

# THE Meresman

## & Exploring East Sussex

### Making a Difference

#### Paths to Prosperity starts to make an impact

Travelling around the East Sussex countryside it's noticeable that as the Paths to Prosperity project nears the end of its first year, the hard work that all the team are putting in is already resulting in benefits to the rights of way network across the county.

One target has been to produce a series of high quality circular walks across East Sussex, with the aim of making access



Improved bridleway at Chailey

as clear and easy as possible. Eleven of these routes are now complete, including one at Camber Castle with full access for all (non-vehicle) users and many of the stiles on other routes have been removed altogether or replaced with gates.

In nine months nearly three hundred individual improvements have been made.

Each route has its own leaflet and the first five are available now with a further five being printed in May. These will be free of charge and distributed from many local information points, as well as direct from the County Council (ring 01435 866408 for copies). A downloadable version will also be available from the County Council's website at [www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/walks](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/walks).

The other main area in which we have been concentrating our efforts has been the surface repair of byways and bridleways. Over £250,000 has been spent on improving many almost unusable routes, as well as creating new ones to fill in missing links in the network, and this work will continue over the next two years. *David Munn & Chris Tweed*



Walk leaflets

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### East Sussex Local Access Forum

#### NEXT MEETING

24 March 2004 at Community Hall, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 2AX

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

9 June 2004 at Council Chamber, County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes BN7 1UE.

All meetings are on Wednesdays, start at 2pm and are open to the public.

For more details visit: [www.eastsussex.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk) or telephone: 01273 481627

## The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex

Issue 17 of The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex comes to you at a time of some change in the provision of access to the countryside. One of the main aspects of the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, the Access to Open Country and Common Land, will start this year.

Unfortunately the Conclusive Maps showing this land have not been published by the time we had to go to print. However, we know that there will be new areas of land made available to the public especially in the South Downs.

Some land will not have any existing available access to the site. East Sussex County Council and the Sussex Downs Conservation Board expect to work together in providing such access over the coming months.

The access land will start to be opened in the autumn, beginning here in the South East of England. We will be able to give you much more information in issue 18 due out in September.

Meanwhile our 'Paths to Prosperity' project is going from strength to strength. A number of circular walks have now been completed and some are featured in guided walks in Exploring East Sussex.

I hope you find reading The Meresman interesting and find some attractive walks in Exploring East Sussex to enjoy this spring and summer.

*Andrew Whitnall, Acting Editor*

East Sussex County Council publishes The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex twice a year, in April (Spring edition) and September (Autumn edition). If you have any articles or letters that you wish to be considered for publication please submit them to the address on the back page at least two months prior to the month of publication. For further information please contact Vicky Pannell on 01273 481654.



Any views or opinions expressed in 'The Meresman' are not necessarily those of East Sussex County Council.

## COMMENT

### A Ranger's View (1)

Working on the Paths to Prosperity project involves maintaining a selection of circular walks, long distance paths and bridleways. These have been handpicked to incorporate some of the most beautiful areas of East Sussex.

For me it means a chance to explore stunning surroundings, installing new stiles, bridges, fingerposts and easy access gates, as well as clearing undergrowth.

One walk that I particularly enjoyed working on is at Barcombe, in the Ouse Valley north of Lewes. The walk takes you through the village of Barcombe Cross, along the banks of the Ouse and through the neighbouring countryside. With views of the South Downs and some spectacular oaks, this is a very special place.

We worked on this route through last summer's heat wave. As well as being very hot to work in, the ground was dry and rock solid. This combined with the large number of jobs that we had to do made finishing the walk very satisfying. I am very proud of this route and I have been back to it since to show off my work to family and friends.

This route is one that I will visit time and time again and would highly recommend.

*Sam Cordery*

### A Ranger's View (2)

Sam and I first took up our posts as the Paths to Prosperity Maintenance Team in July 2003. Nine months have gone by and we have completed the work on nearly a quarter of the circular routes.



River Ouse at Barcombe Mills

The work has been very varied and interesting – including working in some very extreme weather conditions, from the amazing heat of last summer to the near constant rain of the winter and a big freeze courtesy of Norway.

There is nothing like extreme heat or a hard frost to make the digging enjoyable.

We have had many complementary remarks from users of the paths, which has been both encouraging and rewarding.

We have both learnt a lot in the last nine months from various user groups who have kindly accompanied us on site visits, and have helped us to understand the problems that they may encounter.

We hope that you continue to enjoy using the routes and that the new gates, bridges and stiles make your visit a more accessible one.

*Andy Davidson*

# Hedging your bets!

Is your hedge becoming tree-like rather than bushy? Is it gappy at the bottom and no longer stock proof? Are you filled with dread at the thought of taming it and cutting it back? Whether it's a small garden hedge or a lengthy farm hedge you may want to consider hedgelaying.

Hedgelaying is a traditional form of hedgerow management dating back over hundreds of years. It involves thoroughly clearing out brambles, ivy and soft vegetation then partially cutting through the base of the stems and lying them over at an angle.

A skilled hedgelayer will fit the 'laid' stems together like a jigsaw puzzle. Then, depending on the region, stakes and binders are used to help support the hedge until the new growth comes through. In this part of the country the hedges are 'laid' 'South of England Style' with the stakes and binders running along the centre of the hedge. Most common hedgerow species can be laid, with the exception of elder and dog rose. This is because the sap runs up the centre of their stems and by cutting through or 'pleaching' them you would cut off their food supply and effectively kill them! The cost of having your hedge laid is similar to the cost of putting up a stock proof fence. If the hedge is managed appropriately it should not need to be 're-laid' for 15 to 20 years (lasting longer than your fence). If you consider the huge benefits to wildlife and the landscape then hedgelaying is by far the best option.

There are various grants available for farm hedgerows and you can get further information from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Hedgelaying is a skilled craft and takes a lot of practice to become competent, however if you get a chance to attend a training course go for it!

As you can see from the photos, the ESCC trainee rangers did a superb job transforming this elm hedge both prolonging its life and learning a craft! So, if you've got an out of control, or degenerating hedgerow inject it with life and get it laid! *Sandy Williamson*

*Photos: Hedgelaying at Ripe – before and after. Yes, it is the same hedge!*



## Ruined Byway Closed

A byway open to all traffic in Chiddingly parish has been closed after it was badly damaged by off road vehicles making it impassable for walkers, horse riders and cyclists.

The byway known as Chiddingly 61, which runs from the A22 (opposite Nash Street) southwards to Limekiln Lane, will be closed for an initial period of six months during which time the Council will undertake repairs to the surface and ditches.

The Council works closely with off-road organisations and regrets having to close the byway. However, a number of drivers had used the byway for recreational purposes in inappropriate weather conditions to test their driving skills, and this has caused damage that will be expensive to repair.

The County Council is confident, based on experience elsewhere in the County, that on completion of the repairs the challenge of driving through mud will have been removed from this byway, leaving it in a condition for the majority of users to enjoy.



*Fay Pattinson*

# RYE BAY NEWS

## News from the Rye Bay Countryside Office A satellite office of the Rights of Way and Countryside Management Group

### Camber Sands

The Rye Bay Countryside Office (RBCO) has continued to develop partnerships with other organisations to help conserve and enhance the wildlife and recreational value of Camber Sands, which has the only sand dunes system in East Sussex. The work in the Rye Bay area, which aims to improve access and enjoyment of the countryside and coast, and help the local economy through environmental improvements, is an important area of work for the Countryside Management team. On the sand dunes the first area of Sea Buckthorn has been cleared as part of a five-year agreement with English Nature. The area is part of the Site of Special Scientific Interest and has been cleared to reduce the amount of Sea Buckthorn, which has taken over and reduced the biodiversity of the dunes system.

The Rye Bay Rangers, using brush cutters and chainsaws, carried out the work and all cut material was burnt on designated fire sites. A contractor will now treat the cut stumps to restrict re-growth as Sea Buckthorn often comes back vigorously. English Nature who has also supported the development of interpretation panels to inform people about dune wildlife and dune management gave funding support for the work. Angel Design a local company who have designed previous material promoting the Rye Bay area has designed the panels, which will be in place for the summer season.



Sea Buckthorn Clearing

Once again the Rangers worked in partnership with Rother District Council to collect old Christmas trees after the festive season. The trees were then dug into the dunes by the Rangers and volunteers to help trap wind blown sand and repair the erosion caused by the many visitors during the summer months. The scheme has continued to be successful with trees being donated from the local parishes by people wanting to do their bit for recycling and the local environment. Thank you to everyone that supported the scheme.

### Rye Bay Countryside

The RBCO has been undertaking practical tasks in the Rye Bay countryside to help parish councils and landowners improve access and enhance the wildlife value of the landscape in the area.

During February the team laid a hedge for Sedlescombe Parish Council to help enhance the boundary of the parish's Red Barn Nature Field. The section of hedge consisted mainly of hazel and holly with a few oak and ash standards and was in need of laying to reduce its height, which was going to affect overhead power lines.

In previous years the hedge had been flailed resulting in gaps at the bottom of the hedge and lots of dead wood. By laying the hedge in a Sussex style, stronger growth will develop and a better habitat for wildlife created. Trainee Rangers had a chance to develop their hedge laying skills under instruction from Darryl Major, the Rye Bay Ranger, and time was also spent talking

to local residents about hedgerow management.

A series of new finger posts are also planned for Sedlescombe Parish, due to funding being made available through an improvement project recommended by the Local Access Forum. The finger posts will give information on distance and location and have been chosen by the parish council. These posts will be made from local Sussex oak and installed by the team.

The team has also installed new finger posts for the 1066 Country Walk and 1066 Hastings Walk with funding from the 'Paths to Prosperity' Public Service Agreement (PSA). The posts will help improve way marking along these two popular long distance routes, which bring visitors to the Rye



1066 Finger-post

Bay area and help promote the local economy.

Another long distance route, which is due to be improved in the area, is the Royal Military Canal Path. Working with the Romney Marsh Countryside Project, the Environment Agency, our rights of way team and local landowners we will be carrying out access improvements to the path and surrounding circular routes leading from it. Funding from the Heritage Lottery will be used not only on access structures but also on promotional material and information links about the history of this important historical structure.

### Trainee News

Our current Trainee Rangers, Gary Stiles & Kay Frankling, have fitted in well to the team and have continued to develop their countryside skills over the last 6 months. Training completed so far includes chainsaw certificates, bridge and stile building, hedge-laying and hurdle making. It is hoped that they will both complete the NVQ2 in Wildlife Conservation and go on to find employment in their chosen field.



Hedgelaying at Sedlescombe

### Walks & Rides

The RBCO will be leading a series of summer events planned for the Rye Bay coast and countryside. There are bike rides, guided walks and family events, which will give people a chance to experience the beautiful Rye Bay countryside.

Some of these walks are part of the Maritime Season being promoted by the County Council and also as part of South East Marine Week taking place in August. Information on these events can be found in Exploring East Sussex and the County Council web site.

### Enquiries

For more information about the work we do in the Rye Bay area, please contact us at: Rye Bay Countryside Office, 111b High Street, Rye, East Sussex TN31 7JF. Tel: 01797 226488 or fax 01797 223753. Simon Fathers, Rye Bay Countryside Officer. E-mail [rangers@ryebay.demon.co.uk](mailto:rangers@ryebay.demon.co.uk) or visit our website [www.ryebay.demon.co.uk](http://www.ryebay.demon.co.uk)

# Ditchling Low Down

Between August and December last year we carried out a visitor survey at Ditchling Common Country Park, surveying a total of 100 different groups of people.

The main objectives of the survey were to ask people about how far they had travelled, what they used the Country Park for and how long they spent there. It was also an opportunity to talk to visitors informally, which in turn allowed them to suggest any improvements that could be made to the Country Park in the future.

The data gathered from this survey has been analysed and passed to Ken McManamon, the Ranger, who will be able use the information to make further improvements.

We found that on the whole people were very happy with Ditchling Common. Some people commented on how the stone path had allowed them access to countryside during even winter months, others talked about how they visited the Country Park daily to exercise themselves and their dog, and to enjoy the local ambience.

After studying the interpretation board and maps, a few people expressed surprise at how much more of the Country Park there was still to explore. The majority of people felt that the delicate and often difficult, balance between wildlife conservation and public enjoyment was maintained well.

Suggestions were made on how to improve Ditchling Common, such as additional seating areas, dog-waste bins, litterbins, as well as new nature trails for children.

*Vicky Pannell & Frances Ratcliffe*

# On Course for Success

East Sussex County Council has been running a very successful Trainee Ranger course for over 15 years. The scheme provides the Countryside Management service with an invaluable source of full-time volunteers who work hard, helping the Rangers manage our sites.

They also bring new ideas and experiences to the team. In return, Trainee Rangers receive a comprehensive training package and a wide variety of invaluable experiences to help them to achieve their ultimate goal of finding paid employment in the environmental and conservation field.

The job success rate of trainees who complete the course is very high (over 80%) and it is something that we are very proud of. It is wonderful when a volunteer's hard work and commitment is rewarded!

To name but a few from our recent teams of trainees: Chloe Bradbrooke is working for the National Trust at Nymans gardens as a Warden/Assistant Gardener; Jenny Lynch has become a Ranger with the Sussex Downs Conservation Board; Heli Gittins is with English Nature as an Estate Worker, and Fay Pattinson, Chris Brown and Sam Cordery have all taken up positions within our own Rights of Way team. Most recently our current trainees Vicky Pannell and Frances Ratcliffe have found work. Vicky has been appointed to the Walks & Rides Co-ordinator post and Frances has taken up an educational role at the Sussex Wildlife Trust.

I hope that the Trainee Ranger course will continue going from strength to strength in the coming years!  
*Cathy Able*

## East Sussex Community Information Service

Information is made easier to find thanks to the East Sussex Community Information Service (ESCIS). ESCIS is a website [www.escis.org.uk](http://www.escis.org.uk) of local and community information developed and managed by the Libraries and Information Services of East Sussex County Council.

You will find information about 7,000 organisations based in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove, covering areas such as: voluntary clubs, charities and trusts, places of worship, education and training, sports clubs and facilities, doctors and dentists, leisure clubs and societies, places to visit, local authorities, and so much more. The information is also printed out into hard-copy directories called 'Help in Hand'. These can be found free at your local library or purchased by contacting us for an order form.

To add your group to ESCIS contact us or visit your local library for an ESCIS form. You can also add your details directly to the website. Internet access is free in all East Sussex and Brighton & Hove libraries.

For further information contact: *Anita Cundall, Information Officer ESCIS*

Telephone 01273 481754 or e-mail [anita.cundall@eastsussexcc.gov.uk](mailto:anita.cundall@eastsussexcc.gov.uk)



*Frances Ratcliffe and Chloe Bradbrooke installing fencing at Camber to protect the dunes*

## Spring is on its Way!

This time of year brings with it the start of Spring and the promise of warmer weather. Despite the wet and cold we have experienced over the last few months, people have been busy working throughout the county. Amongst all the maintenance work that has taken place, the Ashdown Ramblers have been working hard in the Forest Row area, the Danehill Millenium Footpath Group continues to keep the paths open in their parish and LARA (a motoring organisation) continues to work hard clearing byways throughout the county. Meanwhile in the south of the county the Hailsham & Polegate Ramblers have been busy working on paths to the south of Hailsham, and the All Wheel Drive Club have been helping clear Robin Post Lane. Thank you everybody.



Before the work began. Alan Hart (ESCC) Clive Westwood and Tony Kempster of 4x4 groups inspect Robin Post Lane.



Bridge Builders. Back row from left John Massey, Derek Carey, Matt Bumpus, Jonathan Martin and Martin Eardley. Front row from left Daniel Chattein, Barry Palmer and Scott Woodcock.

The BTCV are still working hard on rights of way projects. In December last year the group installed a six metre bridge in Barcombe. The bridge, built in one and a half days, was installed by a mixed team of 18-24 ETF (Environmental Task Force) and 25+ IAPP (Intensive Activity Period Programme) led by Colin Pantrey and Matt Bumpus, both of BTCV in Hastings. This bridge was the second of six to be installed at Barcombe along with eleven stiles. Other work has been completed on paths by the teams in Herstmonceux, Broad Oak Brede, Battle and in Brightling where they are currently

repairing steps, stiles and installing a replacement bridge (February 2004). We have also been running a series of training days and workshops for parishes and groups. These take the form of a walk chosen by the parish along which all sorts of issues and problems are discussed. It is now the third year since the 'Walk and Talk' was introduced and they are proving successful in helping people to understand the nature of the work of Rights of Way & Countryside Management. The aim of the sessions is to provide people with a background to the legal and practical issues associated with rights of way. Ten indoor workshops on the background to rights of way will be arranged throughout the forthcoming



Overgrown and boggy... a path in Sedlescombe. Polly Rice and the good folk of Sedlescombe struggling up a narrow and difficult path

year across the county. The dates and venues have yet to be determined but invitations will be sent to people in due course. In addition the 'Walk & Talk' sessions are available to any parish or group wishing to find out more about the work of the County Council and rights of way or who would like to become more involved in helping to become more involved in rights of way work. If your group or parish are interested in arranging a 'Walk and Talk' session, please contact Polly Rice on 01435 869252, 01273 482354 or e-mail [polly.rice@eastsussexcc.gov.uk](mailto:polly.rice@eastsussexcc.gov.uk). Following on from meetings with Sedlescombe, Framfield and Mayfield parishes, work is now in hand to collect all the useful information we need to start looking at parish path improvement projects. Working jointly with landowners, we will be looking at the path network with a view to making improvements.



A new acquisition! The more they can carry... the more they can do.

## Improved Access

The work with the 'improved access' project continues with completed surveys of Ashes Wood, Battle and a route from Butts Brow to Warren Hill car park on the Downs near Eastbourne. Work with the Forestry Commission, Wealden District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council is progressing well. The land managed by the Forestry Commission and Eastbourne Borough offers great potential for a high level of access and work so far has shown that little needs to be done to make major improvements that will provide more opportunities for wider public access. The next step is to put into action any works that are needed and publicise the information.



John (Forestry Commission), Paul, Marion & Rosie (Disabled Ramblers) & Polly (ESCC) exploring the possibilities of Ashes Wood.

Work is also in hand to assist Barry Yates of the Rye Bay Nature Reserve with his aim of making the reserve as accessible as possible. Alan Lindfield, a volunteer access consultant, has reviewed the level of access to the reserve and has produced a set of proposals that once in place will result in making the reserve open to as many people as possible. Many of the facilities and areas of interest are currently only accessible via shingle paths or are in need of adaptation to widen the level of access. The sensitivity of the area and the presence of public rights of way bring with them a very long list of potential restrictions to opening up access to the reserve. This is a very exciting project as many of the issues being addressed require lateral solutions to some very basic problems. Any solutions that come about will be readily transferable to any other future access projects on which County Council embarks.

## Disability Discrimination Act

In readiness for the introduction of regulations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 the County Council has been working closely with the Disabled Ramblers and other volunteers. We have been studying legislation, checking with other authorities of the work they are doing and taking part in awareness training in sessions. With the regulations coming into force in October this year, it was considered essential to summarise all the information acquired and look at future working practices.

Stage one of this process for the County Council was to hold a workshop in January at Uckfield. Representatives from East Sussex County Council, district councils, voluntary rights of way groups and disability organisations attended the session. Speakers covered topics including the position of the County Council with regard to the DDA and the practicalities of implementing the legislation. Teresa Hodge of the East Sussex Disability Association and Robyn Helby and Sue Watson from the Disabled Ramblers gave their views on the topic and raised some issues that we should be thinking about.



Delegates at the conference weighing up the pros and cons of the 'Tramper', an all weather terrain mobility vehicle.

In summary our research showed that the all the current legislation associated with disabled recreational access is very vague and does not define the role of County Councils or where precise responsibilities lie. With that in mind as an authority we will work with parishes, groups and other organisations to make improvements wherever possible. Over the next year, the first step is to audit the country parks managed or owned by the County Council and look at how long distance routes are maintained and managed. The major issue that came out of the workshop was the lack of information as to the location of the easy access areas.

## Call For Information – Walks Providers

Over the last few months there have been many discussions about how people obtain information about walks and the fact that there are a large number of organisations producing leaflets about recreational access. The discussions are ongoing about finding a way of co-ordinating all the information that is available and in anticipation that a project will commence soon, we are collecting information of groups, parishes and all organisations who provide guided walks, produce walks leaflets in order to gain some idea of the amount of information available.

If you are part of a group, a parish, a society or a person who is involved with walks or events, albeit by request and are interested in finding a way of publicising your walks, please send in the details of what you do and where to Polly Rice at East Sussex County Council, Transport and Environment, Rights of Way, County Hall, Lewes. BN7 1UE.

Alternatively email Polly on [polly.rice@eastsussexcc.gov.uk](mailto:polly.rice@eastsussexcc.gov.uk)

## Back at the Office

Plans made at the beginning of the winter for making improvements in the Parish & Volunteer Scheme organisation were altered last October. Polly Rice joined me for a ten week work placement at the beginning of October and she worked with us until the end December. Polly has now joined the Rights of Way team under the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme and will be working with us for the next year. Polly will be based at County Hall on Mondays & Fridays and Heathfield Depot on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Polly will be at college on Wednesdays. Although Polly is new to rights of way she will be able to help with general enquiries and take messages. We are working on setting up improved working practices with a view to providing a better and more efficient service for parishes and volunteers. Major improvements will be seen very soon!

Polly was introduced to the County Council by RBLI Workwise Employment Services. The RBLI is a registered charity with over 15yrs experience helping people with disabilities and long-term health problems, to find and substance employment. We provide a flexible package services for employment throughout the UK. This helps them to recruit, retain and train disabled employees and provide onsite support to ensure that the needs of both parties are met.

## ...and Finally

There are lots of projects being carried out over this summer, far too many to mention. Needless to say, everybody at Rights of Way and Countryside Management has a very busy summer ahead of them. Enjoy the summer!

## How Adventurous are you?

At present there is no group which organises rambles or walk for people with all levels of mobility problems or disabilities in East Sussex. In other areas, the Disabled Ramblers provide such opportunities and in East Sussex the Hailsham & Polegate Ramblers undertake rambles for the blind. Sue Watson, a rights of way volunteer explores the countryside in East Sussex wherever she can on her Tramper. Since starting her voluntary work with East Sussex County Council she has met several people who would be interested in starting up a group. She said that 'there are a few people in the Sussex area who are looking into the potential for starting up a group for disabled people, hopefully affiliated to the Disabled Ramblers, to explore places like country parks, downland, nature reserves, public footpaths, bridleways and other trails; and to tackle issues relating to access to the countryside generally'. The group would be open to anyone. If you are interested in having some input into this group or finding out more, please contact Sue Watson on 01323 483310 or even better via e-mail: [suze333@hotmail.com](mailto:suze333@hotmail.com). If Sue is not available please feel free to contact Mary Moulton or Polly Rice on 01435 869252 or 01273 482354.



Polly at the Uckfield Civic Centre – preparing papers!