

CUMBRIA BRIDLEWAYS SOCIETY AGM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting at 7:30 pm on Monday 14th December 2009 at Gilpin Bridge Inn, Levens

Committee Members Present: Hilary Fell (Chair), Jane Armstrong, Carole Barr, Sue Gill, Tracey Harris, Gay Parkin

Apologies: Ann Aldridge, Pamela Bonnick, Susan Burns, June Chapman, Keith Crocker, Barbara Hartley, Lisa Hartley, Steve and Linda Hobson, Helen and David Kerry, Moira Knoery, Betty Walker, Vyv Wood-Gee

Minutes of previous AGM:

Minutes, subject to minor spelling mistakes, were proposed as a true record by Jane Pape and seconded by Lulie Hothfield.

Matters Arising: - None

Chairman's Report:

First I'd like to thank you all for coming to our second attempt at an AGM; I know some of you have come huge distances to be here. I hope none of you were too badly affected by the recent floods, it must still be extremely difficult for many people whose lives and businesses were affected.

Sadly now I would like us to spend a few moments thinking of members who have died this year. We remember with affection and gratitude Barbara Stothert, (highly respected for her work with Riding for Disabled) Philippa Cropper, Freda Hopkinson and Katherine Wynne, who all supported us for many years.

Looking back on 2009, our newsletters tell the story of an extremely busy and productive year. Carole, our Rights of Way Officer is now Chair of two access committees and her excellent report at this meeting will show some of her work for Bridleways.

The Field Officer network is really taking off now: from hardly anything 2 years ago Moira now has over 40 names on her list. She has held successful meetings in the north and the south of the county and 2 Field Officers contributed to our last newsletter. Thank you so much to all new Field Officers, it is very encouraging as you are really the 'nitty gritty' of what we are trying to achieve. Communication channels are vitally important in this and we are working to improve these all the time.

Thinking of CBS Events; Sue and Jane ran another very successful Tack Sale at Endmoor in the spring, with wonderful refreshments for sale cooked by Tracey. We made a very respectable profit and people had a good day.

The Spring Social at Crooklands was extremely well attended and the evening was deemed to be a great success, with a good chatty meal followed by Paul Hindle's interesting illustrated talk about the old routes through Cumbria.

Our Packs & Tracks 'gathering' event at Dalemain in May was greatly appreciated by all who came and immensely enjoyable. It worked really well and we had wonderful feedback from visitors and participants alike but after all the hard work it would have been nice to have had even more people attending. It didn't cost the society a penny, in fact we made a modest profit of £120, but we need more support this year. We were helped last time with £1000 grant from Cumbria Community Foundation's Environment Fund and there is unlikely to be any more funding since the floods. (We are trying everywhere we can – just wish we had a secretary!) We aim to build on our success and make some improvements so already a steering group is meeting; many things are booked and there is great enthusiasm from former and new participants. We just need all our members to help publicise it – please keep telling your friends. Our website was revived just in time for Packs & Tracks and is now running well, thanks to our old friend Stephen Adams - thank you very much for all your work on it Stephen.

Jane Pape continues to update the Members Map. This is a very useful and friendly thing to have – do look at it tonight and check out if there are any members near you. Many thanks to Jane for all her work on this and for sending out the New Members' Packs. She also provides drawings for the newsletters and her lovely cards are on sale tonight.

We held a Summer Ceilidh in S. Lakes, which was great fun. Our members have been involved in many good riding events all over Cumbria but I wish still more could be put on in aid of CBS.

Gay and Pamela and Lisa on our committee have done a huge amount of work towards creating circular Loop rides in the north of the county, linking with the Pennine Bridleway; Gay will be telling you about them in her BHS report. (She tells me she also has an update from the National Park on the extent of the flood damage to bridleways)

I am glad we communicate so well with the BHS now, to whom we're affiliated, and also with the North Lancs. Bridleway Society - several joint members of our societies are here tonight.

Being a society of ways for all users is a very 'holistic' thing: CBS is hardly the size or power of the Ramblers but working together with other groups does give us strength and credibility on many issues. It is vital that we are known to communicate with *all* bridleway users, not just horse riders - all the ACCESS people, all the authorities - and to be reliable and **get things done**. It takes huge perseverance to achieve improvements and this is where you can all help.

Use the newsletter, use the website and please chivvy us if we are not getting back to you with information. The committee is here to work for you, please don't let us off the hook...

I've left thanks to the end this year, but I'm grateful to so many people who've contributed in all sorts of ways – you know who you are – and you are very much appreciated. The helpers and volunteers for Packs & Tracks were *amazing*, thanks to every one of you for making it a success. I must mention Tracey again; she has transformed the Accounts and membership database, she puts in hours of time for us, and she is very hard to reward!

Now I just want to thank all the patient and hard working Committee members and wish everyone a VERY happy Christmas.

Field Officers Report – Moira Knoery (read By Hilary)

The Field Officer System has grown this year with quite a number of people contacting us offering to become field officers. We now have between 40 and 50 volunteers, but there are still plenty of parishes needing a FO to 'police' its bridleways.

In the first half of the year we had meetings in the Carlisle area, followed by Eden, Copeland and Allerdale and a meeting with some volunteers in the South Lakes area.

Our Autumn meeting was very useful, with a talk illustrated by slides from the Cumbria County Council rangers team with a question and answer session afterwards. The turnout was good - about 20 people braved awful weather to come. Lots of queries were aired and I believe everybody there felt it to have been very helpful and positive. Everyone enjoyed a pleasant shared lunch.

This year we have moved forward in dealing with the CCC as they have become more aware of our existence and have occasionally requested advice or help - as the National Park have done over a number of years with the CBS through Carole Barr.

Treasurer's Report – Tracey Harris

Thank you to everyone for the welcome you have given me in my first year as Treasurer.

Please accept my apologies for the lack of my signature on the accounts. They were sent to the Auditor at the time of the floods and it had not been possible to collect them since due to other commitments. Carole Barr very kindly offered to collect them and photocopied them for me for presentation tonight.

As you can see from the accounts we have managed to host many events. Most made a surplus and some broke even and after taking away the running costs of the Society we have managed a surplus of funds of £276.79p for this year.

The Lost Ways Account, which was amalgamated with the CBS account in the previous financial year, has been reduced by £276.32 leaving a resource of £5,380.80.

We currently have 173 members on the database:

The old database contained 210 people

68 left as we had a 'tidying up' period of checking unpaid subs from several years.

142 stayed

31 new members joined.

Question: Is the number of people leaving due to clearing down? Answer: yes, indeed after trying to contact all the non-payers a lot of people were removed from the database. These people had either expressed a wish to be removed or were un-contactable on the details we held.

I will be taking subscriptions at the end of the meeting from anyone who has not yet paid. If you currently pay with cash or by cheque please consider setting up a Standing Order. It really does help the Society greatly and is completely in your control. I have some Standing Order forms available.

I would also like to thank all the members who have provided donations this year – these amounted to £46.00.

(Several of these are from members who have died and on contacting their next of kin we have been very generously told to treat their subscription as a donation rather than returning it.)

Finally – does anyone know a J Macauliffe? We have received a Standing Order payment for £10 on the 04/11/09 but I do not have any membership details for them.

Rights of Way Report November 20th 2009 - Carole Barr

There seems to have been so much going on this year with rights of way

I think it is so important we continue to maintain links with the authorities and access forums otherwise we will be unable to keep our finger on the pulse.

Plans for Coastal Access have caused great concern. Presently, there is no right to even walk on our beaches despite a long tradition of use by people for enjoyment. This is why some areas of beach are fenced off or private signs erected. The Government is committed to a coastal trail along the whole of our coastline for walkers but has no plans to extend this use to riders or cyclists. In June the Equestrian Access Forum were successful in securing an amendment to the bill that will preserve existing rights. We asked those who ride on the beach to give us information on where they access the coast, parking available etc. So few supplied any information. Why are riders so complacent? Why are other user groups so much better at uniting and fighting their corner? Are we all too busy riding to put pen to paper? We are at risk of losing access. Don't wait until it is too late!

Cumbria is one of the first five authorities charged with creating the access along their coastline, so we will be one of the first areas to have a coastal trail. I will lobby through the access forums to ensure ridden access is not lost.

The Forestry Commission has been consulting on use of its woodland including access. The consultation closed recently. Some forests still have permits for horse riders that can be very costly. Riders are the only users charged for use of forest tracks. Mountain bikers, for example, have routes purposely built for them for use free of charge. The BHS strongly argued for free access to all and I encourage our Local Access Forum to do the same.

The National Park is busy comparing the Definite Map with routes on the ground and where users are actually going. In some cases the definitive route is not the used route; there is a mapping exercise to record used routes and have a map that reflects this use.

The authorities continue to send us modification orders and consultations for comment.

The Lakes Access Forum has formed a sub group of which I am chair. We have met with Dave Robinson of the LDNP to discuss how the forum might assist in moving the Rights of Way Action Plan forward. I think this is a really useful exercise and we hope to be involved in the next action plan at a much earlier stage rather than when it was first formulated. Part of the action plan is new routes and improvements but sometimes it is the simpler actions that can be achieved more quickly, such as bridleway catches on all bridleway gates.

The Motor Powered Vehicle sub group has had several site visits this year to look at routes where there have been complaints about illegal use or damage. These routes are often unclassified county roads and as such receive no maintenance. We continue to push for work to be done on them, because so often these routes are useful to all users and their importance as such should be recognised. We have also begun to survey the unclassified roads; this work will update the existing surveys available on the County Council web site as guidance for vehicle users. I have tried without success to bring the carriage drivers on board so we can identify routes used by or suitable for them to use. I hope we might recruit a carriage driver on to the committee tonight!

We have claimed several routes in the Cartmel area that are used by horses and we wait to hear the outcome. Members have contacted me about routes they use that are not bridleways and ask how they might claim them. The society can always lend support and advice.

Another area where members have reported problems is the growing number of events that take place on bridleways. This is an area the authorities are looking at with a view to producing guidelines for event organisers.

I hope as many of you as possible have looked at the new website. It is a useful tool and I hope to make more use of it to keep you informed about rights of way issues and to ask for information. I am grateful to Stephen Adams for taking over managing the site and we will all work together to expand it further. If you have pictures we could use then please send them in, as it is good to have changes. Please tell us where your pictures were taken.

Working on various committees over the years I have made contact with the many user groups and I hope brought some understanding of issues for riders to people. Whenever possible I push for new routes to be 'multi-user'. It is always good to look at what we have achieved but it is equally important to be critical sometimes. So, I would like to remind everyone that the CBS is a "society of ways for all users" and I think we should be careful not to lose sight of this.

More social events are great, they raise awareness, money and they are fun. We should not forget the aims of the society. This coming year I think we should work hard at the Field Officer network so we have a system that benefits our members and is accessible to them.

BHS Report – Gay Parkin

Eden Valley Loops Update A brief history of the Loops - there were originally 4 but following consultancy this was extended to 6. The criteria was safe, easy rides; after riding the loops it was decided to remove the additional 2 and make the 4th loop into 2, making a final number of 5 loops. Brochures giving an overview of the routes and maps have to be printed and money is needed to cover the costs.

Work is progressing well and we are in the process of completing grant forms, as the deadline is 5/1/10. The RDPE (Rural Development Programme England) to whom we are applying will actually pay 60% of the money required, (if we are successful) 20% can be applied for 'in kind' (ie work we have already done) which leaves us 20% to find (about £3,000) Applications will be heard on 27 Jan so we have a little more time in hand. A grant for 20% of the work already done is being applied for and the BHS are setting up a fund to loan us the money as grants are paid in arrears. I am attending a meeting tomorrow to hopefully agree this.

Update following recent floods - Ian Clement, Ranger North East for LDNP, advised that there are 194 bridges needing repair, 68 footpaths/ bridleways washed out and 57 gates/stiles damaged in the area. The cost of these repair works is in the region of £800,000 and so the emphasis on next years funding will be on the replacement and repair of existing routes - there will be little, if any, funding for new routes.

Committee

The Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Rights of Way officer posts are due for re-election and all officers are happy to stand again. Proposed by Eve Hall, seconded by Janet Niepokojczycka. Carried.

Moira Knoery and Lisa Hartley are both due to stand down and are willing to be re-elected. Proposed by Barbara Dale, seconded by Jackie McClure. Carried.

New nominations for the committee:

Tina Galloway – proposed by Gay Parkin, seconded by Carole Barr.

Nicola Evans - proposed by Hilary Fell, seconded by Gay Parkin.

Margaret Carter - proposed by Jane Pape, seconded by Hilary Fell.

All three new nominations were carried. Welcomed onto the Committee.

AOB from the Floor

1. Carole Barr advised that the CCC website should hold details of all paths and bridleways washed away by the recent floods.
2. A reminder that Jane Pape has designed beautiful cards, which are for sale this evening in support of the CBS.
3. Joan Chapman has come a long way and brought her homemade haynets for sale which are extremely hardwearing and good value.
4. Sue Gill is pulling together a list of people who are willing to help as volunteers for the Packs and Tracks event on the 16th May 2010. Please add your name to the list if you are able to help.
5. Eve Hall NLBS advised they are holding a fund raising ride on Sunday, April 25th 2010 at Warton, near Carnforth. The contact is Liz Davison 01524 811029. Information on the ride is held on our website.
6. Bridget Pickthall had put up a display about her proposed new Hincaster Bridleway, appealing for help with this.
7. A reminder to sign the attendance list.

The meeting closed at 8:15pm and was followed by tea and coffee. The members then had the opportunity to have a chat, pay their subscriptions, buy raffle tickets, haynets and cards and place bids for the silent auction of 2 nights bed and breakfast at Eden Lodge Country House Hotel, Bardsea, near Ulverston.

A very amusing and interesting talk was given by Ian Richards, of the Westmorland Veterinary Practice, Kendal, on the changes in veterinary practices over the years - since the practice was set up in 1896 to the present day. This was accompanied by examples of a variety of veterinary instruments, some of which we were very relieved to know are no longer in use! Ian ended the talk by letting us know that his favourite improvement is the introduction of disposable, very long, rubber gloves and plastic overalls.

A collection was made for Ian's favourite charity, the Lakeland Mountain Search & Rescue Dogs and a vote of thanks delivered by Lulie Hothfield.

The raffle was drawn and the highest bid for the B & B was by Tina Galloway.