



LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND BRIDLEWAYS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

No 84 September 2015

LAST LRBA RIDES OF THE SEASON

Sun 13 Sept *Nene Valley* nr Peterborough. 8, 12 or 14 miles, mainly off-road, through fords, on bridleways + private farmland. Parking in Ferry Meadows with catering, toilets & activities for non-riders. Entries to Anne Grange, 1 Nene Way, Sutton, P'boro' PE5 7XB Tel: 07824 357616 or email beanies_bits@hotmail.com

Sat 10 Oct *Conkers Discovery* nr Moira in the Heart of the National Forest, using the *Conkers Circuit*, new + old BWs, *Ashby Woulds Trail*, some roads. Just 25 parking spaces so advance entry only. Entries to Lynne Pass, 274 Burton Road, Overseal, Swadlincote DE12 6JN. Tel: 01283 760353 or 07581 652303

All riders must be LRBA members before starting the Ride. Membership + Ride Fee £15. Joining at *Conkers* gives membership to end 2016. Forms for entry+membership can be downloaded from www.bridleways.com along with our *Rides: Information & Rules 2015*.

Sat 17 Oct Endurance GB Leics & Rutland Group. **Charnwood Forest Pleasure Ride**, 6, 8, 12 miles. Non-members £15; entry forms from www.lregb.co.uk. Entries to Sheila Creasey, 47 Edendale Rd, Melton Mowbray LE13 0EW by Tues 13 Oct please. Parking fee of £2.50 payable to enter venue. Further info from Katy Williams 07713 150512 or katyinhathern@hotmail.co.uk

Looking Forward to 2016 & our 25th Anniversary

Yes, we're nearly 25! We're hoping to put on a sparkling programme of events to celebrate 25 years of making more bridleways (BW) and better ones and getting them better known. We'd like your ideas – and your help – in putting on a varied programme. Already booked is another *Little Field of Horrors* event for July. We've thought of reviving some of our 'lost' Rides but before we can put them in a programme, route checking – mounted or on foot - is needed. Could you do this in the next few months? Or perhaps put on a social event for us?

Your ideas for events, please, by 26 September as the Exec is having a special meeting to get on with planning for 2016. Your offers of help with routes or running a Ride as soon as possible. We're having a Ride Organisers meeting on Sunday 25 October and we'd love you to join us

Cars no longer blocking bridleway

“Just a quick thank you for dealing with the issue. Two bollards have been installed to stop cars parking in the gateway and the soil banks which restrict the gates from opening fully have been cut back. Local horse riders can now enjoy accessing this bridleway with ease. Thank you very much. This is greatly appreciated.”
HJ, Shepshed

The story began – or rather came to a head – early last summer when the member complained to us about persistent car parking in the mouth of one of the only two local BWs. Speech, notes on windscreens, whatever ... nothing would make the offenders go somewhere else.

This, we said, is about obstructing highways. The road is a highway, and in strict law a parked car is an obstruction. And a BW is a highway, which is also being obstructed by the car. So you need to speak to the Highways Dept about the obstructed highways. They will have to decide what can be done to stop the cars parking obstructively.

The difficulties with the gates are also obstructions but probably need to be dealt with by the Rights of Way Inspectors, who are also based in Highways.

Highways come under the county council and Leics has a good system for reporting highway problems – either by phone or online. The Customer Services Team acknowledged the complaint (although describing it as an “enquiry”) on 13 June.

So it’s taken 9 months for the problem to get sorted, but you no longer send a guy out with a spade and a couple of thick poles to put some “fancy bollards” in. It’s now much more scientific and doubtless has to meet pages of rules and regulations. But it obviously works.

And HJ completed the virtuous circle by thanking them (*above*) for their efforts. Goodwill all round. (Except, presumably, from the dislodged doggie walkers.)

Condition of Unsealed Roads

The Leics Local Access Forum recently had a presentation from Mike Sheldrake, a senior highways engineer, on the county’s unsealed roads. There are 261 routes totalling 269km. The routes are not routinely inspected so rely on the public to report problems. Apparently 137 km are in adequate condition; 71 km ‘deteriorating’ i.e. needing minor repairs, and 61 km in poor condition.

Full depth reconstruction of these 61km would cost £25k to £50k per km to provide just a 3 metre width. So £1.5M to £3M to do them all. Some routes will be much wider than 3metres and if it’s found drainage improvements are needed as well, there is no limit to cost.

A Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) to close a route, say in the winter to stop the most damaging use, costs £800-£5,000. TTROs are only used by LCC to undertake maintenance or where there’s significant danger to users. Seasonal TTROs to prevent winter damage by motors are difficult to enforce and any structures that allow horses also admit motor bikes.

LRBA/BHS would object to winter closures that excluded riders as this is when we most need to get off the sealed roads. Unfortunately any Order that excludes motors from these fragile routes will also exclude carriage drivers unless special local provisions are made for individual drivers.

Unsealed roads are the majority of routes shown on OS maps as Other Routes with Public Access (ORPAs). There are odd ones all over the county but useful groups E of Melton, S of Countesthorpe and in the Sheepy area to the W. Expand your riding routes by using them.

Leics has just over 600km of BWs and byways. The 269km of ORPAs are a significant addition.

Will your hat or body protector save your life?

Did you know that we happy hackers should be wearing the same level of hats and body protectors as eventers?

How long have you had your hat or body protector? Can't remember? Materials degrade with time. Your hat gets dropped or knocked. Did your head actually hit the ground the last time you fell off? Was its protection damaged? *So will it save you next time?*

Have you checked the standards labels recently? If you do, you may be surprised at how old the standard, or standards, they meet are. Since then, new materials have come in, designs have improved. Why are you not doing your utmost to stay alive?

LRBA has been doing hat (and body protector where worn) checks at some Rides this year and has had to tell quite a few people that their hat or protector standards are wildly out of date and they should rapidly buy a new hat or protector.

A widely-used British Standard for 'equestrian helmets' has just lapsed and been superseded by a new one (see below). BSEN 1384 and EN1384 are no longer being batch-tested by the British Standards Institute so hats bearing *only* this standard will no longer be acceptable for many events. This is a shame for members who've bought 1384-only hats quite recently but the lapsing of the standard does not make that new hat any less protective than it was, so don't ditch it right now. Just think about buying a new one rather sooner than otherwise.

Our *Ride Rules* require entrants to wear riding hats to current BHS-acceptable standards. The BHS will accept 1384-only hats for its exams and affiliated riding club events until 1 Jan 2016. But some other bodies are giving an extra year and LRBA has decided to follow suit. **After 1 January 2017 1384 only hats will not be acceptable at our Rides if we do a hat check.**

The following hat standards remain acceptable – but note the year dates. Older dates attached to the standard are not acceptable. A hat bearing any of these *as well as* 1384 is OK.

PAS 015 (2011) SNELL E2001 ASTM F1163 (2004a) AS/NZ 3838 (2006)

The new British Standard is VG1. A *very* recently bought hat to this standard only had it on a swing ticket (stating VG1 01.040 2014-12) and not on the label in the hat. If this happens to you save both the swing ticket and the receipt so you can provide proof it meets VG1.

BODY PROTECTORS at BETA Level 3 2009 with the Purple label and to a minimum standard of EN1318 are recommended for hacking as well as being the standard required for many competitions. The 2001 standard has been superseded and any protector bearing this label is likely to have suffered significant degradation to its structure in the years since.

Unbiased info on body protectors can be found on the joint BETA-BHS website if you Google 'body protectors for horse riders'

Both hats and body protectors should be professionally fitted. The hat may need extra padding to ensure it stays firm on your head in the correct position and being allowed to wear it for a short while helps make sure it's comfortable.

Some riders may need to try several products before finding a hat that's right for them. Touring manufacturers' stands at eg *Your Horse Live* or Burghley (3-6 Sept 2015) allows you to 'test-wear' and get size/fitting advice from their experts to pass on to your retailer.

Members who've "suffered" from our hat/protector inspections have said how useful it's been to have the matter brought to their attention, even if they've been given bad news.

From 50 years ago - could this be our future???

The *Archives* column of the *Loughborough Echo* produced this gem from 1965:

“A request from Newtown Linford Parish Council to Leicestershire County Council to cut the grass verges in the parish at regular intervals was refused. A letter from the county council stated that it was not the responsibility of the council to cut grass verges which were in most cases the property of adjacent owners who in the old days grazed their cattle on them.

The letter added that the department had some 600 miles of grass verge with only some £1,664 to do the work.”

The days of grazed verges were obviously a distant memory even then. Impossible to think of now with all the traffic and its fumes, not to mention possible theft, “bio-security” issues etc etc.

But could the council – in search of cuts – return to the “*not our problem*” stance? Only being responsible for mowing a fraction of the highway verges?

Some farmers do a wonderful job of mowing their verge and it’s a joy to ride these which are often kept clear of intrusive hawthorn and blackthorn in the process. But many other landholders don’t – for a variety of reasons. Could *YOU* cope with verge mowing if there was a road outside your paddock?

It could happen. The *Echo*’s Letters Page has been full of complaints about infrequent mowing, eliciting a “*mow your own*” response (not from the council).

On the Funny Side of Life:

I appear to have lost my membership card. I think it’s been washed.

On the Not So Funny Side – have just received an explanation of the short lever handles Leics CC will put on bridle gates. Instead of sticking up above the gate (which can create its own problems with “the knitting”) these finish below the top of the gate. So are absolutely impossible if you’re on a tall horse and approaching from uphill. Apparently these are “*normal County Council specification (see standard drawing www.leics.gov.uk/sdftp10_rev_a.pdf) because livestock can knock a long handle and open the gate. Obviously that doesn’t apply at this particular location [arable field, Ed]. However, budget projections mean that there is no guarantee that this sort of improvement [a long handle installed instead] will be affordable in the future.*” Apparently a few farmers have also objected, on the same grounds, to the “trombone handle” version where a very long handle is curved over just above the top of the gate, thus eliminating the “knitting” problem whilst making it possible for all of us to operate it.

More Unfunny News A Leics RoW Officer reports that his budget was cut by 23% in 2014/15 and faces another 20%+ cut this year. So he has half the funds he had two years ago. Priorities will be *essential* maintenance tasks such as lost bridges. Everything else is in a queue. This doesn’t mean we should stop reporting things – some ‘easy’ items e.g replacement of missing road-side signposts – are likely to get done. And the more reports of a problem, the higher up the To Do List it will get. Just don’t expect instant action or ask “how long?”

Woodhouse Eaves – Meadow Rd track put on to List of Streets rather than Definitive Map following our claim for it to have BW status (see Sept 2014 Newsletter). This makes it a Highway Maintainable at Public Expense and Leics CC say “it is generally assumed that routes on the list are all-purpose highways unless there is a physical restriction”. LRBA is not totally happy about this and the lengthy LRBA/LCC email exchange has been sent to BHS for their opinion.

Rides Report

In spite of a rather nervous pre-Ride period for our first, *Hambleton Bluebells*, Ride in case the rather fragile verges got *too* soft, the weather this summer has been kind to us. No stinkingly hot days, nor remnants of hurricanes have visited us and made riding far short of blissful. In fact, a reasonably constant but moderate supply of rain seems to have kept the going good all the time.

Unable to find hoped-for off-road parking, Roger Linford and Alex Pyper (our new Organisers for **Hambleton**) decided to revert to parking on the verge used since this – one of our oldest Rides- started. This meant a severe limit on vehicle numbers and one or two tricky moments with the larger boxes as well as riding the mile of road to and from the 5 miles of peninsula track.

For the first time in memory we had to dial 999 for an ambulance when a horse spooked and dumped its rider at the far end of the peninsula. Not quite sure why call centres find rural call outs so difficult. Demands for a post code for a field or, worse still, a grid reference, do not help the stress levels in said field! Any post code for the venue could also be totally misleading. But it happened that the Air Ambulance was listening in and, now that E Midlands Air Ambulances are all based at Coventry Airport, they rather fancied a visit to Rutland Water which this crew had never flown to before. Our casualty was, in the end, transported by car to the village and then road ambulanced away for a precautionary x-ray. See also page 9.

Charnwood Forest 4 days later, has come back as we now feel the new gates on Broombriggs Farm are safe. A pity there's so many of them. We were able to use some private and permissive tracks that made the main route virtually road free except for crossings – something local riders only get if they stick solely to the 2 pairs of country parks we linked. The small area into which we crammed a lot of riding meant switching between 3 sets of official marking and some difficulty if you needed specs to read maps. Our orange spray is not very welcome in such picturesque areas, so we also used pin-up signs, a crucial one of which got 'lost'. Sorry if you got confused but...

The late May bank/half term holiday was a good time to schedule our first **Free Starter Ride** at Hicks Lodge in the National Forest. The idea is to give riders afraid to venture out of the school a first taste of "out in the open" riding, or to increase their confidence. The 8 entrants were a mix of children and adults. The horses included one that had just done Badminton. You get all sorts! The route included the so-new-the-signing-wasn't-yet-right permissive tracks in the Forestry Commission's Shellbrook Wood (beside which we were parked), and the new-ish BWs in Hicks Lodge on the other side of the road. And we did our first *Hat and Body Protector Standards* check – with slightly appalling results (see page 3) – rather than the planned map-reading.

At **Prestwold** on 16 June we experimented with stiff orange L, R and B letters for drivers to *stick* on their windscreens to tell us whether they unloaded on the Left, Right or at the Back, following a comment by our parking steward at Charnwood that this info would have been helpful. Most drivers had the signs to hand, if not stuck where they could be seen by the greeter/parking steward. Windscreen top L is Good (nr the pavement). Expect these at future Rides with awkward parking – which *will* mean early booking as the letters have to be *posted*. Following another hat/protector inspection everyone enjoyed a lovely evening's ride, helped by the excellent marking by Viv and Ivor Isaacs, who'd done it from horseback over the previous week.

Exton Estate is advertised at 10 miles, but a member with one of those "app" things told us it's actually just over 11 miles. So it will seem longer next time it's done. Again, a very popular Ride as, in spite of the number of BWs on the Estate, they don't make very long circuits without the extra lengths we get permission to use for the day. Sue is to be congratulated on her

Organising skills as the daughter who was her main helper got her holiday re-scheduled 2 days earlier after the Tunisian bombings and was already abroad on 4 July.

Wartnaby, with a new parking area at the same venue which required extra stewarding (thanks everyone), was also held on a lovely summer evening and went well. Yet another hat/protector inspection produced the same rather mixed results but everyone is grateful to have the opportunity to discuss these vital safety issues. The post-Ride sarnies went down very well too.

The **Skeffington Ride** admittedly uses some 'challenging' terrain in High Leicestershire and some of those who did the short, 9 mile, route felt it was a long 9 miles. (We need to get the "app" on it!). The 13 mile route has lots of gates, a downside of the lovely pasture country in east Leics. The 15 milers enjoyed the sometimes unpredictable ford, and the general feedback was "*Beautiful Ride. Loved doing it. Fantastic views.*" In spite of early inspection and reports to LCC's RoW Dept, various problems had not been 'sorted' by 19 July and our helpers had to spend a considerable time trying to clear vegetation etc whilst marking the route. The steep step up at the gate of the first BW onto the A47 and the bridge and boggy areas in the wood N of Billesdon Lodge Farm had been reported and entrants were encouraged to also report these to highwayscustomerservices@leics.gov.uk so the number of complaints would move them up the To Do List.

All the riders made 2 crossings of the A47 and at one crossing a horse got badly spooked by a large truck carrying a large machine covered with a huge sheet of poorly secured billowing and flapping plastic and closely followed by another towing a caravan. No wonder the horse took off down the road. The rider did very well to control it but was not helped by the behaviour of the 2 vehicles which sped eastwards overtaking the frightened horse. Thankfully the other traffic stopped allowing the rider, her companions and our marshals to get everything under control so everyone could continue.

The **Gretton Ride** – another of our long-serving venues – on Sunday 16 August went off well, thanks largely to the equally long-standing permissive routes on the Bulwick Estate which link up the BWs.

The event was marred by encounters with a local lady who complained by email: *I met 3 groups of riders, none of which gave me as a walker a respectful space on the pathway. I was forced by each group to move out of their way, none of them made any attempt to give me room and walking through a group of 3-5 riders I found intimidating and totally disrespectful. In the last group the woman at the back almost walked into me on her horse and when I challenged her was berated by the whole group. She also incorrectly told me it was a bridleway [the rider was right, none of our route used footpaths] ...walking through the crop field I was forced to step aside to allow the riders through without any acknowledgement and the arrogant attitude was completely unnecessary.*

Whatever the rights and wrongs of what actually happened, it is *essential* that riders *always* act with as much consideration and courtesy as possible, remembering that both walkers and riders have equal rights to use BWs and that the strong (that's us) should give way to the weak (them). Just because it's an organised event, the route is not cleared specially for riders and our *Bridleways Code* has to be followed just as if you were on an ordinary hack. Although we've done our best to make peace with the lady, she is likely to dislike and resent riders for a long time to come. Heaven help us if she gets to be a local council member!

If any of the members involved would like to give their side of the story, please use the email address at the bottom of the back page.

B I T S

The Shoby to Ragdale BW (H28) has had its diversion Confirmed where it goes round the farm buildings not far from the Shoby end. Coming from Shoby, down the farm drive, it now turns sharp R just before the farm yard, to go round the field edge to where it crosses the brook. The BW is to be a 5m wide grassy strip and there will be just 1 bridle gate on the new route. H28 is joined by BW H29 from Hoby to cross the A6006. H29 is part of the *Midshires Way* which continues north through Shoby and Grimston to Old Dalby and Nottinghamshire.

The BHS reports a **serious spike in horse/dog incidents**. 39 incidents were reported in March, 35% more than the previous total of 29 in May 2014 and three times the number reported in March 2014. The www.horseaccidents.org.uk website has been running since 2010 and it seems that March to May is regularly the period when the highest number of incidents occurs. Sheila Hardy at BHS says: *We will be monitoring the situation to see whether this is an isolated spike or the beginning of an upward trend in the number of dog attacks on horses.* She advises riders to socialise their horse to dogs, to walk slowly past dogs and communicate with the owner, give dogs that seem nervous a wide berth and to stop to allow an excited dog to be caught. All good common sense advice which LRBA members are likely to be following already.

'Cuts' are affecting RoW Problem Response Times. A recent complaint by a member to Leics County Council's Customer Services team brought an acknowledgement within 5 days (two of which were a weekend). The complainant was satisfied with this BUT the message, after saying an Inspector would visit and then decide on the most appropriate action, said *"Unfortunately ...we are unable to provide a date when this matter will be resolved but we do expect [not 'promise', Ed.] the Inspector to visit this location within the next 90 working days."* 90 working days is EIGHTEEN WEEKS at least. No wonder the Inspector told

us that, at this rate, he expects to get that Area up to standard by 2076!!!

Carrfields Lane, Frisby on the Wreake carries BW H48. Well, it does now following a Confirmed diversion. Previously the official line lay to the S of the Lane and went through a house and 3 gardens due to an unofficial "realignment" by the builder in 1980.

About the cyclists' bells I agree that bells are best as difficult to hear shouts or polite requests. My horse was completely OK with bikes but I have nearly jumped out of my skin on many occasions when they have overtaken without letting me know they were there. Also on Mill Lane BW Blaby, I once nearly leg yielded into one I didn't know was overtaking. Maybe I should get some wing mirrors for schooling on a hack!
Sharon

Membership figures Our new requirement for all Riders to be LRBA members before they go on a Ride has resulted in more than 90 completely new members and the return of over 20 lapsed members. So our total membership is now over 450. Anyone joining to do the **Conkers Ride** on Sat 10 Oct will, because this is the last Ride of the season, get membership that lasts to the end of 2016.

Planning Team. With new members on our Executive Committee, LRBA has been able to start building a team to deal with planning applications. **Roger Linford** is looking after **Rutland** and **John Coleman** is dealing with **Melton Borough** and has already sent in several responses as reading of the *Melton Times* revealed a number of planning applications which could affect riding. **Vicky Allen**, our Chair, is looking after **Charnwood** in particular and wider issues such as the Leics' county Minerals & Waste Local Plan, but also picking up on other important applications such as the Magna Park extension near Lutterworth. The team is on a steep learning curve – field seminars a speciality – but urgently needs other members to join us, particularly from the W side of Leicestershire.

Mill Lane BW, east of Stamford - Improvement

Fording the river Welland on a hot summer day some years ago was one of the highlights of the LRBA/BHS *Rutland Boundaries Ride* in order to reach the overnight paddocking in Burghley Park. Our forty or fifty horses and riders going through, and playing in, the ford were a great amusement to the Stamford residents picnicking in the meadow by the river. But we were only at that ford because a part of the Mill Lane bridleway was impassable on horseback.

In getting between the A1175 Uffington Road and the B1443 along the northern wall of Burghley Park, the Mill Lane BW crosses – working north to south -

- the disused Welland Canal by an ‘adequate’ bridge
- the River Welland by a ford – but not the one we used – or a narrow footbridge
- a disused railway which now carries the Torpel Way walking route, and
- the Stamford to Peterborough railway by a level crossing

Plenty of scope for various structures to fall into disrepair, be mended or replaced inappropriately LRBA/BHS have been working before and since to get this short but useful BW back into use.

We started with the level crossing so no other landowner could refuse to do their share whilst the crossing was unsafe/unusable, as it was when first checked some years back. This was the easiest, Network Rail being mindful of its legal responsibilities, the need for safety and to get level-crossing users off the rails as quickly as possible. They have now put a non-slip ‘carpet’ over the crossing and also reduced the gaps between rails and boards so it’s no longer possible for a small pony foot to ‘point’ its way in and get stuck. The gates open away from the track (only) and have no catches to delay anyone.

Janet Benskin, Master of the Route, Revels and Everything Else to the 2006-2010 *Boundaries Rides* recently walked the BW and found the gate between stock field and level crossing no longer locked, Lincs CC having persuaded the Burghley Estate that it was an illegal obstruction.

Your Chair happened to be in Stamford in July and found the ‘adequate’ bridge had a gate that stuck firmly - in spite of being catch-less - and would not be open-able from horseback. The bridge approaches were also eroding, particularly at the gate end, with ‘steps’ developing. So Lincs CC have been asked to unstick the sticky gate and put concrete slopes at each end of this bridge. AND to remove the heavy chain + weight which makes bad worse. Their senior RoW officer promises an early visit.

Then, either the ford needs repairing or its narrow footbridge replacing with a BW-standard bridge. Either is inevitably a “long term plan”. Meanwhile the BW *is* open to the brave and cautious. Some riders used to use the footbridge, so perhaps they or other brave souls with trusty horses can re-learn how to do it, and then teach others. The Rutland and S Lincs Local Access Forum has been most helpful in getting things this far.

Ride Posters Distribution Check

We’ve been sending out letters to members who distribute our posters in order to get our list up to date and minimise duplications. The last set of posters and letters is going out with this *Newsletter* and we’re looking forward to having a more effective list for 2016. Thanks to all distributors, especially those who’ve replied and offered suggestions for other poster sites, or types of site, we might target and the answers about timing, poster size etc were most helpful. Next year we’re going to try to get the posters out a little earlier so that more potential riders have more time to see them before Late Entry fees kick in. For poster distributors who didn’t reply, there’ll be another chance when your Renewal Form comes with our next *Newsletter*.

Can your horse get home without you?

If you fell off at a Ride and ended up in hospital, what would happen to your horse? If you're the only person who can drive your vehicle there is *A BIG PROBLEM*.

Organisers can't be expected to magic up a safe place overnight for a horse and a vehicle – often they're as far away from home as you are.

- Do you have a plan in place? Or are you just hoping it'll be OK on the night?
- It's not just about competence and willingness to help. The complicated rules about towing or driving vehicles above a certain tonnage, which of SIX possible classes of licence might apply (if you've taken the right tests), "grandfather" towing rights (or not), insurance cover – yours and theirs, age-related restrictions etc etc, could make it difficult to find a driver amongst stewards and helpers, no matter how willing.
- And if we could, would they know where to take your horse? We only have your house address on the Entry Form.

All these problems began to raise their ugly heads when, for the first time ever, the Air Ambulance was summoned to one of our Rides. A rider fell off when her horse spooked at the far end of the Hambleton peninsula. Eventually she went to hospital by land ambulance for a precautionary x-ray, leaving the mount to be taken back to the parking area – on the verge of the rather busy Hambleton Road. Not the best spot for the worst of scenarios.

Luckily she lived locally and a phone call brought a knight to the rescue. But what if there'd been no knight waiting for the call?

On the entry form LRBA asks for a home telephone number, stipulating (in brackets) "*and contact for lone rider in emergency*". This is the number we'd use to summon the "knight" to your rescue. Would it work? Is there a knight there? A competent, fully-insured knight? Can they deliver the horse back to its stable/field?

And there are "minor" issues such as the keys to your vehicle. If they're in hospital with you, it can't be moved. It would have been very vulnerable if it had had to be left beside the Hambleton Road all night. And for an evening Ride there's less time to sort things out in daylight.

Please think it all through and come to a Ride with a fully worked out Plan B. It might be helpful to write out the details of your Plan B on the back of your Entry Form. Or to have your chauffeur/knight with you.

And our injured lady at Hambleton? The x-ray showed no bones broken and she turned up as a most welcome Ride steward four days later. Let's hope it ends up as well for everyone else.

Changes to our Executive Committee

At our AGM in April **Anne John stood down** after many years of running Rides, attending and taking the notes of Greater (now East) Harborough Area Meetings, and helping in many other ways. A garden gift token was presented to her in appreciation. **John Coleman** from Hoby was elected to the Committee and is now part of our embryo Planning Team (see *BITS*). Since the AGM **Janet Benskin**, known to many of us for organising Rides plus the *Boundaries Rides 2006-2010* and being an assiduous attender at Greater Harborough Area Meetings, and **Lynne Pass** from Overseal, Organiser of several Rides in that area, have also joined the Committee. The full Exec list is on the enclosed *Contacts* sheet. As you will note, we could do with someone from Hinckley & Bosworth Borough to 'complete the set'.

Dealing with Problems on Bridleways, Byways and unsealed county roads

Funding cuts are biting. All Public Rights of Way (PRoW) departments have reduced budgets and many PRoW Officers are working part-time.

We want them to spend their time looking at and solving the problems, not sitting in offices sorting out paperwork or taking telephone calls. So *they prefer* us to report by email or online which can also automatically record the complaint and set a deadline for dealing with it.

There is no system for frequently inspecting PRoW. Reporting problems is up to the users.

Many problems for riders are only obvious to riders. Don't expect walkers to notice or report *our* problems e.g low hanging branches they can walk under or rose briars that whip our faces.

What can we do?

Firstly, use our *Bridleway Guidelines* (enclosed) to see if there's a *real* problem for *all* riders – not just for you or your mount. This is public money – so should benefit many not just a few.

Secondly, help ourselves.

- Soft vegetation, whether hanging down or growing up e.g round a gate catch, can be cut if you regularly take secateurs with you when riding or walking the dog. Cut early it will not grow hard to deal with so won't need costly men and machines to get rid of it.
- A small shot of WD40 can work miracles on a sticky gate or its latch. Get spraying!
- Talk to the farmer if you know him – and can keep it friendly.

Lastly, report it.

- Start by making sure you can accurately describe the location of the problem, possibly to someone who "hasn't a clue" about bridleways etc.
- It helps if you know the number of the bridleway or byway – use LRBA reports to record on to your OS maps the numbers of local BWs and byways.
Leicestershire, Rutland and Lincolnshire county councils have online mapping in the RoW sections of their websites. Click on the path to get the identifier for that route. Some other counties have released their RoW mapping info to www.rowmaps.com
Unsealed county roads (UCRs) shown on OS maps with round dots as Other Routes with Public Access (ORPAs) aren't part of the PRoW network *may* have names but not numbers.
- In **Leicestershire**, for problems on BWs, byways, or UCRs/ORPAs use either:
 - 0116 305 0001 – the Highways call centre (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
 - E mail highwayscustomerservices@leics.gov.uk
 - Online – www.leics.gov.uk/paths and find Report a Problem. Preferred by RoW Officers as you are able to pinpoint the location (so they know which is the best way to the grotty gate etc). This mapping includes the unsealed county roads.
- For problems in **Leicester City** use:
 - www.leicester.gov.uk/contact-us/report-something or
 - Email customer.services@leicester.gov.uk or
 - Tel 0116 454 1000 (General Enquiries)
- For problems in **Rutland** use:
 - Email to rightsofway@rutland.gov.uk or
 - Do It Online from the www.rutland.gov.uk Home page, for an all-purpose form. Or
 - phone customer services on 01572 722577.

Or you can send the council a letter – with a map showing the spot(s)

RUBBISH dumped in bridleways/byways – report to cleansing departments at the relevant district council (which includes Rutland County and Leicester City)

We have just 10 years to claim historic bridleways – or lose them Deregulation Act will bring in “2026 cut-off”

The “2026 cut-off” means that any pre-1949 walking, riding or carriage-driving rights that are not claimed by 31 December 2025 will be permanently lost. So something that was believed to be a public BW or carriage way but is on the Definitive Map (DM) as a footpath will remain just a footpath. Or completely lost if it is not on the DM at all.

Enacted in the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, and existing since then as a looming threat, the cut-off will become ‘live’ when the relevant parts of the Deregulation Act 2015 go ‘live’, probably next spring. As a *quid pro quo* for the cut off (mainly wanted by landowners) the Act contains a number of clauses meant to simplify procedures around the DM. This is meant to make life easier for rights’ claimants and for the Rights of Way (RoW) officers in county councils etc who process their claims.

A Stakeholder Working Group of landholders, user groups and RoW officers had many meetings looking at DM problems but could only put forward items on which all sides were agreed. Not an easy task, so perhaps no surprise that the final list is ‘procedural’ rather than ‘radical’.

For instance, if LRBA puts in a claim based on historical evidence for a route to become a BW, instead of just registering it the highway authority will have to assess whether it is a well-founded claim, *then* it will register it. And then the authority will trace the landowners and inform them of the claim, a task that currently falls to us. Whilst being very glad to be relieved of the job of contacting landowners (some of whom were likely to react very negatively) both the initial assessment and the contacting are new tasks for the authority at this stage. The theory is that the assessment will weed out spurious claims but in many cases it will lead to lengthy correspondence; in effect a tutorial on making the claim strong enough to be considered.

Unfortunately, we don’t think that highway authorities have, or are likely to have in the next 10 years, the resources to deal with the claims they already have and those that would come in at their present trickle, never mind the likely flood of claims as the deadline approaches. And if the strict wording of the 2000 Act is followed, it seems that the claims should not only be put in but processed i.e. assessed, Orders made, consulted on and Confirmed (often involving a Public Inquiry) by 31 December 2025.

This is manifestly impossible given the reduced staffing in RoW and Legal departments not to mention the delays in getting Public Inquiry dates out of the equally overworked and under-resourced Planning Inspectorate. And we hate to think of what is needed in Leicester City which hasn’t yet got a formal Definitive Map because the 1949 National Parks & Countryside Act, which set up the DM system, exempted it as it was then a county borough.

In spite of this we have to “hedge our bets” and make claims. Look not just for “lost” ways – or rather lost public rights because there is often a physical track – but assess the status of every footpath shown on the DM in case there is any evidence that it might be a BW or even a byway. As little cut-throughs and jitties in towns and villages can be life-savers, we can’t just confine ourselves to those long footpaths that link village to village.

We should be *LOOKING AT EVERYTHING AND WE NEED A SMALL ARMY TO DO IT. HELP! WE COULD IMPROVE OUR RIDING NETWORK OR WE COULD LOSE LARGE CHUNKS OF IT. I know which inheritance I’d rather leave. What do you want to leave?*

If you want to help, please contact us – details on back page – or come to your Area Meeting to see if there are other members wanting to help and whether you could be a team It’s VERY IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHERE YOU RIDE SO WE CAN DEFEND IT

Autumn Area Meetings

Area Meetings are informal and are open to both members and non-members. They concentrate on local routes and members who have offered to be BW Guardians are *needed* at these meetings with up-to-date reports – either good or bad. We will be looking at the effects funding cuts are going to have on BW maintenance. We also discuss planning applications that will/could have an impact – good or bad – on our riding. It is hoped that each Area will come up with commitments to run at least one Ride for 2016 (see page). Please attend and bring a friend.

If you can't attend, use the tel nos shown to give apologies or raise issues. Or to get directions.

NOTE: Melton, Charnwood & Rutland meetings are at new venues.

Tues 22 Sept MELTON 7.30pm Blue Bell Inn, Main St, Hoby LE14 3DT. LRBA tel: 01664 434120

Wed 23 Sept BLABY & HARBOROUGH WEST (of A6) 7.30 -9.30 pm Blaby Civic Centre, 20-24 Leicester Rd, Blaby LE8 4GQ. All local members of LRBA and members BRRA invited. Issues to be discussed include Aylestone Meadows, Gt Central Way riding continuation thru Leicester, Lubbethorpe development, Countesthorpe Country Park update, apparent harassment on BW near Broughton Astley. LRBA tel: 0116 247 8214

Wed 30 Sept CHARNWOOD 7.30- 9.30pm Tesco Community Space, Park Rd, Loughborough LE11 2EX. Take 'Superstore' direction at Park Rd rdbt on the A6004/Epinal Way. Community Space is in the store, straight ahead from entrance, slightly to the R when you reach the back wall. Free refreshments LRBA tel: 01509 215619

Wed 7 Oct HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH 7.30pm. Sutton Cheney Village Hall, Main St (near Hercules Revived pub) CV13 0AG. LRBA tel: 01509 215619

Mon 12 Oct RUTLAND 7.30-10pm Don Paddy's upstairs room, Market Place, Uppingham LE15 9QH. LRBA tel: 01572 722329

Mon 19 Oct NW LEICS 7-9pm Marlene Reid Centre (MRC), Belvoir St, Coalville LE67 3PH. Parking in Marlborough Square or behind Centre. LRBA tel: 01283 760353

Tues 27 Oct HARBOROUGH EAST (of the A6) 7.30pm, Keythorpe Lakes LE7 9EX. Take A47 to Tugby, go thru village and at x-rds go straight ahead. Look for buildings and BW sign on L. Turn L here and go past houses, bearing L and down slope to bungalow. **VENUE TO BE CONFIRMED.** LRBA tel: 0116 271 9721

HOW MUCH DO YOUR HORSES COST YOU A YEAR?

Don't forget we're asking you to record how much – in total – your horses cost in 2015. ALL expenditure; however large, however trivial. We'll be asking for round figures – number of horses, number of Es – at the end of the year.

Keep Counting - as we'll be using the totals to make the case for more BWs in return for how well horse-keeping supports the rural economy.

Leics & Rutland Bridleways Assn, c/o 123 Park Rd, Loughborough LE11 2HD Tel: 01509 215619
www.bridleways.com e-mail: vicky.allen@freeuk.com