

THE CHURN VALLEY CYCLE GROUP MULTI-USER PROJECT



The CVCG formed in 2009 for the purpose of reclaiming a three mile length of bridleway and restricted byway between North Cerney and the edge of Cirencester. The PRowWs follow the line of the River Churn along the valley, and used to be the highway into Cirencester; but the route was prone to flooding, and early in the C19, the Manors of Cowley, Colesbourne, and Rendcomb jointly employed Thomas Telford to construct a new road – now the A 435, which was above the flood plain, though had the effect of cutting off most off North Cerney village from its parish church.

The CVCG envisaged that the PRowWs could provide a safer route to Cirencester for walkers mountain bikers and riders, but they had not been properly maintained, could really only be used by walkers, and so needed attention!

Lois, representing MCTTG, attended the Group's monthly meetings from the summer of 2009, went to discuss the project with one of the tenant farmers, and in January 2010, participated in a Group walkover together with Mike Barton, GCC PRowW Officer, to identify work needed. The list was long – installation of several new gates and some existing gates re-hung, a lot of cutting back of overgrown hedges, some very muddy sections to be scraped, a new French drain to be installed, a fallen tree to be cleared, a lot of barbed wire to be made safe, an electric fence to be moved, and waymarking.

The Group started fund-raising for the improvements, and later in 2010, Mike Barton's contractor started on the heavier work.

In August 2011, Lois was invited to bring Lakin on another 'walkover' to review work so far – here they are pictured on the route with Paul Hodgkinson, Group Chair and District Councillor on his mountain bike, and Jane, Sam, and Andy, three members of the Group.

The new gates are lovely! – proper two-way opening bridleway gates with rider-friendly handles. Many other small but important improvements have been done: electric fencing has been removed; Mike Barton of Glos County Council Rights of Way Department has waymarked the route, and rectified the worst instance of protruding barbed wire, and is looking at the problem of a bank which prevents one gate being opened wide enough for safe passage by horses.

The Group hopes to fund their own waymarks to indicate their input along this route, and Lois led a work party of volunteers to do some clearance in autumn 2011.

If anyone would like to make a donation to this project, please contact Paul at paul.hodgkinson1@virgin.net