



West Penwith Bridleways Association

Affiliated to the British Horse Society

Newsletter Number 2 Autumn 2001

Welcome to our second newsletter and to our association if you have just joined. If you've only just heard of us we hope you will join. We are a new and vibrant group with bags of enthusiasm representing local riders. There are a few weary souls out there who say its all been tried before and we will never get anywhere in trying to get a fairer deal for horse-riders. However, things are now different. Firstly we are going to make sure we succeed. We are affiliated to the BHS and are working with the BHS on the major countrywide initiative Ride-UK. Secondly the political climate is now a little different – what with new rights of way legislation, and the realisation (although through very unfortunate circumstances) of how the rural economy is inextricably linked with the country's economy as a whole, and very dependent upon the rights of way network. And thirdly, there is an enthusiasm to have long pathway routes such as the Cornish Way. The St. Michaels Way, The Camel Trail, Camborne Tramways etc. etc. The time is ripe for our voice to be heard and for us to get a 'hoof in the door', and not just be saddled with the status quo. We are a very important part of the local economy. We horse-riders spend thousand of pounds with farriers, vets, feed merchants, liveries, tack shops etc. It is time we had some support for the provision of better facilities for leisure riding.

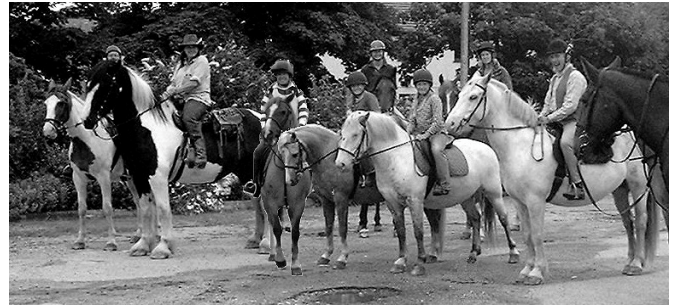
Membership

You will be pleased to know that our membership is growing steadily as word gets around. We have around 50 members now and we have only formally been in existence since May. The more members we have, the bigger our voice on getting a better deal for riders and improved access. Even if you are not able to be active on behalf of the association, just by being a member you are helping to give us 'muscle'. If you know of other riders who you think would be interested, give them my number and I will send them a form. Thanks go to those who have already been busy – out recruiting.

- Margaret

Inaugural Horse Hike

You may have seen in the Cornishman that we held our inaugural horse hike in August – pity they didn't print the photo. The ride started from St. Just Rugby Club and went up Tregeseal valley past the stone circle up on to Kenidjack carrying on to Woon Gumpus common towards Chun Quoit before turning back towards Trewellard where everyone enjoyed a drink at the Trewellard Arms Hotel.



The ride continued on down to the cliff and Levant mine and along the cliff track for some excellent and spectacular views. The riders turned inland to Higher Tregeseal and home. The horses were enthusiastic and a good pace was set by the leaders, Amanda Nicholson and Gill Buman. Thanks go to them for an enjoyable ride and also to St. Just Rugby club for the meet venue.

We have since done another ride from this venue. We had a good turnout of riders, one keen member Eil hacked all the way over from Lamorna to join us! It was a glorious sunny day in October and our lunch stop was at the Queens Arms at Botallack. Suitably refreshed we continued on down to the cliffs for stunning sea views and a lovely gentle canter over to Geevor Mine. Another brilliant day out with great company.

Horse Hikes and Future Program

One problem we have found in scheduling these leisure rides is finding the right day for a ride when people who are interested are able to go. We therefore have decided to abandon a fixed schedule for the time being. Also we have a problem communicating on a very frequent basis with all our members. Thus we are going to organise rides according to demand. We have the following ideas for Horse Hike venues and would welcome further suggestions.

Local Rides from: St. Just Rugby Club, Gunards Head, Zennor, Drift Dam, Lamorna, Engine Inn Nancledra, Lands End, Chapel Carn Brea and others.
Away Rides: Gwinear, Poldice Valley and others.

If you are interested in any of these rides please let Margaret know which ones. If we know the interest for a ride, when it is organised we can telephone to let you know when it is to take place. Obviously rides outside your area require you to be able to travel your horse. If you do not have transport and you know good rides in your own area, why not suggest a ride that we can enjoy with you. This will enable us to add more venues to our calendar.

West Penwith Bridleways Association

Chairman: Paula Hichens Foage Farm, Zennor, TR26 3BU Tel: 01736 794105 Email: timhichens@btconnect.com
Secretary: Adrian Bigg. Treveffa Farm, Treveffa, Zennor TR26 3BL } Tel: 01736 795098
Memberships: Margaret Bigg Treveffa Farm, Treveffa, Zennor TR26 3BL } Email: treveffa-farm@supanet.com

Hi Ho, Hi Ho, Off Bridlepath Clearing We Go!!

Our first project has been across Tredinney Common (below Bartinney) from Chapel Carn Brea to Brane. A rather long track for our first clearance, but as the farmer had already driven across it and left dead, broken gorse and bracken it was an opportunity not to be missed. We've had 4 sessions up there so far, and another 1 should finish it. No more picking your way waist high in undergrowth. The new widened track is a must for trot or canter. Due to the lack of places to canter, I'm sure we'll all enjoy this.

It's always pleasant to get together with horsey people for a gossip, and to be doing something positive for riding at the same time is ideal. Time just flies when you're enjoying yourself! Even with a few coffee breaks. Its amazing how much we achieved.

If we want some decent tracks around Penwith, then we are going to have to clear some of them ourselves, so go out and buy some cutters and meet us on the next project. Likewise, if you have a track you would like help with, call us, we don't bite, only chop!

Amanda Nicholson Tel: 871876

Horse Hikes – Grading

Should the need arise, I hit upon the idea of grading future rides, in the same way we grade rivers for canoeing. e.g. flat water = grade 1, disturbed water with some small rapids = grade 2, fast flowing river with drops and falls = grade 3 and big fast rivers with lots of technical moves = 4

Horse hikes could be similarly graded eg.:

Grade 1 = Pony Trek

Grade 2 = Walk and trot with some canter work on easy terrain

Grade 3 = A ride with a more positive pace and/or some more difficult terrain.

Grade 4 = A challenging ride – level of riding hunting proficiency

Our horse hikes are currently grade 2 on this scale. If there is the demand as our membership grows we will organise rides of varying difficulty.

Poldice Valley Ride

Ever heard of the Poldice Valley? On August Bank Holiday Monday, Adrian and I went out for a 15+ mile ride with Peter Kitt, from mid-Cornwall Bridleways Group, as our guide. This fabulous 'coast to coast' ride via Bissoe to Portreath must be one of the best kept secrets around, all newly restored and only just completed.

The valley is of varied terrain, but starts off at the bike hire shop and goes through old China clay workings. This section feels like cowboy country as the land is scarred, barren and white but broken up by new growth of heather, gorse and tree shrubs. We travelled up through a lovely little wood and eventually crossed over the A30 on a fly-over bridge. We progressed along and rejoined the cycleway and followed some lovely wide tracks as far as a place called Bridge near Portreath. Here we grabbed a quick pub lunch and retraced our way back to our starting point. We managed to get to within a mile of Portreath, but we had to return and get home in time for a prior engagement. We had good canters and a couple of gallops on the safe open stretches. In spite of it being a Bank holiday it was not too crowded and cyclists, walkers and ourselves could all enjoy the amenity in safety.

As a horse hike it is highly recommended. We paid a £1 for parking with horse trailer, at the cycle hire shop as a good-will gesture and to keep up 'Horse Friendly' access. - Margaret

Bridleway and Paths Liaison

We all know of many problems with our bridleways and horse routes. We are already liaising closely with the County Council on some problem areas and projects the council have in hand. We want to help both the County and Parish Councils in efficiently improving things. Bridleway clearance is an area in which we can all help instead of just complaining. Take a good pair of secateurs out with you trim that offending branch or bush – if we all do a little it will make a difference.

Major clearance work like we have done at Tredinney should last a reasonable time. If clear, paths will be used. Horses are very good in keeping a track clear as long as you are not confined to a narrow rut through undergrowth.

We have not room here to list the particular problems we are aware of and are pursuing but we plan to give a report in the next Newsletter.

We do have further bridleway clearance projects in the pipeline. If we know you are keen to help we will contact you especially if we are planning work in your area.

Our activities are not intended to relieve the councils of their responsibilities but to give them encouragement in keeping our paths and tracks clear for an appreciative diverse set of local and visiting users.

We also are anxious to build and maintain good relations with all landowners and of course the National Trust. Such cooperation can greatly improve our access to the countryside.

STOP PRESS – WEB Site Planned

Communication with our Members

This is the second Newsletter and is a bumper issue. Printing and postage is expensive and to keep our subscription low we cannot keep you informed on a week by week basis of what's happening. Email would be great if more of you were connected (please let us know your Email Address if we do not have it). If you do want to keep in touch with activities, or want to become more involved, you are always very welcome to phone 795098.

Riding outside of West Penwith

We do plan to do some horse hikes outside our patch. Adrian and I have been researching the area around Gwinear district. That's the next best kept secret. We took our mountain bikes and covered over 15 miles in one day, on the numerous tracks and bridleways over there.

Don't throw away this newsletter – please pass it on to a friend – and get them to join!

PLEASE KEEP READING – Information on Bridleways and the Ride UK Project follows

WHAT IS A BRIDLEWAY?

The obvious answer is a track on which you ride your horse. BUT a very low percentage of the tracks we ride in West Penwith are 'designated' and 'protected'.

Many of the designated bridleways either do not lead anywhere or lead onto an undesignated path/track or designated footpath.

Further, as we all know, many of the designated 'official' bridleways are impassable owing to being overgrown, boulder strewn, boggy or washed away.

What is the status of the undesignated tracks and paths we ride?

The law gives no direct protection to your right to ride on a particular path or track (or road) unless it is designated by the County Council as a *bridleway*, *byway* or *public road*.

However if any route has been ridden for a period of 20 years (not necessarily by you), you have the right to continue with such use. However to establish this right involves a long tedious legal process called a 'Modification Order' and obtaining evidence. It is only viable to use this procedure as a last resort when severe problems arise on a route that has been in regular use.

Thus you have the right to use a path that has been in regular use for at least 20 years BUT this right is not immediately recognised until proven.

There are other ways of achieving designation of a route based on historical/archaeological evidence but the County Council does not have a policy of promoting or supporting this process.

Many of the routes we ride are only designated as footpaths although they are often wide lanes. The use of such paths by horses is not prohibited as long as the path is suitable and does not cause danger to walkers. However the use of such routes is not protected and your rights are as described above for undesignated paths.

How did this very bad situation arise?

It arose when the parish councils were asked to designate footpaths and bridleways on the map. They were given insufficient guidance or rules to follow. Adjacent parishes did not consult each other where paths crossed parish boundaries. Hence the situations where paths/bridleways just stop for no apparent reason.

A common situation is when the assumption was obviously made that where a bridleway (or footpath) ends at a track that the track was in fact a road and already a right of way. However on the 'definitive map' that the council holds the status of the track is not defined – hence a serious problem.

Many paths and tracks were just 'forgotten' and never put on the 'definitive map'.

What can be done?

The new CROW legislation gives 25 years for the deficiencies to be put right but significantly does not suggest or give any new methods of doing so. It suggests relying on the existing methods, viz Modification Orders to achieve it.

We therefore MUST actively work to put pressure on the powers that be to find more efficient procedures and we must ACTIVELY record and map the routes we ride.

In West Penwith we have made a very good start in mapping the routes we ride. BUT we do need your help. PLEASE LET US KNOW of any problems you have on the routes you ride. This does not just apply to definitive bridleways. We cannot necessarily give quick fixes but we do need to know. We will be working with the County Council and liaising with landowners to overcome problems where possible.

PLEASE REPORT PROBLEMS to Adrian, Tel: 795098 or Email: treveffa-farm@supanet.com.

Bridleway Maintenance

The County Council does have a duty to maintain bridleways. However its budget is limited and it has a policy of encouraging the local Parish Councils to take over this responsibility where viable – with appropriate budget adjustments.

It is the policy of our Association to liaise with the County Council and parish councils where appropriate, to make best use of available resources in maintaining and improving our bridleway network.

In this context our Association has a policy of undertaking some bridleway maintenance work on a voluntary basis where we feel we can make improvements to the quality of our riding facilities. Our activities should give encouragement to the councils in their future efforts to keep our bridleways open.

Mapping Horse Routes - As an ongoing exercise we are mapping all the ridden paths and tracks in West Penwith (both past and present). If you want advice, or have information to give for your area, please contact Adrian.

The RideUK Project

The formation of our Association was prompted by the the BHS RideUK initiative and the wish to put a linear route through Devon and Cornwall. A feasibility study has now started and a possible route outlined.

I have undertaken the dubious responsibility of coordinating the project through Cornwall. We are working to get the full support from the Councils and the major countryside organisations and shortly will be publicising the project to gain support of landowners and farmers whose support is critical to the success of the project. As background the following is extracted from an article in H&H which interviews Phil Wadey who was the driving force behind the project which inspired the RideUK concept. I'm sure you will recognise the problems he describes. However he has shown they can be overcome given goodwill by all.

Adrian

Riding Round London (Taken From Horse and Hound 11 October)



When the idea of an orbital bridleway known as the H25 around London was mooted in 1995, Phil Wadey was one of the regional access officers who took on the responsibility for development and the task of getting local authorities interested. He had plenty of experience, having been part of a team from Patchetts Green Riding Club responsible for recording the routes that they all rode regularly but had discovered were not on the definitive map. "I liked the idea of having an official long distance route that would be protected for posterity, so I was keen to help. In south. Hertfordshire and Essex, the idea was welcomed and Buckinghamshire soon followed. Hertsmere Borough Council was so enthusiastic, it put the proposal in its local plan, which means that when any new developments are made in the area, the needs of the H25 have to be considered.

As the route began to develop, he noticed gaps in existing bridleways - in one case a track simply stopped halfway across a field at the point where a county boundary used to cross - and asked councils and landowners to dedicate a small area of land to link the paths and provide an official route, which had the added benefit of reducing trespass. "In some cases, landowners have offered a stretch of land on a trial basis, as a permissive path, and we have worked hard to make sure that riders stick to the route and do not stray or cause damage, so that once the proposal has been shown to work, it can be adopted permanently."

He has worked hard to build up a relationship with local authorities and to get known at meetings of access groups as the representative of "the horsey set". "It is much better to work with other user groups such as walkers and cyclists, as there is strength in numbers and we can get more help and better funding."

There is no set deadline to complete the H25, but Phil is hopeful that the northern section will be navigable by 2005. There is currently a gap to the west of London, which will be filled when planning discussions for Heathrow's terminal five are completed and its final location is decided, and access officers in Kent are working on a stretch at Gravesend. The H25 also links up gaps in existing bridleways, creating additional "community routes".

It is also hoped that the initiative will help the horse tourism industry and access officers are currently researching livery yards and B&B facilities for those wishing to ride the entire circuit or long-distance stretches on the route.

Funding for the H25 has come from a number of sources. Borough councils such as Hertsmere have been keen to channel cash from developers such as Arsenal Football Club, which paid for the upgrading of a footpath alongside its training ground. Community forests also provide funding and the Hertfordshire Groundworks Trust has approved the project for funding from Landfill Tax credits paid by waste processing and quarrying companies. "I also ask riders to put their hands in their pockets - if we have a shortfall, I am not embarrassed to ask riding club members for £10 each. It's a small price to pay for the chance to use a new bridleway," says Phil.

Phil comments that landowners are generally enthusiastic about the H25. "It is hard to go and ask a landowner to dedicate a stretch of field as a bridleway in isolation, but once they understand that it is part of a more important project, there is usually no hesitation"

For more information, visit www.bhseast.org.uk