



# HANTS & WEST SUSSEX BORDERS BRIDLEWAYS GROUP

AFFILIATED TO THE BRITISH HORSE SOCIETY

[WWW.WSBWAYS.CO.UK](http://WWW.WSBWAYS.CO.UK)

## NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2006

The Bridleways Group has been formed for just over ten years now and like everything else it is time for reflection and consideration of our way forward from here. We have had a fair amount of success and some improvements but alongside this the huge disappointment of losing both the Lye Common and West Marden Public Enquiries. We were asked to take over the historical claim for a bridleway across Portsdown Hill which we agreed to do and which is proceeding - albeit very slowly (12 years and counting!!). However taking into account the enormous amount of time which it takes to prepare and follow up these historical claims - only to find that the Government Inspectorate and Local Authorities sit firmly on the side of the landowners - this will be the last attempt by the Group at claiming a bridleway through proven use by horseriders in the past unless we have a member interested in historical research who would like to take this on.

Time can perhaps be better spent trying to negotiate with farmers and landowners for permitted routes or short off road stretches to form safe links off the road. However this is also not an easy task after the 'Right to Roam' was forced upon them - however hopefully not every landowner is hostile to horses.

There have been a number of fund raising social events organised over the past couple of years and sadly the support from members has been poor to say the least. In fact it is the same few people who attend who normally also turn up at the work parties we have organised to clear and improve bridleways. Were it not for the support from the local riding school these social events would have ceased a while ago.

The Group as a whole would be more productive if members get involved in identifying what is needed in the areas they ride and encourage the local riders to fundraise for their particular project or join in clearance parties if that is what is needed. Any project will be fully supported by the Group for insurance contacts advice etc and will be match funded if possible from our finances.

The Way Forward for Members:

- ❖ Continue to report any obstructions to the appropriate Rights of Way Officer either by telephone or on the County Council websites which have links to report faults on rights of way - or to Sue on 02392 455685
- ❖ Identify what is needed in the areas you ride and contact us to support you in improving the problem.
- ❖ Support any projects happening in the area you ride
- ❖ Have contact with Parish Councils where possible as they have quite a lot of power with Rights of Way and improvement of them.

The Committee has continued membership with the Countryside Access forums of Hampshire and the South Downs with particular emphasis on the Rights of Way Improvement Plans and more access for horses. Also the Forest of Bere Equestrian Forum. These are seen as important links to keep our needs to the front of the local authority eye. Sue has just decided not to attend any more of the bi-monthly BHS Hampshire Access Group meetings at West Meon as they appear to be poor value for the time spent. Any member who would like to go instead on behalf of the Group would be most welcome. Please get in touch for details if you are interested.

Yes our format is changing slightly - any suggestions happily received

**No we are not folding as a Group - just re-aligning the way we operate!**

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e-mail: [sue.montila@ntlworld.com](mailto:sue.montila@ntlworld.com)

## Current Group Projects

### **Bridleway 24 Whichers Gate Road**

This has been in a dire state of heavy mud for a number of years making it unusable for a good many months of the year. It is also very important as it keeps horses off an extremely busy road. Local riders led by Myra Mitch and Lucy together with the Little Leigh Equestrian Centre are busy fundraising and we hope to get the necessary improvements started in the Spring in conjunction with Hampshire County Council

### **Monument/Park Lane Stansted Estate**

Rita and her riding school colleagues are busy fundraising for some surfacing to this bridleway which the Group hope to match fund in due course.

### **Park Slip Stansted Estate**

We have permission to clear this permitted bridleway once again. At present we are waiting for commitment from riders in the local yards who use this route to form a working party. Once this group has come forward we will book a date.

### **New Permitted Track Forestside Road Forestside**

The Stansted Foundation have kindly agreed a further permitted track which will lead from the Forestside Hut (opposite Forestside Farm) and come out opposite the track which we negotiated some years ago. This will obviously benefit the liveries at Forestside Farm more than anyone else as their roadwork will be zero if they so desire. They are therefore forming a work party for Sunday the 12th March to clear the route. Fiona is co-ordinating. The cost of the materials needed to pipe and cover the ditch in two places together with some fencing is estimated at £200 and they have been asked to raise half of that sum, the remainder to be paid from Group funds.

If you use the Forestside Road please come and join the work party on the day - many hands make light work - and it can be fun!

### **UPDATE**

This work party took place and the weather was kind to us. By lunch -time the track was open and available to ride. Very many thanks to the 19 people who turned up to help and for the £100 donation towards the cost from the riders at Forestside Farm. There is some fencing to be done at the entrance/exit points which the Stansted Foundation have agreed to undertake.

## Forestside Track started like this:



## And finished like this:



## E Mail addresses

**I sometimes contact members by e-mail and distribute the Horsecatch bulletins when there is something of local interest.**

**If you have an e-mail address which I do not contact please respond now to:**

[sue.montila@ntlworld.com](mailto:sue.montila@ntlworld.com)

**It is such a quick and easy way to keep in touch - and best of all its free!!!**

**NEXT EVENT - NOT TO BE MISSED**

## **LIVE MUSIC WITH COLIN ROY**

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006 at Westbourne Social Club  
River street Westbourne starting at 7.30**

**Tickets £6 each to include excellent buffet  
TICKETS IN ADVANCE FROM RITA : 01243 376274**

**Come along and help raise money towards surface work to the Racton Track  
Bridleway**

### **EQUESTRIAN ACCESS**

Some of you may have seen an article in Horse and Hound (Jan 26<sup>th</sup>) in which Jim Knight said that above all else he 'wanted to be remembered for doing something for access for the horse'.

Horse riders have so far gained nothing from the CROW Act - face increasing speed and volume of traffic on the roads, particularly rural ones - and have to share the bridleways with cyclists. Meanwhile vast sums of money have been spent on identifying and mapping Open Access Land for walkers who already have exclusive use of a vast number of footpaths. An 'alliance' has recently been formed between various organisations to attempt to better equestrian access. This group will meet again in April to formulate an Action Plan. This is good news - however it all takes time and we need action now! **SO WHAT CAN YOU DO???**

Write a simple letter stating how you find hacking out in your area, and what could be done to improve it. Perhaps it is slowing traffic, upgrading footpaths, using setaside as links to bridleways or something else. Perhaps you feel unable to venture out at all. If so tell him why!

Ask everyone you know who rides and get them to join in this campaign to get Access for Horses Now

Write a letter and get everyone in your yard to sign it if they feel they don't have time to write one of their own.

Send your letter to: \_\_\_\_\_ and a copy to your local MP if you know who it is!

**Rt Hon Jim Knight MP  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
LONDON SW1A 0AA**

He can also be reached on [jimknightmp@parliament.uk](mailto:jimknightmp@parliament.uk) but perhaps lots of envelopes would be more noticeable!!!

### EMSWORTH COMMON ROAD

You may recall some time ago we contributed towards having the foliage cut back where the bridleway crosses the Emsworth Common Road from Hollybank Woods Emsworth. Those of you who ride this route will be pleased to find that in a recent 'removal of unsafe trees' exercise by Havant Borough Council their thoughtful Officer remembered our discussions with him about clear site lines to enable riders to see/and be seen by traffic. The view down the road from this bridleway is now excellent after the removal of some hefty branches – whether they were safe or not!!

### PORTSDOWN HILL CLAIM

Having held a meeting early in January at which 40 people who used to ride the hill met with an Officer from Hampshire County Council we were able to produce further evidence that there should be a bridleway along Portsdown Hill from the Viewpoint to Skew Road. Part of the claimed route is within the jurisdiction of Portsmouth City Council and their solicitor was also at the meeting. It was also discovered that Portchester Common (part of the hill near Skew Road) should legally be open to horses to take air and exercise and we are pursuing that matter with Fareham Borough Council. Hopefully things will progress further in the not too distant future.

falling on deaf ears at the present time so far as HCC are concerned.

There are a couple of websites which you might like to see and perhaps try and get involved in changing attitudes via your Parish Council, village or whatever.

The more people that push to 'Give us back our Rural Roads' the better.

Have a look at [www.safelanes.org.uk](http://www.safelanes.org.uk) and [www.ashevillage.co.uk](http://www.ashevillage.co.uk) if you get time.

### FINDING A ROUTE TO RIDE

This is another website (most of us can get access now in libraries or maybe at work!!) Basically it has been set up for people to add routes in their own areas or find ones in different areas. An extremely good idea and there is also a Discussion Forum. Obviously a ride is only as 'good' as the day it was written, as trees fall, cows are put in fields etc etc., no different really than when we explore rides near home. There is also an opportunity to feed back any problems on rides which you may find. Register for free and see what's available so far or send in something to enhance the site:

[www.bridleways.co.uk](http://www.bridleways.co.uk)

### SLOWING TRAFFIC & SAFE LANES

It is probably fair to say that most of us who ride out would prefer not to use the roads at all! Sadly however it is a fact of life and whatever happens as a result of our efforts to obtain new routes or reclaim the ones we have lost in most cases we will have to do some roadwork. It was an eye opener for me when a friend who had always ridden out through a busy commercial/industrial estate moved her horse to a more rural location and told me that she felt more unsafe there on the road than in the other locality where the traffic was large but moved more steadily on a wider road with plenty of vision.

The subject of slowing traffic in rural areas and Safe Lanes Schemes keeps coming up at meetings of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum and it is a matter of concern for all users of the countryside. However it appears to be

### OTHER INFORMATION

Many meetings (14) attended since November 2005. All different but for the same reason : Trying to get more equestrian access and helping other countryside users to understand the horse riders needs. Most have been worthwhile and some steady progress is being made on the understanding front.

The Area Rights of Way Officer for South Hants is working hard for a route between Botley/Bishops Waltham. Also an access point to the railway line at Soberton

The BHS has been requested to talk with the Forestry Commission to negotiate a fair deal for horseriders compared with the other users of their land. Currently horseriders in the south are asked to buy a permit - other users and the rest of the country go free!!!!

Work party at Compton - we moved two finger posts to allow the bridleway gates to open more easily and 'adjusted' a catch on one gate and 'undressed' two others with stock fencing attached.

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