



MID COTSWOLD TRACKS & TRAILS GROUP

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

Good News.....

I hear from the Public Rights Of Way Team that there is a new bit of restricted byway recognised in Uley.

Andrew, from Gloucestershire County Council says :

We initially had an application from David Sykes, the Uley Parish Council p.r.o.w. secretary, to add a missing section of bridleway at Rowden up through the woods. When I did the historical research the evidence pointed to this section being part of an old road from Uley via Elcombe to Bowcote on the Dursley to Tetbury road, so the next stage was to investigate the status of the bridleway which forms its continuation to Bowcote. We then published an order to add a length of restricted byway and to reclassify a section of bridleway to restricted byway (the application had fallen foul of the NERC Act in the meantime). One landowner considered objecting but when presented with the historical evidence decided against, so it was confirmed unopposed. We have undertaken some clearance work at each end of the route but will need to spend more money on the surface at the Rowden end.

One interesting piece of evidence was in M Lloyd Baker *The Story of Uley* (n.d. [1935?]) On page 34: "The other old road out of Uley in that direction was that which went by Elcombe, and up through the wood to Bowcote. This was known as the "coach road", and the wood was called the "coach wood". My ancestor used it when he first came to Stoutshill, when going to Petty Sessions at Wotton; he was very fond of driving four in hand. Perhaps it was rather easier than the Owlpen lane. There were many more houses along the Elcombe road 150 years ago than there are now, probably because it was one of the principal highways of Uley. In 1800 it was known as 'the Alley'."



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**Well done PROW team
and Uley Parish Council.**

**We are all quick to
complain so it is really
good to be able to say how
pleased we are about this.**

**If you know someone keen
on historical research,
maybe they would like to
look into some other lost
roads**

AGM and BIG BRIDLEWAY+ BLITZ

AGM - We are holding the AGM at **The Royal William, Cranham** **Weds Sept 25th at 7.30 p.m.**

The existing committee are all willing to stand again, but we would welcome additional committee members if anyone would like to join us. We meet approx 6 times a year. Contact Pat if you would like to chat about it.

The standing Committee is:

Chair: Pat Harris. Secretary: Sue Ellis. Treasurer: Katrina Thacker.
web : Steve Radcliffe. Essential others: Jo Bird, Jane Moss and Emma Chandler

the AGM will be followed at 8.00 p.m. by an open event:

BIG BRIDLEWAY+ BLITZ

part 1 - A TALK BY JOHN LANE **of Gloucestershire's Public Rights of Way Department.**

Riders are invited to hear John explain about our tracks and their different categories and problems, how the PROW department functions, and how we can help* The PROW department has faced dramatic cuts to its staff and funding over the last few years, and we need to show how important the department is to us and our equine businesses. The walkers and cyclists seem to have had the louder voices in the past, and we now need to get together and show that we are also a group who can work together to make a difference.

part 2 - MAP MARKING

After the talk, MCTTG will have tables with maps of the area, and we want you to come and mark up the maps to show the tracks as either:

GOOD / USABLE BUT NEED IMPROVEMENT / AWFUL

to give us and PROW a good overview of the problems, and to look at ways we can join tracks to make safer off-road riding.

We are also inviting the Parish Councils to send representatives to the talk and to look at maps with their local riders, and with a broader view of looking at the tracks of their neighbouring villages, to see if more can be done to improve off-road access.

If you think you can come please let me know, midcotswoldtrails@gmail.com and bring your rider friends with you.

The evening is being sponsored by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, and MCTTG thanks them for their support. Coffee/tea will be available during the map marking. Food can be ordered for serving at about 9.

***See the following page for a report on a project that featured co-operative working and funding on a local track.**

Want better bridleways ? Help us to get them !

A co-operative project ...

Pat has completed a report on a community project to improve the surface of a local track that involved villagers, two Parish Councils, Highways, the Public Rights of Way Department, a local school, two house building companies and a community grant.

The report on Marsh Lane improvements is linked from midcotswoldtrails.co.uk web site, but here are a few notes on how it all came about.

To help or not to help (from Pat)

There has been much debate over the idea of local fund-raising for track surfaces, as it is actually the statutory duty of county councils to look after them. Gates are the legal responsibility of the landowner, so raising monies for gates is a slightly different thing. Originally the British Horse Society thought that offering to fund-raise for the council was not the best approach, and that people should serve notice on councils to get them to recognising the issue of poor tracks, and force them into paying for improvements. There have been instances of community fund-raising for surfaces, but often these were for new tracks, or for tracks to be incorporated into longer, recognised Trails. When I contacted the Highways about Marsh Lane, I was told that they fully agreed it needed doing, and that they would add it to the list, but that they worked on a priority system, and it was unlikely that it would ever have more priority points than mending potholes or dealing with town paving etc., let alone the major highway projects.

I contacted the British Horse Society Access Department to ask their opinion, and was told to "have a go" as a community project, if I thought it would mean getting a track improved. It took four years, but it has been done, and has been a bit of a learning curve for all involved. Whilst this is only one of several improvement projects that I have heard of around the country, it has helped to widen the debate on self-help in general. BHS are now publicising the idea of community co-operative fund-raising as one way to get track surfaces improved. Quote from Mark Weston (BHS Director of Access) says *"This is a fantastic achievement. Many thanks to everyone who was involved for all of the hours of hard work and perseverance that has achieved this great outcome. I will ensure that we publicise this so that others can see that what might seem like insurmountable issues can be overcome, especially with some partnership working."*



Partnership Working

I am told that the whole Gloucestershire Highways/Public Rights of Way department is out to tender for the new contract starting next spring, and that developing use of volunteers, community groups and self-help schemes will be part of the requirement for the successful company, so it is to riders' advantage to be on-board with this via MCTTG or as part of other local community groups, if we want to get our tracks improved. It is with this in mind that we have organised the talk from John Lane of the Rights of Way department, who will explain the issues of our tracks, and ways that we can work together.

Input from Riders is essential

MCTTG knows that many bridleways need improvements to make them safer, but we need to show the County Council that riders are a very large group of track users, and we need you to come and mark up the maps of your areas to prove the point. When I mentioned a local track to a District Councillor a little while ago, I was astonished to get the reply ... "but there are only two horses in the village." Riders often seem to be a bit of an overlooked section compared to walkers and cyclists.

Some other items and problems ...

RAMBLERS REPORT ON THE REDUCTION OF FUNDING FOR RIGHTS OF WAY IN ENGLAND (for period 2009-2012)

The Ramblers have prepared an report on the budget cuts, with excellent arguments for it being a bad thing in general, and some specific percentages cited. Gloucestershire is listed fourth in the "worst cuts" list, funding being cut by a third in the 2009 -12 period, axing £337,904 from the budget, and staff cuts of 45%. The report is available via a link at midcotswoldtrails.org.uk or by searching the internet using the title above.

SI 0075 New Cattle Grid gates for Minch and Rodborough commons. There was a public enquiry to look at the proposed gate at Swells Hill, but we have not heard the result yet.

SI 048 Sandpits Lane, Randwick. A large machinery access gate has been put across the bridleway (although horses can get round it by the hedge), and the track has deteriorated as the surface is now large chunks of stone, and horses are using the field instead. Randwick Parish Council has been alerted to the possibility that future remedial action might become necessary. Sue is monitoring this.

SI 051 Steanbridge, Painswick. Two stiles are obstructing the northern track here, and several more are on the southern track. MCTTG is looking to try to reopen the northern track as a first step. There are complicating issues of it having been obstructed for a considerable time, and it also being a Restricted Byway. The Carriage Drivers Association have been consulted, and do not object to bridleway gates going in at the present time, as long as there is no attempt to down-grade the track, as it may be possible to improve to its proper status in the future. There is some local opposition to it being re-opened to horses, but we are looking at see if we can get any supporting funding from others towards replacing the stiles with gates. We have set aside £200 of the £800 needed for gates and latches (ex VAT), and the PROW department would project manage and install if the monies for the items could be found. If you would like to donate or organise a fund-raiser for this project please contact us. Getting this track re-opened would be a very worthwhile thing. If Painswick Parish Council would consider actually purchasing the gates, (with money from whatever fundraising we manage) they would be in a position to reclaim the VAT, as Rodborough and King's Stanley have done when working with us.

SI 056 We have been notified of a bad gate at OS 854:994 near Nailsworth. Could anyone get a photo of this and give a couple of sentences on the problem ? Would also need to know who the landowner is so we can contact them and see if they will work with us.

SI 057 Badgers Wood/Cowcombe OS 898:021 We are told that logging activities have damaged some parts of the bridleway. Can anyone get some photos and describe the problems ?

SI 060 (Coaley) and **SI 059** (Alderley) MCTTG were recently alerted to a safety problem on two sections of public rights of way. One stretch is bridleway which forms part of the long-distance trail, the Monarch Way, as well as the long-distance walk, the Cotswold Way. The other is Finger Lane, at the back of Coaley Peak.

Both have recently been resurfaced by Gloucestershire's Highways Dept using reclaimed builders' materials as a sub-base. Unfortunately, pieces of metal, sharp-edged ceramic and roofing tiles and glass have remained on the top surface. The material was either not screened properly, or was not covered by an appropriate top surface. Some remedial action has been taken, but more needs to be done as there is still glass in evidence on the track.

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Already one horse has cut its foot on glass shards. Walkers including children and dogs and cyclists (and their bicycles!) are also vulnerable on these multi-user trails. The local parish councils are also concerned about the situation.

We fully appreciate the difficulties local authorities, their Highways and Public Rights of Way Departments, are under in these times of financial constraint and know how much cheaper this kind of material is. We endorse their commitment to sustainability and care for the environment and the use of recycled materials, avoiding the use for landfill. Gloucestershire's Rights of Way team and Highways Department have always been extremely helpful to us and we have enjoyed a good working relationship with them. However, we feel we have reached an impasse on this occasion.

With all these things in mind, we are writing to local councillors about the problem. Can you help us take it further? Have you experienced any similar issues recently, on these or other tracks? Please let us know.



Glass in the hardcore at Alderley before the topping was added



Glass picked up from the surface at Coaley **after** the topping was added

There are a few more subjects to discuss, and I will try to get a bit more out to you all in a few weeks time, but if you want to chat about anything go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mid-Cotswold-Tracks-Trails-Group/163988567007928?ref=hl> and join in the conversations.
Pat. 01453 823841