

HODGEMOOR RIDER

It's open: the new Bridle Way to Hodgemoor Wood

Hopefully most of you have been up and back "Wickham Way", the new bridleway that opened to Hodgemoor Wood on August 1st. Even though it was pouring with rain (photo below), enough of us turned up for the opening celebration on August 2nd to merit a trip to the White Hart afterwards! Among the guests were Brenda Wickham herself (in the blue jacket), the BHS representative who instigated the whole idea, Jonathan Clark (2nd from the right), Bucks CC Bridleways officer for this area, and John Coombe (3rd from the left) from The Chiltern



Society.

After some experimentation with the entrance gate, it was decided with the agreement of Jonathan Clark, to remove the gate. The heavily loaded spring made it very difficult to open safely on this relatively busy road. The Association has also provided a quality padlock for the big gate as a preventative measure against travellers or unauthorised vehicles getting through.

The bridleway entrance is situated in the village and therefore very visible to the local community. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has attracted some attention, not all of it favourable. **As the first section runs along a much used footpath, we would ask riders to go slowly and carefully along this first field.** The Association has received one very polite phone call from a mother with 3 young children who was very worried about meeting galloping riders round the first corner.

Walkers need help understanding that our initiatives are actually helping them; better riding trails means that riders will not have to ride on footpaths and churn them up. By agreement with Forest Enterprise, there are new parts of the Wood which are exclusively for walkers.

We also know that some of you have met some antagonistic walkers: we know it's hard but try to explain that apart from that first section, most of the new bridleway runs independently of existing footpaths. Tell them that our initiatives are actually helping walkers; better riding trails means that riders will not have to ride on footpaths and churn them up. By agreement with Forest Enterprise, there are new parts of the Wood which are exclusively for walkers.

Also, do not be tempted to go through the Wood at the Spring Link. Forest Enterprise is trusting us to wait until this last part of the bridleway is properly prepared and opened officially. If one rider goes through the Link, it unfortunately brings down the reputation of all the riders in the area.

The Spring Link: please be patient

We want also to remind members that the new bridleway currently **only goes to the edge of Hodgemoor Wood**. So we can only go there and back again. Bucks CC and Forest Enterprise are currently going through the legal process of upgrading the existing footpath along the eastern edge of Hodgemoor Wood to a bridleway. Tenders are also going out to contractors to do the drainage work necessary and laying a hoggin base. Extensive work by Association members has cleared a huge

amount of undergrowth from much of the path which will help reduce costs. Many thanks to those who have volunteered so far (not many, it must be said!), and all our sympathies to Lisa Watson

who had to go to hospital to have a hawthorn removed from her back.

12 August Ride to Penn

Your editor as lead rider was not very hopeful for any participants when she woke up that Sunday morning to sheeting rain. But she got up, saddled up, and to her surprise found eleven brave people waiting right on time at Waylands. We set off, negotiated the dreaded A355 Magpie crossing with no problem, and after an hour were pleased and relieved to see the lone figure of Miranda Souter from the Penn Area Bridleways Association looming out of the mist and rain to guide us.

As one horse lost a shoe, some of us came back early, but Miranda took the rest round many of the Penn trails which was much enjoyed. A big thank you to Miranda and those of you who turned up. Vicky Gregory and her party had ridden all the way from the Jordans end of Welders Lane, and Irene Payne and Angela le Maistre had come from Chalfont St Peter. So they rode even more than the estimated 15 miles and 3 to 4 hours from Hodgemoor Wood to Penn and back.

4 November Sponsored Ride

Following the success of the 12 August ride despite the awful weather, we are planning a fund-raising ride for the Association on Sunday, November 4th. The cost will be £10 per rider for members, £15 for non-members. Please do let Susie Bicknell (01494 872447) know well in advance and at least by Nov 1st meeting if you are coming. We shall try to keep to groups of 8 depending on speed. Meeting time: 9.45 a.m. at Waylands Equestrian Centre, Rawlings Lane. For people running late for the R.V., Susie's mobile number is 0787 658 1144. There will be rosettes for completing the 15 mile ride.

Audrey Holbrook will be running her fund-raising Sponsored Ride for the children at her Riding School in the first two weeks of October. Many thanks to Audrey for her initiative.

November 1 meeting: guest speaker Sue Gibson on Road Safety

Horse-riding and road safety is very much the theme for this newsletter. After all, this is one of the main reasons the Association exists. We are campaigning for more off-road hacking, but we still have to use the roads to get there. We are delighted that Sue Gibson will be coming to talk to us at our meeting being held on November 1st. Sue is the Bucks County Road and Safety Officer for the BHS, as well as being a BHS examiner for Riding and Road Safety. Do come, you will learn a lot, not only out riding but in your horsebox and with your trailer.

Did you know that not wearing fluorescent clothing out hacking could affect your insurance if you have an accident? Come to the talk on Road Safety for riders, November 1.

13 October: BHS "Ride For Road Safety" Day

Continuing on the road safety theme, the BHS, with the backing of **Horse and Hound** and **Horse** magazines is holding a "RIDE FOR ROAD SAFETY DAY" on October 13. We would like to participate, and would like some volunteers to help hand out leaflets at peak shopping time between 10 and 11 or sometime that Saturday morning in Chalfont St Giles, Chalfont St Peter, Seer Green and Jordans. Ideally we need one or two mounted volunteers covered in fluorescent gear, and one or two helpers on foot

per village. Children and cute ponies would obviously attract more attention than adults! Please call Susie.

Who Is Responsible For Clearing?

We understand that some members are not clear where responsibilities lie for bridleway and riding trail maintenance. Bucks CC is responsible for all statutory bridleways, that is to say the bridleway that has always existed up the western end of Hodgemoor Wood, and the new Bridleway leading to the south eastern side of the Wood. Forest Enterprise is responsible for the permissive riding trails in the Wood. The Association can help both Bucks CC and Forest Enterprise with this maintenance. To notify of any problems, please call Susie Bicknell on 01494 872447, but for your information here are the details of Jonathan and Liz:

- For the bridleways: Jonathan Clark, Bucks CC
01494 475368
- For Permissive Trails: Liz Manley, Forest Enterprise
01296 625825

Request For Articles

The Association is getting quite a high profile locally. We have had additional press coverage recently on riding and road safety, and have been asked to submit articles on the Association to the BHS Bucks newsletter and The Chiltern Society magazine appearing in December.

Chalfont Valley Equestrian... hooray

We would like to mention Julia Tilley who runs Chalfont Valley Equestrian in Bottom House Farm Lane for getting all her 14 clients to join the Association: thank you Julia! This means our membership is now approaching 70. That's a lot envelopes to stuff and stamp each time we do a newsletter, but we don't mind doing more... so get your friends to sign up.

Bridleway Clearing Equipment Wanted

Does any member have access to a tractor-mounted grass-cutter or hedge topper that the Association could borrow to help with maintenance (subject to Bucks CC and Forest Enterprise agreement).

Dates For The Diary

Thursday 20 September: General Meeting 8pm Reading Room, Chalfont St Giles. Bring things for raffle. News on Onyx grant application.

Saturday, 13 October: Ride for Road Safety Day.

Thursday, 1 November: General Meeting 8pm Reading Room Chalfont St Giles: Talk on Road Safety by Sue Gibson, BHS.

Sunday, 4 November: Sponsored Ride to Penn. 9.45am at Waylands Equestrian Centre.