



MID COTSWOLD TRACKS & TRAILS GROUP

Helping to improve our tracks and trails ... from this generation to the next

CHIT CHAT FROM THE CHAIR

GLoucestershire Horse Riders

Congratulations to Gloucestershire Horse Riders - a Facebook site which now has over 2000 members. Started by Julie Smee, it is a site for buying, selling, and chatting about all things horsey. Julie is also organising some events, and has kindly offered to support MCTTG with some fund-raising ideas.

We look forward to working with GHR to get more improvements to the local tracks and trails network.

Talking of Facebook I started a MCTTG Community Page, but it wouldn't let me invite people to join (except people on my personal list), it was suggested I should create a MCTTG Group Page instead. I did this, but it would appear that Fb has just changed the system, and you can no longer invite people to join directly, so neither does what I wanted. The Community Page allows people to see the photo albums parading across the top - which is good. The Group Page doesn't show the photo albums unless you click on PHOTOS. I need to dump one and keep one - any thoughts?

SPONSORED GATES. I have been talking to Ian Soule, Works Manager for Glos Rights of Way Department, about sponsored gates. He is very keen on the idea, and can get plaques made.



If every equine business, riding school, riding club and livery yard in Gloucestershire sponsored one gate this year, how many could we get done ?

200 ? 300 ? More ?

Some only need a bit of attention and a new rider latch (*see following pages for samples*), some would be a lot safer if repositioned slightly. Ian is working on one at Stanton which is near a bridge, and they are repositioning this one.

Could you help with the appeal for Rodborough gates? (*see page 8 - contact me*).

If you want to know the ones Ian is currently planning, or if you have ideas for some in your area that you might like to sponsor, have a word with Ian 01452 425577. You can also talk to the landowner, and offer to help - (*see the following pages for more on this*).

You can also talk to your Parish Council and see if they will pay something towards a gate (*to avoid any liability issues, discuss changes with PROW and work to British Standards*).

Don't let the Ramblers get all the glory !! We riders could make a huge difference to the network if we really tried.

Next time I hope to have more news on 3 or 4 projects we have been working on.

Here are some of the things you can explain to your Parish Council if they are not aware of the riding issues

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THE BENEFITS AND ISSUES OF GOOD TRACKS AND TRAILS NETWORKS

SHARED USE

All tracks that a horse may use are also available for use by cyclists and walkers, and often by disabled and pushchairs, so these tracks have a wide community benefit.

BUSINESS FIGURES

DEFRAS's figures for July 09 put the gross output for the horse industry at £4 billion per year, attracting 4.3 million riders and directly employing a quarter of a million people. It is a major contributor to rural economies including farriery, equine medicine and alternative practitioners, tack and feed merchants, farmers supplying hay and straw etc., horse box maintenance, clothing, tourism (e.g Gatcombe, Badminton, Cheltenham Races etc. - all the horses that are the basis of this tourism require tracks and roads for exercise on a daily basis.) An article in the Daily Mail (April 2010) makes a comparison with football fans which it quotes as 535,503. (I'm not good at maths - is this about eight times more riders than football fans ?)

ENCOURAGING YOUTH SPORT

It is one of the few sports that attract young girls. As well as the health benefits of being outdoors doing physical work, the dedication required to look after a pony requires discipline, empathy, risk assessment, self reliance, team work, observation, and tenacity - to a greater degree than many other sports.

AIDING DISABLED HEALTH REGIMES

It is one of the few sports that the elderly and physically disadvantaged can, and do, participate in. For example, a ten mile ride is perfectly feasible for an older person with replaced hips or a younger person with damaged lungs, whereas a long walk may not be possible.

With regard to the two items above, *“Government is committed to providing high quality opportunities to play sport or get physically active the definition will be broad, including sport, as well as activities like recreational walking and recreational cycling..... yoga, pilates, outdoor bowls, archery and croquet are included as they place some degree of physical demand on a participant who is 65 or over. Increased participation in sport and wider physical activity remains a top priority”* (Sport England's definition Dec 2007). The intent of the government is clearly to encourage all forms of physical activity, although it is interesting that riding, despite its huge participation rate, is still the Cinderella of the piece.

AIDING DEPRESSION, GRIEF etc

There are many reports showing the mental benefits of being outdoors and also of being around animals.*

** e.g. BHS Report Researchers from the University of Essex have found that riding reduces levels of anger, confusion, tiredness and tension, while increasing energy levels. The study concluded that not only is this kind of exercise a massive benefit to the individual, but it would clearly cost the economy less if more people were involved in this type of activity. (report available from BHS).*

WHAT CAN BE DONE ?

Twyditch

Landowner Simon says:

“The bridleway was very wet even in the summer months.

I spent a lot of time rolling it in the spring and summer months but it was damp.

The Rights of Way department have done a very good job of Twyditch Lane and now we can get a tractor and hedge trimmer to cut back the hedge to give it more light.”



Before



***After Well done Simon and
The Rights of Way Team, amazing !***

COALEY - FROCESTER (Hunter Fields) Aug 2010 and NOW

After consulting with Rights of Way Officers, Julian, on behalf of local riders, approached the landowner, Dave, and offered to pay for new latches on four gates. The landowner responded by asking for only half of the cost, and said that he would do the work. WOW! When it came to looking at it in detail, Dave decided to replace one gate completely. As a farmer with an account, he was also able to get a slightly better deal than the riders could have, and could reclaim the VAT. Several riders clubbed together for their share of the money - and just look at the results



Gate 1 - Change difficult spring bolt for Rider Latch. The gate already hangs well and opens wide and easily. Also remove small bush at head end and put a rail across. **Done >**



Gate 2
Old metal gate, had a chain and post (OK) but hinge post was leaning making it tricky to close.

Brand new 5 foot gate, to British Standard, with Rider Latch

Done >





Gate 3
Again, a difficult spring bolt.
New Rider Latch required.

Done >
(Also new closing post)



Gate 4
Another spring bolt -
new Rider Latch required and clear the
brambles at "horse's head" end.

Done v



Julian and Fran asked MCTTG for help on
this bridleway.

We contacted Rights of Way, and all walked
it together, making a "wish list" as we went.

Subsequently, two gates were supplied by
PROW and installed by Cotswold Wardens at
the Frocester end (as reported in the last
newsletter), and the landowner here has also
cut back an overgrown hedge and removed
some dangerous wire and posts; and these 4
gates have been re-done by the landowner
and local riders at the Coaley end.

GREAT RESULTS !



AND A GATE AT ULEY BURY



Before The problem here was, firstly, a simple matter of a gate being hung the wrong way round. The gate was hinged so that it opened across the entry/exit space. To get through this a rider would need to back the horse away from the gate and then try to get through the corridor between the gate and the fencing whilst holding the gate open. The large gate was fitted with a rider handle, but was chained closed all summer, because the farmer had had problems with it being left open and the cattle escaping. The second problem here was that a REALLY strong spring had been put on it - I had difficulty opening it on foot to get the dogs through.



After.... The smaller gate, while not the full 5 foot normally required by British Standards, is a good size, and is now hinged against the fence to make it much more accessible. There is still a spring, but is only lightly tensioned, and closes very gently. The gate also now closes from the side the cattle are on, so that, should they push against it, they would push the gate against the post and not just the latch. The large gate has been rehung, and is open when the cattle are not present. A system of coloured discs indicate if cattle are present on the Bury or not.

In this instance, MCTTG approached Uley Parish Council to find out who the landowner was. They contacted the Dursley, Cam and Uley Joint Woodland Committee (a Committee managing Stroud District Council owned land). Although this is not Council owned, they held a small fund provided by Cotswold AONB Board, which had been ring-fenced since the original Uley Bury project was set up, and reserved for Uley Bury improvements only. Many thanks to everyone involved in this, and especially to Janet Wood and David Sykes.

SOME GATE INFORMATION

Gloucestershire County Council have a leaflet called "Gates and Stiles on Public Rights of Way". (Go to GCC web site. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY page.

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/prow> Scroll down to "Stiles and Gates leaflet".)

It explains that landowners are responsible for maintaining gates on public rights of way and that they are liable if anyone injures themselves or their horse when using a gate that has not been maintained.

An injured user can claim damages as a result of either the statutory duty under Highways Act 1980 section 146 or the Occupiers' Liability Act 1957.

The ideal would be to have gates that conform to British Standard 5709.

BS5709 requires a minimum of 5' between the gateposts.

GCC policy is that the gate should be negotiable by a horserider without dismounting.

This is the usual interpretation of the Highways Act (1980) S. 146 (see above leaflet). Various Rider Latches are available, but often the simple throw-over loop is a good and safe solution.

BHS policy is for a minimum of a 3 metre semi circle of manoeuvring space on either side of the gate - BS5709 also refers to adequate manoeuvring space.

If a gate has self-closing or accelerated closing (i.e.spring) BS5709 requires

i) that it should be a two-way opening gate and

ii) that it should need not more than 50 N (5 kg on a spring balance) to get it fully open

BHS policy would be that it closes in not less than 6 seconds.

All the above is without considering that BS5709 requires that the needs of all potential users be addressed; and if it's a very recent arrangement, then the Equality Act (2010) will also apply - this to ensure that disabled riders still have safe access.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S WEB SITE also states that farmers and landowners need to cut back overhanging and encroaching vegetation that affects public rights of way, and it points out that on bridleways horseriders need a full 3.5m/12 feet high clear of overhanging branches.

It reminds landowners that they should maintain gates on paths across their land in a safe and convenient condition for public use. Small grants have been available from the county council's public rights of way team to help with the cost of maintaining legally approved gates.

The website also states that it is illegal to cultivate or disturb any field edge public right of way, and that landowners should ensure that bridleways across fields are reinstated and marked on the ground to the correct width after ploughing or other authorised works. (Further advice is available from PROW department).

Landowners should ensure that paths across fields are kept free from crops. A range of minimum widths are prescribed by law depending on the path's status and location where no other evidence exists as to width.

In practice, approaching a landowner "quoting the book at him/her" often doesn't go down too well. MCTTG is trying to solve things by creating partnerships between PROW, Riders, Landowners and Parish Councils. If a group of riders is willing to fund-raise to help improve the tracks in their area, we think they have a better chance of getting the ball rolling.

We are working with Rodborough Parish Council to improve 2 cattlegrid bypass gates.



This one at Dark Lane needs a new stock-proof rider-latch - cost £41 of which RDC is paying half and Highways is paying the contractor to fit it - so we need to raise **£20.50** for this.

This one, at the junction of Top Road and Bear Hill, needs a wider gate and all the fittings for it, including new stock-proof rider-latch. The latch is as above (so **£20.50** from us for that), but the gate and hinges etc. will cost £133 and will need £100 to get it fitted - RPC are offering half for this also, so MCTTG needs to raise **£116.50**. (Total = **£157.50**)



If you would like to donate towards this, or if you have a business who might like to be a sponsor (plaques available for the larger donations) contact Pat midcotswoldtrails@gmail.com 01453 823841

If every village looked after its own bridleways, the whole network would be safe and open to all.



MEMBERSHIP

THIS IS STILL FREE

WE NEED YOUR
BACKING WHEN WE
ARE TALKING TO THE
PEOPLE WHO MAKE
DECISIONS ON OUR
TRACKS & TRAILS.

For letters to MPs,
Councils, DEFRA,
Sustrans and all the
other decision-making
bodies we need the weight
of your numbers behind us.

Access to cycle tracks ?
Grant funding rules ?
Obstructions on routes ?
Upgrading of tracks ?
New cattle grids ?

These are some of the
issues we have been
busy with over the last
year, and which are at the
heart of the talks we are
having right now.

Give A New Meaning To

**HORSE
POWER**



MID COTSWOLD
TRACKS & TRAILS
GROUP

Helping to improve our tracks and trails ... from this generation to the next ...

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

*(one form per person, more forms available at
www.midcotswoldtrails.org.uk)*

NAME
.....

ADDRESS
.....
.....

PHONE
.....

email
.....

I am interested in helping by:

- BEING ON THE COMMITTEE MONITORING A BRIDLEWAY
 FUNDRAISING

OTHER - please say if you can offer help or knowledge in any other way

- NONE OF THE ABOVE, I only want to be a general member, please
keep me informed of your events and I'll help or join in where I can.

Membership is currently FREE

Post form to: SUE ELLIS (Memb. Secretary)
Willow Bank Cottage, 3 Far Westrip, Stroud,
Glos GL6 6HD
or email sueatwillowbank@btinternet.com

We do not sell or share your information with anyone.

BHS & TTT
AFFILIATED

MCTTG 1.31.01.12

membership also available by email

... TALK TO US ON FACEBOOK.....

midcotswoldtrails@gmail.com
www.midcotswoldtrails.org.uk
Chair: Pat Harris 01453 823841

**Or come and meet us - Our next meeting is
7.30 March 7th at The Amberley Inn GL5 5AF**