

HODGEMOOR RIDER

Next Phase: the Bracken Ride to the Spring Link... off road

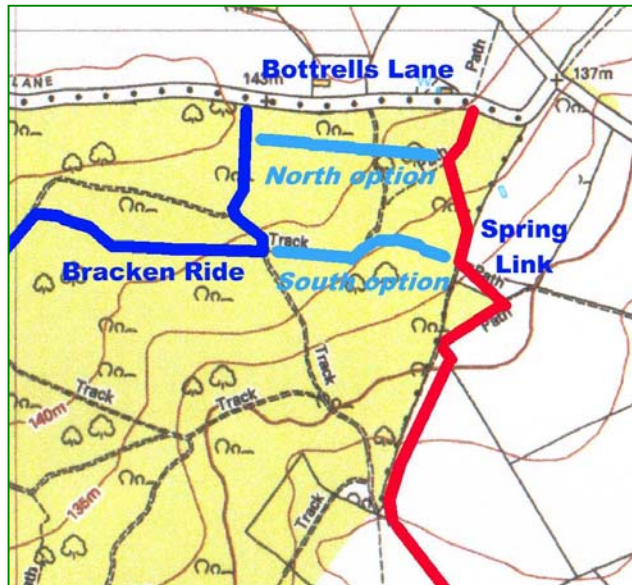
We have since April been benefitting from the one and a half kilometres of renovated trails throughout Hodgemoor Wood. This has been a great achievement. Now we must move on to a new phase and keep the momentum going. The plan is to surface 260 metres leading from Bracken Ride to the Spring Link. This would result in a complete off-road horse trail route from the west side of Hodgemoor to the east side bridleway known as the Spring Link. There are two possible routes (see map) 1) along the footpath parallel to Bottrells Lane that Forest Enterprise has agreed could become a permissive riding trail or 2) a more southerly route, of which half is currently a footpath, and half would be a completely new route to the crossing at the Spring itself. But please do not try the routes out till one is approved and built.

Both routes require a lot of clearing, which falls to the responsibility of this Association. That means... you. There has been a disappointing turn-out for clearing parties which we communicate in these newsletters and by email. On one occasion in late spring the number of volunteers who joined Susie and Marcus was... zero. But our thanks go to those who have turned up, and we do not mean to discourage them. In a spirit of self-criticism, let's ask some questions...

- Can you suggest ways in which we could improve the way in which the clearing parties are organised?
- Should we raise funds in order to be able to have it done professionally?
- Are you personally willing to lead a

clearing party?

- If you abhor the physical work, would you volunteer to participate in phoning people in the days before each clearing party?
- Should we incentivise those that help with a deduction off their membership fee, or extra tombola ticket at the upcoming AGM?



Either route will cost between £8000 and £9000. The Association has about £3000. So we need another £6000.

We hope lots of you will come to the AGM on 20 October (see below) to discuss these routes and suggest fund-raising possibilities.

Press coverage for Hodgemoor

On July 8th the Association invited sponsors, supporters and press to celebrate the last two years' achievement. Our aim was to get some public recognition for our principal funder, the Brett Environment Trust, and also for Bucks County Council, Chiltern District Council, Forest Enterprise and the British Horse Society. We also hoped to show other riders that it is possible to improve off-



road hacking with a little effort and co-operation with other user groups like walkers and cyclists.

So far the Association has had press coverage not only in the local press (Bucks Advertiser, Bucks Free Press, Chiltern and Thames Rider) but also in the national glossy "Your Horse".

At the event, Martin Drury, a Brett director, actually rode round the renovated trails (and Jan Longhurst of Chiltern DC has since ridden round the woods too). Among those present were Peter Hodge from Brett, Councillor Jeremy Banham (Vice-Chairman, Chiltern District Council), Emma Munday (Forest Enterprise), Jonathan Clark (Bucks CC), Michael Walton (Groundwork Trust) and Margaret McAnuff (Chiltern Society). And thanks to the many Hodgemoor Members who turned out too.

Aescwood kids to raise funds

In November 2001, the children at Aescwood Riding School, with the encouragement of committee member Audrey Holbrook, raised £2500 by a sponsored ride. This started the ball rolling, helping convince other funding sources that the Hodgemoor Riding Association was a good cause. Another ride will take place this November, and if it is as successful, then the Association will be well on its way to raising the sum needed for linking Bracken Ride with the Spring Link.

AGM: 20 October 2003

We hope lots of you will come. As usual there will be food and drink, plus the annual raffle which has turned out to be rather popular. Can you donate any raffle prizes, even used horse gear which you don't need any more. The agenda for the AGM is on the last page of this newsletter. Don't hesitate to put yourself or a friend (with permission of course) up for election to the committee or one of the officer posts. The more the merrier. Also, some rotation and variety might be a good thing.

"Hodgemoor Rider" Tabards

Florescent tabards have been very generously donated to the Association by committee member Heather Black's brother. They have "Hodgemoor Rider" and the phone number on the back and are fastened by velcro at the front. They will be available at the AGM for £10 or by post for £11 from Susie Bicknell at address in footer (cheque to Hodgemoor Riding Association). The price may be

more than in the catalogues, but if we sell 50 or more, that's a significant step towards the next phase.

And we would encourage members to use tabards: just recently there was an incident on the Seer Green road opposite the Highclere/Willowcourt livery entrance where a car went off the road avoiding 2 ponies and a jogger. Best to be visible with autumn coming up.

You and your horse:

a professional photo for Christmas

Amanda Myers has offered to take photos for your Christmas presents or as a memento of your great year's riding in Hodgemoor. Amanda will cover her costs and profits will go back into the Hodgemoor funds. Call Judith Broadley on 01753 883882 to get prices and an appointment.

Membership Analysis

We know there are around 400 horse-riders within hacking distance of Hodgemoor: we were aiming for at least 100 members this year and we've more or less made it. We would have easily done it if the 30 or so members who haven't renewed had done so. By the way, if you know of someone who did not renew we would be very grateful to know why so that we can improve our service or communication. Do people not feel involved enough? There's a lot to be done still, and the Association really needs all local riders' support. So if you're one of those who forgot to renew, please send your £10 (£5 for under 15 juniors) to Susie Bicknell at the address below. There are 30 new members, many of whom joined because of the membership boards that the Association put up in the Wood. Sadly these have been vandalised, but with the help of Forest Enterprise, we will soon be putting up stronger posts with pockets for membership forms.

We now have 15 new junior members, mostly recruited at Audrey Holbrook's Aescwood Riding School.

Penn's Common Wood Saved

Those of you who have come on the sponsored rides to Penn will remember the joys of riding in Common Wood. Thanks to hardworking campaigners, a Lottery Grant of over £500 000 has allowed the local Residents Society to buy the Wood which

would otherwise have been divided into lots and sold. Now access for riders and walkers will be preserved and this fine wood kept for the local community.

One of the campaigners is Miranda Souter (of the Penn Area Bridleways Association) who in late July organised a fund-raising ride from Penn to Hodgemoor. Several riders came over, met up with Hodgemoor members, had lunch and a swim, and rode back

From the Grand Canyon to the Chiltern Hills

Joining the ride from Penn to Hodgemoor was Donna Taylor with her wonderful mule Sweetheart. Donna had fallen for the gentle, quiet Sweetheart on a riding holiday to the Grand Canyon in September 2000. After 2 years Donna persuaded the trekking company to sell Sweetheart, and started sorting out the daunting administrative details. In May this year, she travelled with Sweetheart on the 9 hour flight from Houston to Amsterdam and on to the UK. Sweetheart has adapted quickly to her green surroundings and lives happily with Miranda Souter's two horses in Penn. On the ride to Hodgemoor, she certainly seemed to enjoy herself, skipping through the woods much to the fascination of the other horses (and humans) with her. The photo above (with Miranda in the background on the Penn visit) shows Sweetheart is no stranger to the camera either.

Autumn Ride to Wendover Woods November 9

Forest Enterprise has kindly said we can do another ride to Wendover. Not many of you came this spring, but those who did, loved it, and the Woods should be really lovely in the autumn. The suggested date is Sunday, November 9th. We would meet at the Forest Enterprise office at Aston Clinton (easy

to find and easy to park) at 10.30 a.m. and ride for 2 to 3 hours. Some of us might have a spare space or two in a horsebox, so if you do not have transport just call or email. Entry fee £20. Please let Susie Bicknell (01494 872447 sbicknell@btinternet.com) know by November 1st if you are coming.

Ride to Penn December 7

On Sunday, 7 December, there will be a ride to Penn Wood, probably with a stop-off at a pub for a pre-

Christmas drink! We will meet at the Widmer corner entrance to Hodgemoor Wood at 10.30 a.m. (later than usual to allow pubs to be open by the time we get to Penn area!). Hopefully the ground will be softer than the ride to Penn we did in the summer when we walked most of the time: we ended up doing five and a half hours in the saddle! This was exceptional, but any of you thinking of coming should bear in mind that it does usually take around 3 hours and is 10 to 12 miles long. Entry fee £15. Call Susie Bicknell



01494 872447 by 1 December.

Horse Ownership Course

Several members have enrolled for the Horse Ownership Course organised by the British Horse Society starting 22nd October at Prestwood. Details on www.bhs-bucks.org.uk or from Caroline Rance 01494 862327, caro_rance@hotmail.com.

Calendar of events

October 20	AGM in the Reading Room at Chalfont St Giles
October 22	Horse Ownership Course
November 9	Autumn Ride in Wendover Woods
November	2 nd Aescwood sponsored ride
December 7	Christmas Ride to Penn