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# LARA NEWS

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Number 7 – January 1994

## LARA Meets the National Trust

The National Trust, now the largest non-commercial landowner in Britain, is conducting a wide-ranging survey of how its extensive properties can be used to help provide countryside recreation opportunities for the public. The Trust does not just care for old buildings; increasingly its scope widens to include woodlands, moors and old estates. Just the sort of terrain that traditionally provides many of the facilities used by motor clubs. The National Trust is concerned that any activities on its land should not interfere too much with the notion that their main remit lies in 'quiet recreation'. Organised competition causes them no real problem and opportunities for motor clubs to make local agreements to use NT land are unlikely to diminish.

### "Talk to us" – TRF

The Trust's review team expressed some concern at how motor recreationalists might be 'controlled' and whether byways over their land might, now or in the future, be abused or over-used. The LARA team of Ian Davis (RACMSA) and Alan Kind (MRDO), together with Tim Stevens representing the Trail Riders Fellowship, discussed all this and more with the Trust's knowledgeable and probing review team at a meeting in November 1993. LARA's team explained all our initiatives on user education and the 'cowboy problem'. At the end of the session the NT team asked what they could do to assist our work. Alan Kind suggested that they could throw their considerable weight behind helping motor sport and recreation become more widely accepted as a legitimate countryside recreation. Tim Stevens put it in three short words - 'Talk to us'. □

## All Change at the DoE

Environment Minister Lord Strathclyde has moved over from Marsham Street in the latest round of Government reshuffles. The new minister with responsibilities for countryside access and recreation is Baroness Denton, who moves from Trade and Industry. Motoring enthusiasts, and perhaps others, will be interested to read this extract from Lady Denton's CV:

*Lady Denton of Wakefield graduated from the London School of Economics. She has worked mainly in marketing, latterly in the motor industry, first as Marketing Director of the Huxford Group, a small motor company, then of the Heron Motor Group. In 1980 she became Managing Director of Herondrive. Five years later she was appointed Director of External Affairs for Austin Rover. Simultaneously she was a non-executive director with Ordnance Survey. For three years from 1968, Lady Denton was a professional racing and rally driver and was twice British Women Racing Drivers Champion. She is Vice President of the British Women's Racing Drivers Club.*

During the furore about vehicular access to the countryside in recent years Lord Strathclyde has listened to our concerns with, we believe, a fair and open mind. Lady Denton's background gives us hope that this reasonable understanding of the fears and aspirations of legitimate motor sport and recreation should be inherited by the new minister. □

## Browning Committee – A New Face

All things must pass and, sadly, Bill Kershaw, LARA's long-serving representative on the (House of Commons) Rights of Way Review Committee has finally decided to hand on his portfolio. This committee, now chaired by Angela Browning MP, is the top forum for discussing all aspects of rights of way and recreational access - and some of what is discussed will, in time, go on to be the core of new legislation. That makes it a vital job and an increasingly demanding one. Just a couple of

**Ridgeway  
No TRO –  
Official!  
comment, p2**

years ago the RoWRC's work was mostly restricted to brief quarterly meetings. Now there are regular working groups in addition, which demand considerable knowledge, preparation and participation. Bill Kershaw has done a marvellous job for motor sport and recreation and his will be a tough act to follow. That task falls to the new LARA representative, Ian Davis of the RAC Motor Sports Association. Although Ian's daily work involves the control and approval of motor rallies, he drives a Vauxhall Frontera and confesses to an increasing interest in green road driving in Wessex. □

## Somerset TRO? Do Not Panic!

A flurry of excitement was caused recently in the Chipstable area of Somerset when notice of a TRO appeared in the local paper. Vehicle users were naturally concerned that a restriction which they had been assured was 'on the back burner' had come once more to the boil. In particular they were disappointed that a recent welcome tendency towards co-operation in the county seemed to have come to naught. They were reassured to discover that the notice had been inserted by mistake, but they are now wondering how such a mistake could happen if consultation is really the guiding principle in these matters. □

## Which National Park is Out of Step?

Not so long ago our representatives were standing on Exmoor looking at a lane which was down to bedrock in places, and being told that something would have to be done to reduce vehicular use as there was no money to carry out repairs to this ancient highway. Now we read in a news-sheet produced by another more northern National Park that 'Work to tackle eroded sections of the Pennine Way footpath (*sic*) in the Dales area has begun... Many of the repair materials are having to be flown in by helicopter, while the damage on Fountains Fell will be tackled by exposing the more resistant subsoil...' This is for a section which has been worn out by walkers alone, though, not a route open to walkers, horse-riders, bicyclists, carriage drivers, trail riders and recreational motorists. The conclusion we draw is that someone, somewhere, has some rather odd priorities. It does seem just a tiny bit unfair that those who can only find their way when they are bombarded with information can cause serious damage by over-use and the taxpayer will mend it, but those who need to seek out evidence for their limited resources in dusty archives, and who have to pay taxes before they are allowed to use the routes they find, are denied any benefit from their research or from their contribution to the exchequer. □

## Hello? Is There Anyone Out There?

Reports come to this office from time to time of access workers, or local club secretaries, disgruntled that their concerns and their achievements receive scant recognition in these columns. They might remember the comment of Edward Bulwer-Litton about the pen being mightier than the sword, and use one. □

## Ridgeway News at last –TRO Rejected

After waiting over 12 months for a decision, the news that the TRO has been thrown out by the Secretary of State brings no elation or even relief, but sadness, to many LARA workers. What a waste! No-one can say how much the whole exercise cost in time, money, or co-operative attitudes.

We have all learnt a lot from the experience, not least that claims of conflict which are unsupported by real evidence do not carry any weight with Ministers. Perhaps we can now hope for a change in attitude from the Countryside Commission, who pushed so hard for this TRO. We believe that the pushing came directly from the Commissioners themselves, even against the advice of their own officers. As so much of the thinking, of government, of local authorities, and of other groups, about recreational access has been guided by Countryside Commission pronouncements, now is the time for them to reconsider their attitudes to vehicles. If the 'conflict' they believed in so fervently has turned out to be illusory, even after an extensive survey, perhaps they should brace themselves to include proper provision for vehicles in their policies.

**"Byways should be specifically recognised as a recreational asset" – DoT Director**

The Director goes on to suggest, in his letter outlining the no-TRO decision, that other routes for vehicles, as an alternative to the Ridgeway, should be identified and signposted, and that they 'look to the Countryside Commission to take the lead' to encourage this. LARA members are themselves keen to support this initiative, and have already asked how we can help. As some of the alternatives are not recorded as Byways on the Definitive Map, the assistance of motoring users who have evidence of status will be invaluable in this process. As Alan Kind, who led the LARA anti-TRO team at Swindon, says:

*'It is a long way from Cheltenham to the LARA garret in Newcastle, but just say the word and I will be there. All I ask is that this time they do not slam the door in my face.'* □

## More Clutter in the Country?

If you are a driver, rider or cyclist who likes to travel without encountering a constant succession of gates, watch out! The Rights of Way Review Committee is currently considering suggestions that landowners should be allowed to place gates across bridleways, ostensibly to exclude 'undesirables' (not our choice of words) such as new age travellers, cowboy motorcyclists and fly-tippers. Anyone who thinks a bridleway gate or 'box-trap' will stop a youngster on a motorcycle clearly knows little about countryside access. 'Travellers' and fly-tippers can pose problems for society, but do we really want even more green roads to become like steeple-chase courses? As if this weren't enough, bitter experience shows that when farmers can gate green roads they soon remove those troublesome enclosing hedges or walls. This well-meant, but ill-thought idea will not protect the countryside – it will quickly lead to additional obstructions, hedge destruction and habitat loss. Perhaps if they are serious the RoWRC should consider renaming themselves the Obstructions Committee – and as for the idea itself, it should be fly-tipped right now! □

## All Change: Old Faces in New Places

Overleaf you can read of changes in the DoE and in LARA representation on the Rights of Way Review Committee. In addition to this there has been a reshuffle on the top table of the British Motorcyclists Federation, in which LARA activists Geoff Wilson and Tim Stevens have been elected as Directors. Geoff has also been appointed President of the FIM Touring Commission (how does he find the time?). His BMF colleague has meanwhile found an extra

niche as LARA Information Officer, a position which recognises his contribution to the production of LARA News and other LARA offerings. Latest among these is a new, third, edition of the LARA Access Guide, sponsored this time by Suzuki GB Cars, and containing advice for everyone who uses a recreational vehicle in the countryside. Copies are already being requested by National Parks and Local Authorities, for widespread distribution among councillors, officers, rangers, rights of way workers, and other users, in addition to vehicular specialists.

Now from the AWDC – not wishing to be left out of the chopping and changing – we hear that they have a new National Rights of Way Officer. Liz Hurley is stepping down to spend more time with her four-by-four. New boy Peter Williams has for many years been keenly interested in green lanes, especially in his home territory of the Midlands and Wales. He believes that use of these ancient highways by four-wheel-drive traffic from time to time helps to keep back the growth of brambles and bracken. 'Once they get overgrown,' he reminds us, 'they become impassable to horses, walkers, bicycles, even motorcycles, and then can be lost for ever.' Peter can be found using his Landrover 90 for work and recreation, including an occasional AWDC trial, up and down the land. Contact him at 1, Downderry Close, Castle Bank, Stafford ST18 9PN, or ring 0785 213505. □

## TRF RoW Workshop Success – "Fresh Perspective, Excellent Value"

'Are you bogged down with your RUPP reclassifications? Are you beginning to wonder whether RUPP stands for Roads which Usually Present Problems? Help is at hand...'

*So starts a report on the recent TRF event at Derby by Tim Hart, Rights of Way Mapping Officer for Nottinghamshire County Council. He continues:*

'I have been most impressed ...I would strongly urge all senior rights of way officers who still have RUPPs to reclassify to make every effort to benefit from future TRF events. The range of subjects discussed, and the opportunity to obtain a detailed insight into the concerns of a major vehicular user group, will certainly offer a fresh perspective on RUPP reclassification, and the possibility of making valuable new contacts. TRF workshops are also excellent value for money in terms of staff training.'

The two day event attracted sixty participants, was organised by Tim Stevens, TRF RoW Officer, and had the able support of Alan Kind, and a range of thoroughly expert speakers. Although the TRF received no grant aid from anyone, no-one paid more than £50 inclusive of meals and accommodation. Authorities and others interested in the application of this initiative in their areas should contact the TRF directly at PO Box 196, Derby DE1 9EY. □

## Soap Star Misses Walker, Gains Points

Thespien Dean Sullivan, who evidently appears in a television entertainment entitled **Brookside**, has been fined £150, and docked six penalty points, for 'driving without reasonable consideration for other persons using a public place'. Magistrates were told that Mr Sullivan drove his car at a man walking in the grounds of a stately home, missing him by inches.

This conviction is under the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1991, which sought to extend the offences of careless and dangerous driving beyond the limits of the highway and into 'public places'. We would be interested to have reports of similar cases, especially any involving recreational vehicles, as this new extension of an old law is put into effect.

The view of the editor is that this case would never have happened while Ena Sharples was in charge. □

# IMPORTANT NOTICE:

LARA Conference 1994 —

## SECRET HIGHWAYS

Unclassified 'White' & 'Green' Roads —  
The Overlooked Recreational Resource

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A conference to investigate the history, status, recording, mapping, publicity and potential of these important recreational highways.

**The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa,  
Wednesday 20 April 1994  
Conference, lunch & papers – £35.00**

Unclassified roads have long been the 'Cinderella' of the minor highway system. Although not identified, or sometimes even shown, on Ordnance Survey maps, with no requirement on highway authorities to properly identify and record them, these roads form an essential part of the minor highway system for recreational users. Most rights of way users know about footpaths, bridleways and byways, yet many, perhaps most, have no knowledge of unclassified roads and are consequently denied the use of many of Britain's finest old highways. Many excuses, and a few reasons, are given to explain why these essential and valuable public assets cannot be made more widely known. This conference looks at the whole issue with a view to setting an agenda for the proper integration of unclassified roads into our recreational highway network.

# PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

- 09:30 Registration & coffee
  - 10:00 Chairman's Introduction: Viscount Addison
  - 10:05 A road in limbo? Geoff Wilson (BMF)
  - 10:15 Evolution of the unclassified road: John Sugden (BHS)
  - 10:45 What are unclassified roads in law? A Kind (LARA)
  - 11:15 Coffee
  - 11:30 Putting unclassified roads onto the definitive map:  
Catriona Mulligan (Northumberland National Park)
  - 11:55 Motor competitions on 'white roads': Ian Davis (RACMSA)
  - 12:20 White roads on OS maps – a user's perspective:  
Tony Drake (RA)
  - 12:45 Lunch
  - 13:45 Maintenance standards & liability:
  - 14:10 RT and RC roads: Tim Stevens (TRF)
  - 14:30 White roads on maps – The Ordnance Survey view:  
Don Davies (Ordnance Survey)
  - 15:00 Tea
  - 15:15 Integrating UCRs into the recreational network:
  - 15:35 Open questions
  - 15:55 Chairman's summing-up and close
- All speakers will be timed to allow at least one question immediately after each presentation.

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This Conference is organised by **LARA** for the benefit of all users of Unclassified Roads and is supported by:



Please complete and return this booking form – or use a photocopy if that is more convenient. Your booking will be confirmed, and an invoice and directions will be sent to you. Conference papers will be issued on the day, and certificates of attendance will be available. **Please return to LARA, PO Box 19, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 5HW**

### LARA CONFERENCE 1994 – SECRET HIGHWAYS – Unclassified 'White' & 'Green' Roads

Please book \_\_\_\_\_ places at the Secret Highways Conference on 20 April 1994. Do not send money at this time

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Authority/Club: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please indicate any preference for a vegetarian or other diet

\_\_\_\_\_

Please use the form overleaf for a colleague.

Return to: LARA, PO Box 19, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 5HW

## Signing on the Trail

Many competitive events use highways of all descriptions, and motor sport is no exception. To minimise any possibility of confusion, or risk to passers-by, LARA members have agreed to use standard signs to warn of the presence of vehicles. These sketches show what is intended, although minor variations will undoubtedly occur. Other highway users are asked to take note of such signs, and be warned that an event may be taking place just around the corner. Even if all seems tranquil, competitors may appear at any moment without warning – remember that modern vehicles are much quieter than in the past.



Should you come across an event which is not signed, please tell a marshal; it is not unknown for kindly locals, young or old, to remove such safety features. If your club is organising a competition which uses, or even just crosses, a footpath or bridleway, as well as needing to apply to the RACMSA in the normal way for authorisation, you are recommended to put up signs like these. Make sure, please, that every one is taken down again as soon as the event is over. Full size versions are available from your governing body. □

## The Kettering Interpretation

Recently a proposal has been set in motion under T&PA 90 by Kettering D C to restrict traffic using a country lane between Orton and Rothwell, lest it should be used by motorists seeking access to the new A1 – M1 link road. As we all know, that is not what roads are for. BMF activists are concerned that confusion will result from the description used for this process by the DoT. We have been assured that the route will remain open to horse riders, bicyclists, and motorcyclists, but the description of the process used by the DoT is 'pedestrianisation.' □

## Sales: 4WD Up but Trail Bikes DOWN!

A lot of the ban-everything-that-moves panic during the last few years has been prompted by fears of increased sales of four wheel drive vehicles. LARA claims – that many of these cars are bought by vets and doctors, and venture away from tarmac only with a horse-box in tow – have been countered by allegations that they are sometimes bought by yuppies too, and that lager louts are not known for their caring attitudes, and I heard from someone who knows it is a problem and anyway it says in the Sunday paper...

In contrast, trail-bikes are not bought by trendy-wendies, and figures from the Motor Cycle Industry Association show that trail motorcycle sales are not just down, but down by 45% over the past three years. However, TRF membership has *grown* by around the same amount during the same period, so perhaps it all goes to show that sales and use are not closely related at all.

Exactly what LARA has said all along. □

## A New Byway – the Suffolk Response

We were concerned to learn that the minute a new Byway had been added to the Definitive Map, Suffolk County Councillors decided that they would set in motion the TRO procedure. This seems to fly in the face of DoE Circular 2/93, which recommends that use of a Traffic Regulation Order should only be considered in the event of a real problem which could be eased by a prohibition of recreational vehicles, and even then, only after other management measures have been tried and have failed. In this case there has been no vehicular damage, indeed we are assured that there is no problem with leisure use of green lanes anywhere else in the county. No alternative measures have been considered. Among the reasons for applying the TRO is:

*'The use of the byway as a through route for vehicles is rendered unnecessary with the existence of adequate alternative public roads in the area.'*

Just try to find that listed in the regulations... □

© LARA NEWS Editor: Alan Kind, LARA Motor Recreation Officer, PO Box 19, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 5HW  
*The forum for promoting the responsible use of our environment for motor sports and recreation*

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