

HODGEMOOR RIDER

HODGEMOOR: WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Since 2001, the Hodgemoor Riding Association has concentrated its energies in repairing riding trail surfaces in and around Hodgemoor Woods. We were lucky enough to get a £40 000 grant from the Brett Environment Trust (now closed), as well as funds from Bucks CC, Chiltern District Council and the BHS. We also regularly hold fund raising events (demos, XC, dressage, rides, TREC and Treasure Hunts). Over £60 000 has now been spent, and the principle danger has been averted: the Forestry Commission is no longer threatening to close Hodgemoor Woods to horseriders because of the damage caused to trails.



One of our Fund-raising Rides: this one was to the golf course near Penn

Because the trails are so much better, Hodgemoor has become more and more popular with local horseriders. But getting there is more and more dangerous. Local roads are busier and busier. At the AGM, members agreed that any available funds could be used to improve access to Hodgemoor. Therefore, the Association has a new development plan to upgrade 3 footpaths to bridleways which would help horseriders avoid two particularly notorious road routes to Hodgemoor. In some ways raising money for the trails in Hodgemoor was a doddle in comparison with this new task.

It is no easy matter to convince landowners that they won't mind a lot of horseriders coming

across their land, particularly if the route is a permanent statutory bridleway. Walkers are bad enough! You can perhaps persuade them more easily if you offer to finance a fence on the property to keep riders from straying off route, even though this is not legally necessary. There is also the surface to consider: Bucks CC is responsible but obviously can't take on too much.

There is the compromise situation: the permissive riding trail. The landowner can always shut it down if he doesn't like it. And, of course, money always helps. The initiative of the Chess Bridleways Association and the Jasmine Safety track Trust is an inspiration. They bought 2 tracks of land and rented 3 others in the Chipperfield/Sarratt area to make trails taking riders off dangerous roads. But it is not an ideal situation. It is a constant struggle for them to raise the £700 to £800 rent needed annually to pay the rent on the land they don't own. As with all such projects, it needs the full support of horseriders and the local community.

The Association will do its best to find new routes. The dream aim is to open up the 9 km triangular route north of Hodgemoor towards Amersham which would involve no roadwork. But dreams can come true.

Report accidents involving horses

We want more bridleways to get off our dangerous roads. Gloomy a job it may be, but you can provide ammunition for this by reporting any accident or incident to the British Horse Society: www.bhs.org.uk and fill in the accident report form. At present, no horse-related road accident has to be recorded unless there is a human injury requiring the person to be taken direct from the scene to hospital. Therefore a horse could be killed or injured but the accident could go officially unreported.

BHS statistics from 2000 to 2006 show a great improvement:

	2000	2006
Riders killed	11	5
Horses killed	49	19
Horses injured	98	28
Accidents reported		

This is good news, but the figures may be much higher because of unreported accidents. So please report any incidents.

Time to Renew your Sub: cheaper with Standing Order

For 2007 we are making subs by Standing Order cheaper than by cheque or cash: £10 an adult for the Standing Order, £15 cheque or cash, £20 or £25 for a family, but it will remain £5 for 15 years and under and for walkers. The standing order is with this newsletter on the back of the membership form.

There were a lot of new members last year: 32 out of the current 80 adult members are new, so local livery yards are seeing quite a high turnover. Although we hope livery yard owners or managers will put pressure on new liveries to become members, do encourage others yourself. We realise that many of the horses kept locally are maybe competition horses (and therefore rarely hacked out and benefiting from the woods), or in retirement, or whatever. But we hope that these owners would still become members in the interest of the horse riding community in general. Maybe this is being over optimistic but, hey, why not?

Livery Focus

So far we have featured Austens Farm, Aescwood Riding School, Oldefields and Chalfont Equestrian. This time it is the turn of:

Widmer Farm

Rawlings Lane, Seer Green, Beaconsfield, Bucks HP9 2RQ. Tel: 07974024655.

Profile: Widmer Farm has been an established equestrian centre for over 20 years in a key location for Hodgemoor Woods and its extensive bridleway network leading over to Coleshill and Penn. Widmer is positioned within 36 acres of grazing land with a mixed, friendly yard in all disciplines. The property has recently been sold and the stables are under new management. A very relaxed, friendly and social yard with lots of new, exciting facilities including a new ménage and lunge arena! Lots of enthusiasm and investment being made on an already well established and successful yard.

Staff: Manager is Julia Tilley, 1 part time (Claire) and the owners Francesca and James play an active role.

Facilities on offer: 32 stables (2 yards), 1 brand new, floodlit outdoor manege (size 20 x 40 sand & rubber surface), brand new lunge arena, jumping paddock, secure tack room, rug / feed rooms, toilet, owners live on site. New facilities planned for 2007:- horse walker, tea room, cross country jumps.

Widmer's recently resurfaced outdoor arena



Services Offered: Part livery, Assisted DIY and DIY - Spaces available.

Other information: Adlib hay / haylage, mare and geldings are separated, worming program, electric fencing, sickness / starvation paddocks, parking for Lorries / trailers. Organised dentist, blacksmith / vet visits available. Trailer rental available on request.

Instructors: Di Bovey, Amanda Bettle but own instructors welcome.

Events: Various events, BBQ's, demonstrations and shows organised in summer months.

Those Fallen Trees: Your Silent Helper

The very heavy rain brought down a number of trees, particularly old ivy-clad ones that couldn't take the sodden weight. You may have noticed that some trails were blocked in the woods, but not for long. Just want to point out that it wasn't Bucks CC or Chiltern DC, but your trusty chairman who was out on his Sunday mornings doing this!! Do call if you come across blocked routes.

Horse box anti-theft devices

Following the theft of a top-of-the-range horsebox from outside Austens Farm livery yard recently, we have been investigating ways of reducing the risk of your horsebox being stolen. We can offer the following advice.

Wheel Clamps: NO. Most professional truck thieves will come equipped with lever jaw clippers which can cut most wheel clamps through, and jimmy bars which can bend them out of shape enough to drive out of. ☒

Steering Wheel Locks: NO. Similarly, the thief can just cut them off. ☒

GPS Trackers: They are expensive to buy, most services charge a monthly fee and even then the thief can find it and disconnect it or rip it out. Even if you know where the truck is by looking at a map on the web with your truck pinpointed you still have to find the way to persuade the police to go and seize it back. Search on Google for GPS vehicle tracking security and you will see a range of products and services. Is it worth the hassle and the cost? ☒

We would like to suggest putting **two** free-standing systems in, which would cost around £360 including fitting. This could be a good investment: if the thief disables one and the truck still will not start then he is likely to give up and try somewhere else.

Interlock on the air brake system: this disables the release of the truck's air brakes. Even if the thief can start the engine without the key, the truck is not going anywhere! You have a key to turn the system on and off (or a remote control button for a supplement of £55) ☑

Hidden Cut-Out Switch: this disables the ignition or the fuel supply system so the engine won't start. ☑

With thanks to additional research by Matt Reynolds at Reynolds All Vehicle Care (Commercial Vehicle Repair and Servicing), London Road, Loudwater. If you want to have your truck fitted you can call Matt directly on 01494 523888 or 07714 244134 or use your own horse-box maintenance people.

Events for 2007

Last year we raised over £1200 with our events, the most successful being the Native Pony Dressage Day and the KC La Pierre Demo. We hope to do as well this year.

Definite dates so far:

Easter Sunday Morning Treasure Hunt. April 8th
Call or email Georgina clandongabriella@fsmail.net
or 07796 685992

TREC/XC Practice Day: Sunday April 15th. 10-12.30
Call/email Susie

Hodgemoor Business and Social Forum :
Tuesday November 13th.

A long way ahead but plan early! Any of you with businesses to promote can come to this. Other must come to find out. Food and drink too. Pre-Christmas push time. It doesn't have to be horse-related!



There will be more TREC events this season (Richard Hill on Guinness at a TREC event last year)

The Following Events are planned, dates not fixed yet:

Hodgemoor Newcomers Dressage Challenge

Combined Dressage/XC

Pleasure Rides

Competitive TREC Event

Social event to eg Point to Point

Dressage Demo

Clinic or Demo at Waylands Equestrian Centre

Indoor Talk or Demo

Reject Racehorse finds new home

Hodgemoor member Lesley Cornthwaite has had her heart set on rehabilitating a racehorse for several months. There are three main centres in England for rehoming racehorses. If you find a suitable horse and meet their requirements, you make a donation (usually around £500). The horse,

however, remains their property. If things don't work out, you can return the horse.

Lesley went several times down to the Greatwood Rehabilitation Centre near Marlborough where a horse was attributed to her and he was supposed to be ready before Christmas. But this horse had setback after setback. Its overraced legs would not come sound, and when eventually they tried to bring it back into work, it had got so attached to another horse, it refused to go anywhere without the other.

Lesley's time was running out. She had an option on a livery yard place, which the yard owner had patiently held for her for several weeks. But other clients were now banging on the door. So on Feb 25th, Leslie went to the Moorcroft Racehorse Welfare Centre based at Slinfold in West Sussex. There she tried a magnificent 6 year old chestnut who had cost his owners 400 000 guineas but had apparently dug in his toes about racing! Beautiful as he was, Leslie felt he really would be too much to take on. There was one other on box rest recovering from a tendon injury that Lesley was very taken with. But he still had months to go. Bitterly disappointed, Leslie went home. Over the phone, the chestnut had sounded perfect. She had one week left for her livery place.

On her way back from work 2 days later, Leslie happened to drive past the entrance to a racing yard just north of Aylesbury. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" she thought, and turned up the drive. ("I must be mad", she also thought!) "Just wondered if you had any horses you don't want" she asked the suspicious head lad. He eyed her. "Well, we do actually, but you swear it's not



This is Strathclyde's "before" picture: in the next newsletter we hope you'll see him transformed!

for dog food?". Lesley couldn't believe it. She was led out to a very muddy field where this horse was standing sadly. Here was another who'd taken against the racecourse, probably because he'd been whipped or beaten around the head. He's 8 years old, and his registration book reveals that he has run several times including Ascot and Kempton Park. He's won over £30 000. He'd been out in the field for the last 3 months, is thin and scraggy, and clearly in need of Lesley!

The next day, she was back and rode this gaunt fellow round the yard. Her decision could not have been anything but yes. So on the Saturday, I went with her to fetch him. To our surprise the head lad (a man in his 60s it must be said) hugged and hugged him in the horsebox and seemed very happy and relieved that this horse was off to a new life rather than into a dogfood can.

Strathclyde has now been in his new home for several days now, and seems to be settling in fine. Lesley knows she has a challenge ahead of her. There are links in his story missing. What really happened to stop his successful racing career and how will this affect his retraining? So if anybody reading this has had experience in retraining racehorses, she'd love to hear from them. Call Lesley 07766 557679 or email her Lesley@minstrel-889.freeserve.co.uk

Those interested in rehabilitating racehorses (or just donating towards their well-being) can visit: www.racehorsesgreatwood.org or for the Sussex Moorcroft Welfare Centre: www.mrwc.org.uk

Keep to Bridleway and off Fields!

Please keep to the Wickham Way bridleway leading from Threehouseholds up to Hodgemoor Wood. The fields just before the wood have just been harrowed and rolled in preparation for haymaking, and they don't benefit from being galloped over! Last year, the farmer making the hay broke his baler because of the uneven surface and nearly refused to finish the job.

Also please always be considerate to the dogwalkers from whom Susie has had some complaints.

If we want to improve access for ourselves, we must continue to improve our lobbying position vis a vis landowners and other user groups by being a responsible group.