

FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEWAY



Winter

2005

NEWSLETTER

RITCHIE'S RAMBLINGS

My head is spinning! I have just read the 104 pages of the "Use of mechanically propelled vehicles on Rights of Way - the government's framework for action". Unless you are a connoisseur of Rights of Way (RoW) law, I recommend you don't do the same!

You may recall that the government published a consultation paper on this subject at the end of 2003. It received over 14000 responses, which it has analysed, considered and now pronounced upon. Here is my summary of the key points in the paper:

Also in Issue 67

Forthcoming Events	p4
Radicalism Rebuffed	p5
A Visit to Sheepdrove Farm	p6
Delights of the AGM	p9
2004 AGM Minutes	p10
Annual Report & Accounts 2004	p12
AGM Agenda	p16

The government will introduce new RoW legislation as soon as it can find parliamentary time

- it will abolish the principle that use of a RoW by a horse and cart centuries ago gives rise to the right for 4x4s and off-road motor bikes to use that route today
- it will encourage the police to use existing legislation to prosecute illegal motor vehicle use on RoW
- it will introduce a new classification of a Restricted Byway, which is a RoW for walkers, cyclists and horse riders but not for mechanically propelled vehicles.

This is good news for those who wish to see curbs on recreational motor vehicle use on green lanes and it is good news for The Ridgeway. Why? Well, it should

- ◆ provide long term protection for those sections of the Trail that are currently classified as footpaths or bridleways, stopping future claims under the 'horse and cart' principle that such sections can be opened up to motor vehicles
- ◆ encourage the police to take a tougher line with vehicle owners who use the Trail illegally, for example without tax and insurance or in contravention of a Traffic Regulation Order
- ◆ clarify the status of those sections of the Trail in West Berkshire and Oxfordshire that are currently classed as Roads Used as Public Paths.

In short, the proposals are another step in the right direction. However, they are deficient in two major respects.

Firstly, it is proposed that there will be a period of grace of one year from the date the new legislation takes effect for claims for vehicle rights under the old 'horse and cart' principle. We forecast a flood of such applications from the vehicle users groups before the law changes, overwhelming the capacity of the local highway authorities to deal with them.

Secondly, the government seeks to change the burden of proof when a motor vehicle user is accused of illegally driving or riding on a RoW. At present the accused driver/rider has to prove that they have a legal right to be using that particular RoW. Amazingly, the government is now saying that this infringes the driver/rider's human rights! They argue that the presumption must be that they are innocent and that it is for the prosecution to prove otherwise! I doubt the same logic would be applied if I were to be caught speeding or driving the wrong way down a one way street!

We will press the government to revise these proposals but to pass the main provisions of the new legislation as quickly as possible.

The Ridgeway is mentioned specifically in the paper and we can take a lot of credit for raising the profile of this issue over the past few years and forcing the government to address it.

Finally, if you are a connoisseur of RoW legislation, you will not be disappointed with the paper. At one point it asks the question 'What size and colour of sign should be used to

mark a Restricted Byway?’ The answer, five pages later, is a purple arrow!

I leave you with my favourite quote, “Two respondents stated that they would like llama and alpaca trekking to be acknowledged in the legislation and their rights to be clarified on Restricted Byways and on Byways Open to All Traffic”. Let me know if you meet them on The Ridgeway.

Ian Ritchie

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday 13th March AGM

Short walk from Goring public CP 10.45

Ldr Peter Gould 0117 9733059

Annual General Meeting Goring Village Hall 2pm

Saturday 7th May Ridgeway Marathon The annual 40 mile challenge from Overton to Streatley. Further details from Alan Smith 3 Harlington Road, Bexleyheath, Kent, DA7 4AS jungledrums@waitrose.com or see the website ridgeway40.org.uk

Wednesday 25th May Visit to Sheepdrove Farm
See page 6

Tuesday 26th July Dr Gary Lock has agreed to show a group of Friends round the Marcham/Frilford excavations.

RADICALISM REBUFFED

In the last newsletter, we presented a novel solution to the surface problem: tarmac the western Ridgeway. None of the members who responded to this article liked the idea. For instance, David Fielding wrote as follows

"Radical Solution? Phew! Where to start and how to keep this short? Firstly, any cost/benefit analysis of Mr. Dunckley's suggestion would preclude any such solution, thank goodness!

"Secondly, a green road is a green road (however much its "colour" may have been disfigured by SUV's), and the prospect of a tarmacadam road (with pavements!), along the Ridgeway making it just one more traffic-clogged route is just appalling. Almost as horrific as Napoleon's proposal to fill in the canals of Venice for boulevards, or Oxford's inner ring road through Christchurch meadows: it would be an act of vandalism which will hopefully never come to pass.

"Access to the Ridgeway for less able walkers is available for cars at several points along it. One of the happiest sights I have seen on the Ridgeway itself was an escorted convoy of electric three wheelers driven by disabled people. They were managing very well without tarmacadam.....but undoubtedly the escort had chosen an undamaged section for their outing!"

Come the AGM, it's up to you to decide otherwise, but the present committee does not favour tar.

Peter Gould

A VISIT TO SHEEPDROVE ORGANIC FARM

By kind permission of Peter & Juliet Kindersley

Date Wednesday 25th May 13.45.

Cost £8.00 per person

Book by 11th May

Meet at the Kindersley Centre at Sheepdrove Farm NE of Lambourn. On the outskirts of the town, at Grid Ref 330792, turn off the B4001 along Sheepdrove Road. Bear left at fork in road. Follow sign to Sheepdrove Organic Farm. At gate, pass thru adjacent dip. At Red Barn go right. Bear right at bend. At sign, go left. Arrive at The Kindersley Centre. Follow signs to Conference Parking

Sheepdrove Farm is situated high on the Berkshire Downs and is an 800 Hectare mixed farm with sheep, beef, poultry and cereals. Peter and Juliet's long term vision has been to create a self-sustaining farm that protects the environment.

The tour gives an overview of organic farming and the wildlife and conservation projects on the farm. It includes the composting operation which processes organic waste from local stables and households, collected by the council. It also includes the farm's reed bed system which drains all of the used water from the land and buildings, and cleanses it using a network of reed beds, ponds and miniature swirling pools – all driven by the force of gravity.

The tour is on a tractor and trailer, so please wear suitable clothing free from contamination from animals outside Sheepdrove Farm. Footpaths will be used before embarking on the tour. A warm and waterproof coat is recommended as it is very windy on the Downs.

I/We would like to join the visit to Sheepdrove Farm on
Wednesday 25th May 2005 at 13.45.

Name 1)

2)

Address

.....

.....

Post Code

Tel No

I/We enclose a cheque for £.....
made payable to Friends of The Ridgeway

Please return by May 11th 2005 to
Jane Ebbutt,
8, Windmill Close,
Aldbourne,
Marlborough, SN8 2DN

I do hope you will come and support this visit. Please fill in
the form and return to me with full payment by Wednesday
11th May. There are only 28 places available and these will
be allocated on a "first come" basis

Jane Ebbutt

AGM

Traditionally, the Friends of The Ridgeway has accepted, nay besought, nominations to the committee from the floor of the AGM. Our new constitution demands more formality. Nominations for election to the Executive Committee must be made by members of the Charity in writing and must reach Peter Gould, 18, Hampton Park, Bristol BS6 6LH Secretary of the Executive Committee at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting (26th February). Should nominations exceed vacancies, election shall be by ballot.

We need three officers: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer- and up to five other Committee members. Nominees must be qualified to act as charity trustees. Roughly speaking, they must be sane solvent and not on the make. (As our membership is scattered we do not expect every candidate to be formally nominated and seconded in writing by that date, though the proprieties must eventually be observed.)

The Society especially needs a publicity and press officer. Any organisation is the weaker for being mute and unknown; a campaigning organisation is seriously debilitated.

The Society also needs to get shot of its longest serving committee member. In one capacity or another, I have been around since 1987. Unless I have been democratically culled before 2007, my resolution is to sharpen my secretarial pencil and fall on it that year. Be told.

The other intellectual and sensual delights of the AGM, the walk. (10.45 from Goring Car Park), the art, (a display by **Susan Kirkman** who designed our best selling greeting card), the cakes (ale available round the corner in the Barleymow) will follow their delectable pattern.

The speaker is **Paul Booth** on Rethinking Roman Religion.

And finally **Pandemonium**: a Folk Group and Ceilidh Band. There will be five people, playing guitar, mandolin, violin, accordion, recorder, bass drum and percussion.

2004 AGM Minutes

Goring Village Hall Sunday 21st March 2004

Attendance 95 Apologies: 18

No representative of the National Trails Office could attend.

1. The minutes of the 2003 AGM were accepted *nem con* as accurate (Proposed Nigel Forward, seconded Margaret Ibbott)
2. There were no matters arising.
3. The Secretary formally introduced the Annual Report. Its adoption was proposed by Alan Smith seconded by David Moore. Adopted *nem con*
4. The Treasurer introduced the accounts. Their adoption was proposed by Jack Ibbott, seconded by David Page Adopted *nem con*
5. Adoption of new constitution

The Executive Committee recommended that a new constitution based on the current Charity Commission model be adopted. An amendment to insert “educational and” before “recreational” in clause C Objects. proposed by Rex Hepburn seconded by Kelvin Rose, was accepted.

The chairman moved that the new constitution be adopted, seconded by David Page. The motion was passed overwhelmingly with one objection

6. Elections

The following officers and committee members were elected

President: Bill Bradshaw was proposed Ian Ritchie, seconded by Jane Ebbutt

Vice-presidents: Michael Ancram MP: MP Julia Drown MP, Paul Goodman MP Robert Jackson MP, Boris Johnson MP, David Liddington MP, David Rendel MP were proposed *en bloc* by Anna Hanslip seconded by Nigel Forward

Executive committee (trustees)

Chairman: Ian Ritchie Proposed by David Page, seconded by Jane Ebbutt

Secretary: Peter Gould Proposed by Nigel Forward seconded by Jo Bird

Treasurer Anna Hanslip Proposed by Ian Ritchie seconded by Margaret Ibbott

Committee members Janet Hierons and Jane Ebbutt Proposed by Nigel Forward, seconded by Anna Hanslip

Chris Hall proposed by Ian Ritchie seconded by Margaret Ibbott

7. Appointment of Auditor:

Tom Webb was proposed by Jack Ibbott, seconded by David Page

8. There was no other business.

The formal business ended at 2.30 and was followed by an address by Lord Bradshaw, an address by the Rt Hon Alan Michael and a recital of show tunes by James Mitchell

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Do you object to the Friends holding your membership record on computer? The data is used for membership records, including subscriptions, and label printing. It is not disclosed outside the Friends. Objections or requests for more information to FRmembers@aol.com. or in writing to the Secretary. 18 Hampton Park, Redland, Bristol BS6 6LH

ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 2004

Patron: Chris Bonington

President: Lord Bradshaw

Vice presidents: Michael Ancram MP, Julia Drown MP, Paul Goodman MP, Robert Jackson MP, Boris Johnson MP, David Lidington MP, and David Rendel MP.

Executive Committee (Trustees): Ian Ritchie (Chairman), Peter Gould (Secretary), Anna Hanslip (Treasurer), Janet Hierons (Membership) and Jane Ebbutt. Chris Hall joined the committee at the AGM in March. The committee met four times during 2004. The Chairman represented the friends at the annual Ridgeway Forum and the AGM of GLEAM.

MEMBERSHIP			
(30th December)			
	2003	Net Change	2004
Individual	169	+28	197
Family	77	+9	86
Life	160	+6	166
Associations	19	+2	21
TOTAL	425	+45	470

In this table, a family membership, counts as 1, however many there are in the family. Likewise, the councils and organisations that support us may have many members.

At the 2004 AGM, the Society adopted a new constitution following a Charity Commission model. An alteration made by the AGM to the Commission's suggested objects clause led to prolonged argument with the Commission about the Society's educational role; but just before the end of the year, the Commission's lawyers decided that it would be in order to register the Friends of The Ridgeway as a charity.

Since the 2004 AGM, The Society's objects are "the preservation for the benefit of the public of all the natural aspects and features of The Ridgeway National Trail" and "the provision of recreational and educational facilities in the interests of social welfare for the public benefit".

PRESERVATION

The pressure exerted by your Society has begun to reap dividends in 2004. A permanent ban on motor vehicles was introduced on Smeathe's Ridge (near Barbury Castle) in February 2004. We regard this as the first real breakthrough in our campaign to rid The Ridgeway of the noise, smells, danger and surface damage created by 4x4s, motorbikes and quad bikes.

Even more significantly, following the intervention of the Minister for Rural Affairs, Mr Alun Michael, the Ridgeway Management Group has agreed to place a seven months seasonal ban on the recreational use of motor vehicles on The Ridgeway each winter. Although less than the complete ban we continue to campaign for, this is a major step in the right direction. It is intended to protect the trail from surface damage over the wettest part of the year. Each of the highway authorities along the route differs in its approach to the implementation of the ban. The only Council to introduce a complete ban over the winter of 2004/5 is Wiltshire – on the other hand Swindon Borough Council has done nothing. We shall continue to press for the ban to be introduced by all the authorities and we shall monitor its effect.

We continue to represent your views vigorously to the local authorities, the government and the Countryside Agency, and we are pleased that the issue of motor vehicles in the countryside is now recognised as a real and difficult issue. We take some credit for the fact that the government has produced a consultation paper on the subject and is promising new legislation.

Your society has generated much coverage for our cause in local and national newspapers, local radio and local and national TV during the year.

The Society aims to protect the setting of the trail as well as the surface; to this end we have made representations about a quad-bike circuit between the Ridgeway and the M40, a large wind turbine near Baydon, an industrial site on the outskirts of Wantage and housing development on the old Harwell Aerodrome.

EDUCATION

Besides the annual visit to the archaeological excavations at Marcham and Frilford, the society organised a walk to the deserted village of Snap. The chairman and committee would like to thank the organisers of visits and all other entertainments over the past year.

Four issues of the Newsletter appeared. Besides details of our campaigning activity, they included articles on the mythology of Weland, the etymological mystery of zorbing, the story of the Ridgeway Walk and the realities of coal carrying and village clearance. These articles were published on the website with others pertaining to the archaeology and recent history of the Ridgeway Corridor.

Our new greetings card was a great success. We sent a free specimen to each member and sold over 600 in 2 weeks.

ACCOUNTS

Receipts and payments for the year ended 31st December 2004

	2004	2003
	£	£
RECEIPTS		
Subscriptions	2181	2450
Donations	496	1756
Publicity Sales	771	1685
Bank Interest	88	55
	<u>3536</u>	<u>5946</u>
 PAYMENTS		
Newsletter	1133	1275
Postage & Telephone	179	126
Stationery	45	458
Printing & Copying	713	216
Christmas Cards	-	853
Greetings Cards	435	-
Affiliation Fees	85	63
AGM	149	168
PR Consultant	211	-
Website	105	1101
Insurance	148	-
Sundry Expenses	66	186
	<u>3269</u>	<u>5294</u>
 Surplus for the year	 267	 652
Balances brought forward	<u>5655</u>	<u>5003</u>
	<u>5922</u>	<u>5655</u>
 Represented by:		
Lloyds TSB Current Account	730	347
Lloyds TSB Business Instant Access Acc.	5192	5308
	<u>5922</u>	<u>5655</u>

A. Hanslip, Hon. Treasurer

I have audited the above Accounts which are in accordance with the books and vouchers presented to me.

T.C.L.Webb, FCIS, FAIA, Hon. Auditor

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2005

Sunday 13th March 2pm

Goring Village Hall

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 2004 AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report
5. Treasurer's Report & Accounts
6. Election of President & Vice-Presidents
7. Election of Executive Committee (Trustees)
Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Committee Members (5 including
Membership Secretary
Publicity Officer)
8. Appointment of Auditor
9. Any Other Business

Speaker

Paul Booth Rethinking Roman Religion

Grid Ref: SU 598 807

Please park in the Goring Village Car Park, there is no parking at the Hall. Goring is well served by public transport, both trains and buses.

**Copy for the Spring Newsletter by
15th April please**

18, Hampton Park, Bristol BS6 6LH

Ridgewayfriends@aol.com

Items for the website are gladly received at any time