

HODGEMOOR RIDER

Happy Hacking In Hodgemoor this Winter!

There's no doubt that those stretches of lovely newly-surfaced trails have made all the difference to riding in the wood this winter. The trails have had a baptism of fire as it has been one of the wettest winters ever but have stood up to all the rain very well. One walker rather grudgingly said that the paths were so good now he kept meeting families with pushchairs! This is true, and may give the horses a bit of a fright from time to time, but our aim has always been to benefit all users of the wood, not just us horseriders. Thank you all for your encouraging comments.

Agriwork's Good Work!

The Association is very pleased with the contractor John Edwards of AGRIWORK, who has (so far!) done everything he said he would, when he said he would, for the price he quoted. His team includes his partner Dawn often to be seen handling some large bit of machinery!

Trail Repair Progress Report

When rain stopped play in early November, 1252 metres of trail had been resurfaced, of which 137 metres has only just been compacted and smoothed. Another 195 metres has been com-missioned, and AGRIWORK will do this as soon as the ground is hard enough. That is nearly one and half kilometres, which may not sound a lot, but it will have dealt with the worst trails in the wood. We have committed just over £40 000 to these repairs, which



leaves about £3000 in the kitty.

Subscription Time

Enclosed with this newsletter is a subscription form which we hope you will return as soon as possible. Prices remain the same as in 2002. Membership has been around 75 in the last two years: 100 members would be nice. Income from subs last year was £814, and that at £15 a square metre represents another 27 metres of repaired trail. Also, you are more important than your money. The more members we have,

the more we can ask councils and funding bodies for help. Please tell people you ride with and get them all to join.

Identity Discs For Members

We estimate there must be 300 to 400 horseriders within hacking distance of Hodgemoor: 75 were members in 2002. We want to encourage more to join. Forest Enterprise has kindly given us a supply of discs ("Forestry Commission - Hodgemoor Riders 2003") that will be sent out to each member. Members can then attach the disc to their saddle or bridle when hacking, on a voluntary basis. The discs give riders pride in their participation in improving the woods and encourage a communal identity. And if you see riders in the wood without discs, you can let them

know about the Association and encourage them to join.

Eighteen children who attend Aescwood Riding School have already joined for 2003 and can be seen here displaying the discs.

Signs In Wood

Forest Enterprise and the Association have agreed to put up signs at strategic entry points to the wood. Attached to each post

will be a pocket holding membership forms. These should go up soon to help publicise the work of the Association and to attract members.

Message from Emma Munday Of Forest Enterprise

"Thank you to all those riders that together make Hodgemoor Riding Association a pleasure to work with. Through your hard work, facilities for riders have improved, walkers are happy and the conservation value of this beautiful wood protected and enhanced. Please keep up the good work by supporting the committee, informing either the committee or Forest Enterprise of any problems and staying on the designated horse trails.

For your information, staff you may see around include Joanne Mason the Recreation Manager, Steve Carter the Wildlife Ranger, Jim Mancer the Forester, or myself Emma Munday, the Area Manager. If you need to contact us, call the office on 01296 625825. We are always glad to hear from you and are very grateful for your local involvement in helping us manage this woodland.

Regards, Emma".

Ride In Wendover Woods

And many thanks from us to Emma and her team for their cooperation and support in the last two years. Emma has also suggested a fund-raising ride for the Association in Wendover Woods which Forest Enterprise would let us use exceptionally. We would meet at Forest Enterprise's office at Aston Clinton, and ride for a couple of hours in these wonderful woods (far larger than Hodgemoor!). The office is easy to find and there is plenty of room for trailers and boxes. Entry fee would be £20. Two possible dates are Sunday, March 23rd or Sunday April 13th, meeting time 10.30 a.m. at Wendover. Please call Susie Bicknell 01494 872447 as soon as possible so a date can be finalised.

Sponsored Ride from Audrey at Aescwood... Encore!

In November 2001, the children at Aescwood Riding School raised £2500 for the Association and in doing so started the ball rolling. People that we had approached for funding realised we were serious about trying to raise money, and that we were worthy of support. We ended up with grants and donations from Chiltern District Council, Bucks County Council, the British Horse Society and the magnificent grant of £40 000 from the Brett Environmental Trust.

Audrey Holbrook at Aescwood is planning another ride this autumn. If a similar sum is raised, then with our reserve of £3000 plus 2003 subscriptions, we are well on our way to another 300 metres of trail repair.

Showjumping Demo: Lana Junak

Professional showjumper and trainer Lana Junak has offered to give either a show-jumping demo or clinic at her centre at Waylands (tel 01494 872301) in Seer Green. We will keep you informed on a date.

Gymkana And Show: Oldefields

Another offer to help raise funds has come from Charlotte Perry, the new manager at Oldefields Livery Stables (Tel. 07870 583855) in Seer Green. She is planning a gymkana and show in early summer. We'll keep you posted.

Stalls at Local Events

We are planning another way of publicising the Association: having a stall at local events such as the summer fairs in Chalfont St Giles, Chalfont St Peter, Jordans and Seer Green. Anybody with any useful contacts please let us know.

Clearing Parties

What can we do to get you guys out there to come and help sometimes? It's pretty lonesome clipping away on our own! Joanne Mason from Forest Enterprise will be leading our first clearing parties of the spring. The first priority is the much-used Yellow Brick Road which is getting overgrown. Our first dates are:

- Wednesday 26th March 2-3.30 pm
- Saturday 26th April 4-5.30 pm with drinks after at the Bicknells, just to tempt you.

Meet for both at the Rawlings Lane entrance to Yellow Brick Road. Or call us to say the days of the week and the time that would be convenient.

Stamp It, Mark It or Lose It

Postcode your property is the key advice from Helen Evans, local representative of the Thames Valley Horse Watch. Following a recent spate of tack and trailer thefts, clearly done by well-organised gangs, Helen is offering to go round livery yards stamping tack. She also recommends having reference details and photos of your horse/trailer/tack on record to help trace stolen goods. Be suspicious of all unknown yard visitors. Horse Watch is also researching stick-on letters for trailers. The Association will soon be on the Horse Watch ringmaster message service. Contact Helen Evans 01494 532183 to know more.

Email Communication

We want to use email more and more to give you news, dates, etc rather than do lots of newsletters which are quite expensive. When you return your sub form, please note your email address very carefully, as many addresses were not legible last year. Or send an email to sbicknell@btinternet.com so you can be logged straightaway. Maybe those of you without email have a friend who would pass messages on. If not, don't worry, you'll still be kept informed!