkbusters, new c&s, v.g.c. £1,650 ono. Tel: 01594 528200/07779 343693 (Glos).

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KAWASAKI KDX200H4 1998, R-reg, T&T, green, FMF pipe, Renthals, many spares inc. tyres, standard exhaust, good cond. £1750. Tel: 01386 858552 (Worcs).

HONDA XR400 1998, 15,000 kms, white,

ultra reliable bike, many spares. £2,000. Can e-mail photos. Tel: 07973 908002 (Kent).

YAMAHA XT225 SEROW 1996, N-reg, 8000 miles, very nice purple/white, handguards, rear rack, exc. cond. £1500 ono. Tel: 01483 760293 (Surrey).

YAMAHA WR250F 02, exc. cond., taxed, Renthals, hand frame & sump guards, well maintained. £2750 ono. Tel: 07966 989688/01325 333207 (N. Yorks).

HONDA XR CLEAROUT My beloved & trusty 1995 XR200 owned for 8 years. Trail use only. Rebuilt 2002. T&T. Ideal first trail bike. Painted camouflage green/black for stealthy driving. £1050.

Also 1985 XR185 twin shock, stored since 1994, bit tatty but solid engine etc. £750. Room needed for my new TTR250. Tel: 01477 534425 (Cheshire).

CCM 404 DS 900 miles, light use, 10 mths old. Must sell hence £3445. Tel: 01323 761566 (E. Sussex).

GAS GAS PAMPERA 250 2002 '02 plate, 900 miles, good cond. Trail use only. £1750 ono. Tel: 01252 678852 (Hampshire).

HONDA CRM 250 AR 1999, V-reg, black/red. Only 3000 kms. Tax & Test. Sumpguards/handguards. Exc. orig. cond. £2650. Tel: 01430 828 533 (Yorks).

TRIALS HELMET, OSBE White, small, unmarked, as new cond., hardly used. £25. Thor Phase Motox Trousers size 34". Orange/Grey, worn twice so in absolutely as new cond. Cost £65 new, sell for £35.

Michelin Sirac Trail Tyres 90/90 x 21 & 4.6 x 18. Virtually new, did approx. 20 miles before being removed, best offer? Tel: 01600 715883 (South Wales).

ALFER VR250 2002 Rotax engine. Trail use only. Hand & exhaust guards. £2600 ono. Tel: 07771 921896 (Essex).

MEMBERS CLASSIFIED ADS ARE FREE. If you must write an essay a contribution to the 'fighting fund' would be appreciated (enclose a fiver!)

GROUPS

AXE VALE Malcolm Preece, Tel: 01275 844757
2nd Mon, 8pm, The Star PH at Star on A38.

BLACK COUNTRY Nick Hammond, Tel: 01902 700749
1 & 3 Tues, 9pm, The Mitre, Church Road, Bradmore, Wolverhampton.

BRISTOL Richard Stiling, Tel: 07974 151439
4th Mon, 8pm, The Tennis Court Inn, Deanery Road, Warmley, Bristol.

CAMBRIDGE John Brooker, Tel: 01767 692805
1st Thurs, Golden Ball, Boxworth.

CORNWALL Sally Madgwick, Tel: 01208 74411
3rd Thurs, 8pm, Pencaron Club, Bodmin.

CUMBRIA Anthony Hayhurst, Tel: 01539 721115
2nd Tues, The Gilpin Bridge Inn, Levens, Nr. Kendal.

DERBYSHIRE & SOUTH YORKSHIRE
Kevin Marsh, Tel: 01246 811949
2 & 4 Tuesdays, The Angel Hotel, Sprinkhill, Eckington, Nr. Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

DEVON Rob Williams, Tel: 01626 364564
2nd Tues, 8pm, The Welcome Stranger, Bickington, Nr. Newton Abbott.

DORSET Martin Diamond, Tel: 01202 571325
1st Tues, 8pm, Greyhound Inn, Winterbourne, Kingston, Nr. Bere Regis.

EAST MIDLANDS Graham Chinnery, Tel: 01332 863433
2nd Wed, The Chequers Inn, Main St, Breaston, South Derbyshire, J25 on M1.

EAST YORKSHIRE Peter Hall, Tel: 01405 862616
1st Tues, The Plough, Snaith.

ESSEX Dave Anderson, Tel: 01277 657783
2nd Wed, The Wheatsheaf Public House, Hatfield Peveral.

EXMOOR Ian Sadler, Tel: 01884 821547
2nd Wed, 8pm, The Hartnoll Hotel, Bolham, A396 1 mile north of Tiverton.

GLOUCESTER Geoff Wilkie, Tel: 01453 811412
1st Wed, 8pm, Wagonworks Club, Tuffley Ave., Gloucester.

HERTFORDSHIRE Dave West, Tel: 07768 402424
2nd Thurs, 8pm, The Old Guinea, Ridge, Near Potters Bar.

HIGH PEAK & POTTERIES
Graham Till, Tel: 01782 776338 or 01782 833222 (work)
1st Tues, 8.30pm, The New Inn, Leek Road, Longsdon. (A52, 1.5 miles West of Leek).

ISLE OF WIGHT Andy Hawkins, Tel: 01983 617232
1st Wed, 8pm, The Eight Bells Inn, Carisbrooke, Newport, IOW.

KENT Anthony Evans, Tel: 01732 360884
2nd Wed, 9pm, Pied Bull, Farningham, Off A20, Nr Brands Hatch

LANCASHIRE Keith Westley, Tel: 01704 893215
1st Tues, Black Bull, Hall Lane, Mawdesley.

LINCOLNSHIRE Paul Vernon, Tel: 01522 889079
4th Thurs, 8pm, Manvers Arms, Monks Road, Lincoln.

LODDON VALE David Cook, Tel: 0118 901 4481
2nd Thurs, Inn in the Park, Woodley Centre, E. Reading.

MID WALES Stephen Hall, Tel: 01982 570295
Last Thurs, 7.30pm, The Crown Inn, Rhayader.

NORTHUMBERLAND Chris Moody
Tel: 0191 387 3507 6-10pm or 07860 302001 (mobile)
1st Tues, 8pm, North Durham Motorclub, Annfield Plain, Nr Stanley.

NORTH WALES Richard Hughes, Tel: 01244 533855
1st Wed, 8pm, Cross Keys, Buckley, OS 117 290 637.

NORWICH John Jenkins, Tel: 07721 880463.
2nd Wed, 7.30pm, White Horse, Trowse, Norwich.

OXFORDSHIRE Peter Cole, Tel: 01844 214075
3rd Thurs, 8.00pm, Royal British Legion Club, Rutten Lane, Yarnton.

PEAK DISTRICT Neil Walker, Tel: 01788 811919
1st Thurs, 8pm, Travellers Rest, Ashbourne Road, Derby.

RIBBLE VALLEY Mark Wolstenholme, Tel: 01282 432088
2nd Tues, Pendle Hotel, Chatburn, Clitheroe (off A59).

SOMERSET Greg Hughes, Tel: 07887 821472
2nd Thurs, 8pm, The Bell Hotel, Curry Rivel, Nr. Taunton.

SOUTHERN Lee Wildsmith, Tel: 02380 611110
3rd Thurs, Southampton & District MCC, Woodside Ave., Eastleigh, (opposite Halfords).

SOUTH LONDON & SURREY
Steve Sharp, 0208 773 4204
9pm 1st Wed, Carshalton United Ex Service Club, West Street, Carshalton, Surrey.

SOUTH NORTHANTS
Graham Walker, Tel: 07841 158820
2nd Mon, 9pm, The Live & Let Live Pub, Harpole, Nr. Northampton..

SOUTH WALES Stuart Dodwell, Tel: 01446 710851
1st Thurs, Welsh Institute of Sport, Cardiff, 8pm.

SUFFOLK Richard May, Tel: 01787 374073
Last Wed, Manger Pub, A134 Sudbury Rd, Bury-St-Ed.

SWINDON Phil Male, Tel: 01793 731777
1st Wed, 8.30pm, The Carrier's Arms at South Marston, Swindon.

SUSSEX Nick Harris, Tel: 01798 344594
Last Thurs, Ashington Social Club, Rear of Red Lion, A24, 9 miles North of Worthing.

TEESSIDE & NORTH YORKS
Roger Preston, Tel: 01429 837093
3rd Tues, The Ranch House, Thoraldby Farm, Nr Stokesley, map ref 93...493074.

THAMES VALLEY Gary Hiller, Tel: 01932 851291
3rd Mon, District Arms, Woodthorpe Rd, Ashford, Middlesex.

WEST ANGLIA David Knight, Tel: 01933 313816
1st & 3rd Thurs, Scott Bader Social Club, opp. Parish Church, Wollaston, Wellingborough.

WEST MIDLANDS Simon Mills, Tel: 01926 332982
1st & 3rd Thurs, Wilmcote Mens Club, Stratford on Avon.

WEST YORKSHIRE Peter Dyson, Tel: 01274 571747
1st & 3rd Thurs, Bankfoot Cricket Club, Wickets Close, (off Cleckheaton Rd), Odsal, Bradford.

WILTSHIRE Vic Price, Tel: 01380 724651
1st Tues, The Bell On The Common, Broughton Gifford.

WORCESTERSHIRE
Dave Gunster, Tel: 01527 456095 Mob: 07960 422523
1st and 3rd Tuesday, White Hart, Fernhill Heath, Worcs.