

THE Meresman

& Exploring East Sussex

POOH BRIDGE REPLACED

Pooh Bridge at Hartfield, the place where countless generations of children have followed in the paw prints of Winnie the Pooh and played poohsticks, has been completely replaced.

The new bridge was designed to replicate as closely as possible the structure that A A Milne and his son Christopher Robin would have used during the inter-war years and which became the fictional setting for the first game of poohsticks in 'The House at Pooh Corner'.

Tourists, Pooh fans and those just wishing to walk or ride the public bridleway can enjoy a much safer and more attractive bridge.

The story of the replacement of this most famous of rights of way structures is told on page 4.



'First Class' Meresman

The following appeared on the front page of a recent edition of the Journal of the Byways and Bridleways Trust:

"Absolutely first class is all we can say about 'The Meresman', the Rights of Way & Countryside Management magazine of East Sussex County Council. Colourful, nicely laid out and not as superficial or dumbed-down as some."

It's pleasing to see our publication being recommended by 'Byway and Bridleway' which is read by many people involved in rights of way and countryside work in the United Kingdom.

Subscriptions to 'Byway and Bridleway' are available from the Byways and Bridleways Trust, PO Box 117, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 5YT, or telephone 0191 236 4086 or e-mail bbt@highwayman.demon.co.uk.

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Guided Walks for Summer 2000

We are very pleased to be able to enclose, for the first time, a copy of 'Exploring East Sussex' with this edition of 'The Meresman'. Here you will find details of a great variety of guided walks and events taking place across East Sussex between 1st May and 30th September 2000.

'Exploring East Sussex' has been running for more than a decade, but for the first time in many years we are able to offer the booklet without a charge. This will help us to reach more 'new customers', including we hope, some of you who read 'The Meresman' but who have not yet tried one of our guided walks.

We hope to be able to make the 'Exploring East Sussex' insert a regular feature of 'The Meresman' (although it is also available as a 'stand-alone' publication).

So do give the walks a go – they are a great opportunity to discover new places and meet friendly people – and let us know what you think, of the walks and the new look 'Exploring East Sussex'.

Extra copies of 'Exploring East Sussex' are available. Please send a large (A4) stamped (40p postage) addressed envelope to 'Exploring East Sussex' at the address on the back page.
Steve Diserens, Countryside Access Officer

The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex

As you will have read on page 1 'The Meresman' has been merged with 'Exploring East Sussex' and moved publication dates to every April (Summer edition) and October (Winter edition).

For those of you who have not seen 'Exploring East Sussex' before I hope that you will find time to enjoy at least one of this excellent series of guided walks.

One of the big news items involving Rights of Way & Countryside Management in East Sussex has been the rebuilding of Pooh Bridge at Hartfield. Within a day or two of the news of the poor condition of the former structure appearing in a local newspaper the Rights of Way Officers were fielding media enquiries from as far away as USA, Japan and New Zealand.

Pages 8-11 are dedicated to the parish and volunteer work that goes on throughout East Sussex on public rights of way co-ordinated by Mary Moulton. The path network in the county would be a lot poorer without the work of these parish councils and user groups.

If you have any views on items covered in 'The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex' or other rights of way and countryside issues we would be pleased to consider them for publication in the next issue.

We hope that you find this first combined issue of 'The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex' an interesting and enjoyable read.

Andrew Whitnall, Editor

'The Meresman & Exploring East Sussex' is published by East Sussex County Council twice a year in April (Summer edition) and October (Winter edition). If you have any articles or letters that you wish to be considered for publication then please submit them to the address on the back page at least 2 months prior to the month of publication.

For further information please contact Marion Hamilton on 01273 481654.

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

The following are responses to 'Comment' in Issue 7 by Clive Westwood of the All Wheel Drive Club (AWDC) and LARA (Motoring Organisations Land Access and Recreation Association)

If a referendum was possible to establish the preferred use of 'green lanes' between restricting them to walkers and horseriders or opening them up to all traffic, I am certain the result would be to retain them for walkers and riders use only. The AWDC and its members are a comparatively small group compared with walkers and horseriders.

The existing liaison between East Sussex County Council and LARA and AWDC members gives these clubs a voice out of proportion to their numbers and, perhaps, undue influence.

Let our 'green lanes' remain the peaceful backwaters they are, nature reserves to be enjoyed by walkers and horseriders. Car drivers may leave their vehicles in order to enjoy them. Why should a few spoil them for the many?

*L E Rydings, Chairman,
Rother Group, Ramblers' Association,
St Leonards on Sea, East Sussex*

Could Mr Westwood please tell us how it was proved that motorised vehicles actually 'repair' damage done by agricultural/forestry machinery and why we 'must'(!) use motorised vehicles in our lanes to help maintain our heritage? How did we manage to have a heritage before Mr Westwood and clubs like his came along?

Please don't encourage Mr Westwood and clubs like his on our paths, green lanes and bridleways. Let the walkers

have somewhere they can truly call their own without being sprayed in mud, covered in dust or having vehicle horns hooting to get you out of their way. What a shame Daniel De Foe didn't have any motorised vehicles in 1697 to help him with the roads in Sussex.

*Lydia Samuelson,
Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex*

Clive Westwood's reply:-

Both respondents have fallen into the usual trap! They believe that the members of all the motoring clubs want to drive all 'Green Lanes'! This misinformation is always quoted by the 'antis', but in reality, myself and my fellow Club members only drive 'Green Lanes' that have Vehicular Rights, which is a very small percentage of the total. If they had read the article properly, they would have seen that I talked about rights of way with vehicular rights. I agree that there are 'drovers tracks', 'pack-horse trails', footpaths and bridleways which do not have vehicular rights and these are not used by members of my Club, or any other responsible Club.

I strongly object to the inference that I do not love the countryside. Using my vehicle is the only way that I can enjoy the countryside and nature, as I am unable to walk the large distances that these respondents obviously are, and it certainly is not frivolous! Do they wish to deny me, and those worst off than myself, the pleasure of visiting the countryside?

ACCESS

Living and working on a small farm of 250 acres in the middle of an East Sussex village has responsibilities. Over forty years ago we developed a 'Nature Trail', we show people where to walk, where the most beautiful places are, where they will do least harm and be welcome. Stiles were built and we always asked people to ensure that gates weren't left open.

Now that I am too old to enjoy the more demanding physical acts of farming, we diversify. A 'Woodland Walk', fishing, horseriding etc, but there is a price to pay. I carry a plastic bag everywhere I walk. I pick up litter from sweet wrappers to drinks cans. The signs I erect to guide people along the paths need to be continually replaced. Dogs are a pain,

seldom under control, like children, they go mad with the scent of freedom. Fences need more maintenance as people try and clamber over them, 'the grass is always greener on the other side!'. The bluebells and primroses certainly don't like it. You have the feeling that it's no longer your own home. Children's voices echo through the woods. The riders complain of the walkers, the fishermen have their peace destroyed. There are always complaints, and it costs me more time and money.

Why keep open house? Because I know that I am extraordinarily lucky to be able to live the life that I love. I hope to encourage others to do the same. A gift shared is a gift renewed (or should be!).

*The owner of an East Sussex farm who allows public access.
Name and address supplied*

COMMENT

The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a Millennium Project to develop a network of 10,000 miles of high quality routes for cyclists throughout the United Kingdom. The overall aim is to increase the popularity of cycling and create a cycling culture.

The NCN will enable ordinary people to use their bikes in the confidence that there are safe routes to school, to work, or for leisure, giving them a real alternative to the car with its associated damage to the environment and the countryside.



The NCN is being implemented in two phases. The first phase is a Millennium network of 6,000 miles of routes, to be completed by the end of 2000. The total cost of this phase is nearly £200million, making it the largest Millennium project in the country after the Dome, and the only one that covers the whole country.

The Millennium Commission made a grant of £44million to the project, and there have also been major grants to sister projects such as the Trans-Pennine Trail. These grants have enabled money to be drawn from other sources such as Landfill Tax, thus benefiting not only cyclists but also many other users.

The second phase of the Network will be completed by 2005. When completed half the population of the UK will live within easy cycling distance of an NCN route, thus making it much easier to gain access to the countryside without using the private car. Over half the NCN is on quiet minor rural roads and traffic-calmed roads through towns, with the remainder on routes generally free from motor traffic.

On roads, various measures to calm motor traffic and enhance safety are being introduced which clearly benefit walkers, horse riders and cyclists alike. These include reducing the speed and volume of traffic, and installing safe crossings of busier roads. The traffic-free sections comprise a mixture of different types of route and there have been many opportunities to create entirely new sections of route which also serve walkers, wheelchair users and often horse riders.

All of these groups, together with cyclists, have lost ground in recent decades because of the increasing volume and speed of motorised traffic on country roads.

Footpaths have only been used following consultation, where there are no other suitable off-road alternatives and all feasible and safe on-road options have been exhausted.

In the case of bridleways there has generally been a mutual benefit for users of the NCN and existing bridleway users arising from the increased funding available for improved surfacing and maintenance. Consultation with user groups has again been given a high priority.

Under the Countryside Act 1968 bicyclists (but not unicyclists or tricyclists!) have a right to use bridleways provided they give way to walkers and horse riders. Bridleways will make up approximately 140 miles (2.1%) nationwide (of which half were previously surfaced), of the whole NCN. In addition there are other permissive paths where agreement for access by horse riders, cyclists and walkers has been reached with the landowner.

To date, 100 miles of new permissive paths for horse riders, walkers and cyclists have already been created. This includes a number of paths in East Sussex such as the new link being created between Rye and Camber. Sustrans are also working closely with the County Council to extend the Forest Way Country Park to reach Groombridge.

Current legislation allows access for motor vehicles over Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) and some Roads Used as Public Paths (RUPPs) where vehicular rights exist. This can lead to problems with offroad four wheel drive enthusiasts, especially where they seek to re-open paths previously abandoned by motor vehicles.

Sustrans believes that Byways, RUPPs, many other country tracks and indeed some minor roads should be closed to all motor traffic, with the exception of legitimate residential, business or farm access. Such proposals would benefit walkers, horse riders, horse drawn carriages and cyclists alike.



There will always be a tiny minority of irresponsible users of all types. However, these should not be used as an excuse to withhold access for the majority of sensible and responsible users. The key to a successful shared path is ensuring that users are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and those of other user groups.

Mark Strong, Sustrans

A STICKY PROBLEM AT POOH BRIDGE

Many people are familiar with Winnie the Pooh and his adventures, the settings for which are based on real locations in and around Ashdown Forest in the north west corner of East Sussex. Not least of these is the bridge where the game of Poohsticks was invented.



The new Pooh Bridge

Pooh Bridge was originally built in 1907 to allow for timber to be extracted from Possingford Woods and at that time was privately owned, although undoubtedly used by local people, including A.A. Milne who lived at nearby Cotchford Farm. Following the break up of ownership of the surrounding land and creation of the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way, the path that uses the bridge became recognised first as a public footpath and later as a bridleway. With no-one claiming ownership of the land on which the bridge is built, responsibility for its maintenance fell to East Sussex County Council. The bridge is regularly inspected and concern was growing about its condition, with many of the main beams showing signs of rot. At another site, replacement with a standard bridge would have been simple, both in terms of design and cost but with the literary connections of this bridge a different approach had to be taken.

A project to replace the bridge, a replica built in 1979, was therefore planned for autumn 2000, with funding being sought from the private sector to cover the extra costs.

However the resulting world wide media coverage resulted in the County Council receiving many offers of assistance, and those from Cox Brothers of Maidstone to design and construct the new bridge, and Morgan Timber of Strood to supply the locally grown timber, were accepted. This brought the project forward to 1999, with a very short time scale to obtain consents from the Environment Agency and English Heritage and to design and construct the new bridge.

Cox Brothers origins precede those of the bridge by over 60 years, with earliest records stretching back to 1843, at which time carpentry and joinery were already at the heart of the then small building

company. The intervening years have seen the company grow and operate in all major sectors of the industry for both public and commercial clients. 1997 saw a new dawn for the company with its incorporation into the Lexington Construction Group which consolidated the group functions of development, project management, construction, term maintenance, electrical and joinery manufacture.

Tony Stanbury, Chairman of the Lexington Construction Group, responded to the publicity surrounding the replacement of the bridge. He felt that there would be an opportunity for Cox Brothers to participate in a community project of national, indeed world-wide, interest to millions of Pooh enthusiasts, utilising the in-house talents of both the construction and joinery divisions.

Cox Brothers, who offered to underwrite the cost of the project, invited Morgan Timber, with whom they have a close trading relationship, to engage in a joint venture, with the latter supplying the 'green oak' which Cox Brothers Joinery shop shaped and assembled to form the new bridge.

Morgan Timber is a family owned sawmill founded in 1923 and one of its specialities is English Oak. Cox Brothers is one of Morgan Timber's long standing customers and the company was delighted to support them in this project by donating the oak required. By a lucky coincidence Morgan Timber had recently purchased a parcel of oak trees that were growing just a couple of miles from the bridge and these were exclusively used for the project.

The design of the new bridge was based on a photograph of the original 1907 bridge and construction started in mid October, with the old bridge being completely removed. Setting the new

piers proved to be more difficult than anticipated and the new bridge was finally completed in late December. In addition to replacing the bridge, the concrete blocks, which were used to line the banks as an emergency measure ten years ago were replaced with a more suitable natural stone.

As well as the practical and financial contributions from both Cox Brothers and Morgan Timber, the County Council received many generous cash donations both from business and individuals as well grant aid from the Countryside Agency.

A condition of this grant aid is that the County Council, in partnership with Hartfield Parish Council and others, commissions a study to assess the impact of visitors to the site, and to draw up a plan for future management, and this will be undertaken over the next few months.

Although the bridge is probably the most popular of all of the Pooh sites, it is also the one which is least able to cope with large numbers of visitors. With limited parking available, the surrounding narrow lanes are often obstructed by badly parked cars, and the absence of any facilities often leads to trespass, dropped litter and, inevitably, damage to trees in the area as people gather 'Poohsticks'.

If you are planning a trip to the bridge, why not consider making it part of a longer walk, taking in other sites. You



Work on the new bridge

can use the larger car parks on Ashdown Forest, or catch the number 291 bus which runs through Hartfield village on it's way between East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells. Alternatively, there is access to the site by bicycle and it is within easy reach of the Forest Way. If you do need to visit the bridge on its own and by car, please try to avoid busy times, such as bank holidays, and park where you will not cause an obstruction to local people or emergency vehicles.

David Munn

BRIEFS

South Downs National Park

John Prescott, Secretary of State for the Environment Transport & the Regions, announced at last autumn's Labour Party conference that the South Downs would become a National Park along with the New Forest in Hampshire. If it does come into being the National Park is likely to include most of the Sussex Downs AONB in East Sussex, stretch across West Sussex and take in much of the East Hampshire AONB. As a result East Sussex County Council would lose all its Rights of Way & Countryside Management responsibilities for the Downs.

Countryside & Rights of Way Bill

The Government have also announced new legislation covering various aspects of countryside and rights of way matters. The Bill, which is intended to pass into law by the end of the year, will introduce the 'right to roam' across mountain, moorland, downland and heathland and remove the right of way classification of 'road used as a public path' to be replaced by one of 'restricted byway' (as a byway open to all traffic but without a right for motorised vehicles).

Framfield 9

The Ramblers' Association successfully prosecuted Rarebargain Ltd for the obstruction of public footpath Framfield 9 at Lewes Magistrates earlier this year. The defendants were fined but the court has no powers to insist on the removal of the obstruction at Palehouse Common. The County Council is hoping to resolve this matter in the near future.

Round Britain Walk

On the 1st January 2000 Alison Shaw and Martin King set off from Liverpool on a walk of a lifetime. They are walking over 7000 miles around Britain's coast and outlying islands and are hoping to raise funds towards the purchase of essential life saving equipment for the Royal National Lifeboat Institute.

Alison and Martin, who have quit their jobs and homes and sold their possessions, are planning to visit all 185 lifeboat stations around Britain and islands such as the Isles of Wight, Scilly, Anglesey, Man and those around Scotland. They are due to visit East Sussex during March/April 2001. If you would like to make a donation it can be paid into any Post Office, the Girobank account details are: RNLI – Round Britain Walk, account number 46 067 3289.

Wealden Millennium Walks

Wealden District Council are progressing with works required to bring paths included on this series of walks up to a fit standard. This is one of several year 2000 projects affecting rights of way in East Sussex. Others include the Maresfield Millennium Walk, Fletching Millennium Walk and the Malfosse Walk in Battle.

Heathfield Show

Rights of Way & Countryside Management will have a stand at this year's Heathfield Show on Saturday 27 May 2000. We have invited the Sussex Area Ramblers' Association to share the stand with us. The team will also be appearing at the Sussex Wildlife Trust Open Day at Plovers Meadow, Lewes Road, Cross in Hand on Sunday 4 June 2000 2-5pm.

Byways Open to All Traffic

The County Council has met with representatives of vehicle user groups after complaints were received from the public about misuse of byways by four wheel drive vehicles. It has been resolved that in future 'voluntary restraint' would be placed, on a seasonal basis, on those byways known to be in a poor condition.

RIGHTS OF WAY WORK

The Rights of Way Maintenance Team have been hard at work since the summer on numerous projects around East Sussex.

As well as undertaking many minor works (regular clearance, signposting etc.) the following major projects have been completed:-

Cuckmere Valley BR 5 (TQ521017) Litlington Bridge – Replace decking.

Dallington BR 6 (TQ657200) near Buckholt Farm – Stoning surface (800 tons).

Heathfield & Waldron BR 65b (TQ614241) at Pottens Mill – Reconstruct ford.

Warbleton FP 6b (TQ622197) at Flitterbrook Lane – bridge, boardwalk, steps and stiles.

Westfield FP 11 (TQ802162) on 1066 Country Walk – Construct 40ft boardwalk and stile.

Westfield FP 40 (TQ793144) at Beauport Park – Heavy clearance.

The Maintenance Team have now been reorganised into two groups. One group headed by Alan Hart, based at Kingston near Lewes, working in the west of the county and the other group headed by Michael Diprose, based at Heathfield, working in the eastern half of the county.



Footbridge and boardwalk on Warbleton 6

RYE BAY NEWS

Christmas Tree Recycling

After a couple of weeks being the living room centrepiece, our used Christmas trees end up dumped or chipped. However, ex-Christmas trees in the Camber area have a very different fate.

This winter over 300 trees have been re-located from front room to sandy dunes. Unlikely though it may be, the trees provide an excellent way to repair the erosion of a million pairs of feet. The large numbers of visitors at Camber trample vegetation causing it to die back. This then releases the sand which is blown away by the wind. Part buried in the dunes the trees will not grow, but they act as a windbreak. As the wind slows down it drops the sand it carries on top of and behind the trees.

Now sheltered from wind and feet by the tree, the grasses can recover and bind the sand together. The bushiness of Christmas trees makes them ideal for this job. It is also quick and easy to do, recycles otherwise wasted trees and is cost effective.

This project generated interest from the press including a small piece shown on the Meridian news.



Iden Moat

Working with the County Archaeologist, we have produced an interpretation panel about the Moat at Iden. The little known Ancient Monument is now accessible to the public, thanks to Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food's Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Although only the moat and earthworks survive, the panel has been beautifully illustrated by a historical artist. It brings to life a bustling 15th Century house with gardens, smithy and animal pens. It greatly helps visitors imagine the house as it was in its heyday.

Given time, the moat would fill in with the autumn leaf fall, slowly turning to damp ground. In order to prevent the loss of this important and historical and wildlife site, we have been clearing willow trees from the moat edge. Most of the trees will be cleared over the period of about 3 years. This allows the local wildlife to adjust to the changing habitat.

Once cleared, it will require annual trimming to keep the new shoots down. This done the moat can be enjoyed for another 500 years.



Wildlife Pack

We are producing a Rye Bay Wildlife Information Pack. This will contain information on where to go to enjoy wildlife and the countryside, guided walks and rides, long distance paths and details of Nature Reserves, species, habitats and the management needed to maintain them. The pack costs £1.50 (please make cheques payable to East Sussex County Council) and is available from the Rye Bay Countryside Office.

Northiam

Working with Northiam Parish Council to improve the habitat of a small piece of ancient woodland. This has involved removing rubbish, restoring a ditch and clearing wind blown trees. For this we have enlisted the help of the local community and scout group.

Other Work

During the winter the Rye Bay team also

- helped restore an ancient orchard in Pett
- continued our improvements at Johnson's Field, Camber;
- begun to work more closely with staff at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve and the Two Bays Project;
- continued to work with Rother District Council, The Environment Agency, Sussex Police and local businesses to improve beach safety and services at Camber.

Gareth Ellis

WALKS IN THE WEALD

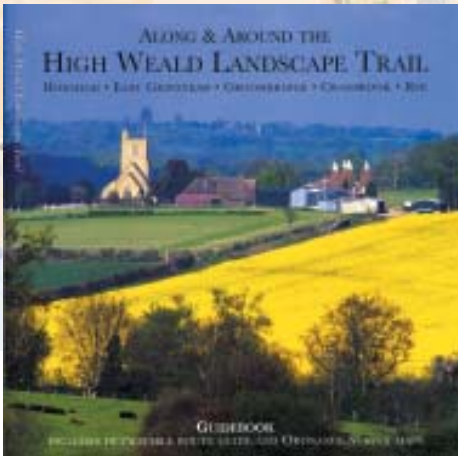
Over the past year East Sussex County Council has been working in partnership with other bodies, including the Rambler's Association, Kent County Council and the High Weald A.O.N.B. (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Unit, to produce two new guidebooks for routes through the Weald of Sussex and Kent.

Both paths are fine walks in their own right or can be broken down into shorter sections or circular walks.

Along and Around the High Weald Landscape Trail – an 89 mile walking route from Horsham to Rye

The atmosphere is rural and peaceful. The sunken lanes edged with tall trees and the streams flowing through wooded ghylls have an intimate, secretive feel. However, this peaceful countryside is actually highly managed and results from a long partnership between man and nature. It is peppered with pretty villages and historic towns, and farms are strung out along the twisting network of narrow lanes that link the settlements.

Stunning views unfold from every hilltop across the patchwork landscape. Small, irregularly shaped fields are sheltered by thick hedgerows and shaws. Church spires and white cowled oasts dot the skylines.



There are trees in every view – dense woodlands and plantations, huge specimen trees in elegant parkland, pockets of woodland edging fields, old yews in churchyards.

In the west the North and South Downs dominate the distant horizons, whereas in the east long views open out across the flat river levels near Rye.

This is a colourful landscape, dominated by the darker greens of woodland and the paler shades of pasture. These broken up by the yellows and browns of arable fields, all merging into endless blue horizons. Local building materials complement nature's palette; warm reds of tiles and brick, golden grey of sandstone churches and bold splashes of white weatherboard.



David Grosz, National Chairman of the Ramblers' Association, leading a guided walk at the launch of the Wealdway

Along and Around the Wealdway – an 80 mile walking route from Eastbourne to Gravesend

The Wealdway runs south to north from the English Channel coast to the Thames Estuary across the area of south-east England known as the Weald. It crosses the two chalk escarpments that bound the Weald to the north and south, the North and South Downs, runs through the intricate farming country of the Low Weald, with its pastureland and its patchwork of fields divided by a myriad of hedgerows, and rises up over the sandstone rocks of the High Weald at Ashdown Forest, where there are wide views across the region.

The name 'Weald' comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'Andredswald', the name they gave to the great forest that in those days clothed the region. Even today the Weald is surpassingly well wooded, giving from viewpoints such as the Downs and Ashdown Forest, an undeniable sensation that the spirit of Andredswald is alive and well.

These woodlands include shaws and coppices, hedgerows and scraps of ancient woodland whose



boundaries have not changed in a thousand years. It is a region of farmsteads, hamlets and villages. Apart from Eastbourne and Gravesend at the two ends of the walk, Tonbridge is the only large town on the Wealdway. Uckfield, Hailsham and Royal Tunbridge Wells are close by. Eastbourne is a fitting beginning or end to the Wealdway, for it fronts the sea and looks towards continental Europe. The sea and Europe have played a large part in the history of the Weald, beginning in Roman times when the Weald's iron and timber went to help maintain the Roman fleet. Gravesend, at the northern end of the walk, lies on the Thames Estuary and looks one way towards London and the other to the world.

Both guidebooks are available from the Rights of Way Section, Transport and Environment Department, St Anne's



Crescent, Lewes. BN7 1UE. Cheques payable to East Sussex County Council.

Along and Around the Wealdway £10.95, Accommodation Guide £2.50, post and packaging free.

Along and Around the High Weald Landscape Trail £8.95, post and packaging free.

Wealdway video: Promo Video, PO Box 138, East Grinstead, RH19 4ZD. £12.50 = £1 p&p.

A New Era

As I write this editorial, a group of volunteers are taking part in a one day first aid course. At the moment they are practicing mouth to mouth resuscitation on a dummy, bandaging techniques come later. The volunteers attending the course represent various user groups and parish councils. They are among many in the county who give their time freely on projects associated with improving the rights of way network for the benefit of others.

A year ago, the County Council was faced with the dilemma of having to decide whether or not to continue working with volunteers on rights of way. The introduction of new Health and Safety legislation made the County Council responsible for the safety and welfare for anyone working on their behalf. Because of the County Council's long history of working with volunteers, the new role of Parish & Volunteer Liaison Officer was created.

Since joining the Rights of Way team in 1991, I have worked as the area officer for Rother. Over the years I have had the privilege of getting to know and work with many people who live in the eastern end of the county. In May 1999 I set myself the task of keeping in touch with the groups and parishes that I knew and meeting other volunteers that work in Wealden and Lewes.

I was unaware when I started that the County Council had been working with at least 36 voluntary groups, approximately 50 parishes and many people within East Sussex County Council. I could also not anticipate that the number of groups would increase within the month of my starting work on the project. I feel that I am making some headway into the task, and that there are still a large number of people that I have yet to meet.

A great deal has been achieved this year. This is due to the hard work, dedication and cooperation of many people who work for and alongside East Sussex County Council. I would like to thank everybody concerned including Nigel Kitchener and the Rights of Way and Countryside Management Team as well as Project Officers, Alan Hart and Michael Diprose and the Maintenance Team. Thank you also to the Presentation Team, especially Bridget Rose, Martin Brown the Assistant County Archeologist and Alex Tait the County Ecologist for Transport & Environment. Most importantly, however, thank you to all the volunteers.

This issue of the Meresman introduces three of the many voluntary groups working in East Sussex. Two of the groups joined forces with the Council last year and one is long established. You will also find details of projects that have been completed or that are in hand and information regarding recent publications that have been produced in association with East Sussex County Council. The publications, devised by groups from different parts of the county, outline walks throughout the beautiful Sussex countryside.

Mary Moulton



A new kissing gate erected by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

Volunteer Projects

This is the first year that the County Council has had the opportunity to contribute towards a greater variety of projects. The type of work undertaken by the groups varies tremendously.

Some groups alternate between organising walks and maintenance work. Others concentrate on special community projects. In many cases their work culminates in the production of booklets and newsletters.

My role has been to assist by finding groups to work together, putting people in the right direction of expert help and contributing materials for the work.

This year has seen several millennium projects including the completion of the Millennium Green at Rotherfield and 'The Millennium Walk' booklet for Maresfield Parish.

In both cases the County Council's involvement was assisting with footpath improvements and in the case of Maresfield Parish, contributing towards the production of waymarks and the walks booklet.

One major project started by the Hastings and District Landrover Club is extensive clearance on Beaney's Lane near Hastings. Their long term aim is to see the total repair of the lane so that it can be used safely by everybody. The group contacted the County Council in May 1999 and initially started the work on their own. They have now joined forces with the Hastings and District Bridleway Association.

Overall, the majority of groups have undertaken general path maintenance. In this millennium year, such work could be seen as mundane. However this is perhaps the most important type of project for rights of way. Such work is carried out by the Beachy Head Group, who became established in 1984. They work all year round on paths in the South Wealden area.

I speak from personal experience when I say that without their efforts, walking in the Warbleton area would not be easy! They build stiles, bridges and carry out clearance work. They, like all the groups, take pride in their work, enjoy the experience and find satisfaction in knowing that once a job is done, there is another section of the path network open.



The Beachy Head Group receiving a big cheque from the Halifax

Hastings and District Land Rover Club

The inaugural meeting of Hastings and District Land Rover Club was held in Sainsbury's car park just off the A21 in St. Leonards on Sunday the 6th September 1998. A total of 17 vehicles turned up to our first meeting giving us an initial membership of 20. Since then we have grown in excess of 60 members and we are always receiving new membership enquiries. The aim of the club is to bring together people to share their common interest and to promote the enjoyment and use of 4x4 vehicles responsibly, legally and safely.



We have furthered this aim by organising an off road day at Battle off road course, arranged green laning trips, attended several motor shows and organised social functions. We hope to carry on with all of these sorts of events in the future and all new members are actively encouraged to take part in and help organise these events. We have also offered our services to local organisations. If any of them require a back up in case of snow, flood etc. we will be more than willing to help on a strictly non profit basis.

Our latest and most ambitious project is the clearance of Beaney's Lane. Beaney's Lane is a byway open to all traffic, running from the Ridge to Stonestile Lane. The top section of the lane is metalled and easily passable by most vehicles but the lower section is badly rutted and virtually impassable by any means. According to local sources this damage was initially formed by heavy plant using the lane as a shortcut but it has been exacerbated by 4x4 drivers using the lane as a playground.



Mike Jackson in a deep watery rut.

With the backing of ESCC, we started the clearance work on the 7th of August this year together with Hastings and Rother Bridleways Association and representatives of the British Driving Society (carriage drivers). Following appeals in the local press and word of mouth to other local clubs, almost all of the 4x4 drivers who were playing in the mud on the lane have stopped. Unfortunately a small group of 4x4 owners have taken exception to us 'spoiling their fun' and have taken to trying to undo the work we are doing by driving the lane at every opportunity, regardless of how much surface damage they are doing.

Despite the opposition of the inconsiderate few, work on the lane has progressed well. Work to date has concentrated in clearing tree growth over the lane and brushwood at the side. This has increased the amount of light and air movement on the lane's surface, which is enabling the lane to dry out much faster after rain. We have also cleared a footway to one side of the lane to enable ramblers to avoid the deeply rutted sections and mud. The clearance of the footway has seen a dramatic increase in

the numbers of people walking down the lane and we hope that once the work has finished it becomes a regular haunt for dog walkers and the Sunday afternoon family stroll.

The clearance of the footway unfortunately gave the few 4x4s still using the lane another challenge. To our horror we discovered that they had taken to leaving the main route and driving up the footway almost to the top of the lane. As well as the damage caused, this was obviously very dangerous for anybody using the footway legitimately at the same time. ESCC hired a post hole borer for us and we have positioned posts up and down the length of the footway to prevent vehicular access but still allow horse and pedestrian access. If anybody has any evidence of misuse of this lane (or any other lane, bridleway, footpath etc.) ESCC and I would be very interested in seeing it.

Work has been scaled down on the lane at the moment due to access problems and poor weather but as soon as the weather and access improves we will be back in full swing with our clearance works. Once we have completed works on Beaney's Lane we are talking to HARBA about assisting with some bridleway clearance and we may look further afield to carry out some more green lane clearance.

If anyone wishes to assist with our work or wants further details of the club please don't hesitate to contact me.

Mike Jackson. Secretary, Hastings and District Land Rover Club
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Training

The first training courses for volunteers took place over the last three months. Some groups and parishes are currently taking part in trial courses aimed to improve their map reading and path surveying skills. The experiences gained from these trial courses will enable me to plan courses that will be appropriate for all those who work on rights of way.

The courses being planned for the coming year will take the form of 'Training Days' or 'Open Days'. These will cover topics including a background to rights of way law, path surveying, map reading skills and basic first aid. For the groups who presently undertake practical work or who are interested in carrying out path maintenance, there will be the opportunity to find out more about the use of tools, stile and gate installation and the construction of small bridges. The aim of the 'Open Days' is to give volunteers who work on rights of way information about rights of way and to provide a forum for everybody to meet and exchange views. If any one has any particular topics they feel could be incorporated into the courses, please let me know.



Volunteers learning to save lives with Stephen Scudder of First Response.

Mary Mould

BTCV working with ESCC

BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) in East Sussex.

We aim to enable local people to make a positive contribution to their county's environment for the benefit of nature, the people and future generations.

In Hastings and Eastbourne, BTCV manages 'The Environment Task Force' as part of the New Deal Government Training Scheme which provides 18-24 year old people with practical training and work experience, as well as assistance in searching for jobs. BTCV and East Sussex County Council are working together on projects that will benefit the public, local communities and visitors to the County. The partnership has been co-ordinated by Mary Moulton, Parish and Volunteer Liaison Officer for ESCC, and Paul Cottingham, Senior Supervisor for BTCV.

The first project, the Millennium Green at Rotherfield, started in July 1999. The task included removing old steps, replacing two stiles with kissing gates and laying a good surface.



Looking at the Past. Martin Brown (County Archeologist), Mary Moulton and members of the BTCV.

One of the great motivations for this kind of work for the members of the BTCV group is the appreciation that we receive. Rotherfield Parish Council wrote personally to thank our teams, recognising the important contribution our teams had made to creating their Millennium Green.

We continue to work in partnership with the County Council, parish councils and local user groups throughout the county on projects on rights of way. Major projects include opening up a footpath that runs from Dallington Parish to Burwash Weald and putting in place a millennium path from Peasmarsh Junior School to St Peter and St Paul Church Peasmarsh. The path from Dallington to Burwash is an important link in the path network and its reinstatement will open up a route that has been lost for at least forty years!

The group have been involved in all aspects of the work including, research and surveying, and has included the involvement of the County Archeologist and the County Ecologist. The last survey known to have been completed on the Dallington path was by members of the Ramblers Association, Messrs F.W Gregory and E.S Edwards in July 1951. The path, which passes through woodland, was very overgrown. The detailed research gave us the vital clues needed to find the path in the undergrowth. It was with great determination that the latest surveys were undertaken by Mary Moulton (ESCC), Jim Sibree (Ramblers Association), John Keeley, (Dallington Parish Council), Paul Cottingham (Senior Supervisor BTCV), Lee Davey and Richard Cannon (Assistant Supervisors BTCV) and Simon Kunath. The route of the path was found! Although in a very rural area, the path forms a key link in the path network in the Dallington area. This has been on the Ramblers Association wish list for a long time.

The Peasmarsh Millennium path is an extension of a path improvement project in Peasmarsh Parish that has been underway over the last two years. The implementation of the Millennium Path represents parish involvement in the community. Work is taking place to improve access on paths between the Norman Church and the school, a route regularly used by the children attending the village school for visits to the church. Each stile on the Millennium Path is being marked with a millennium post and is being tested by some of the school children for ease of use. The children will be able to complete their educational walks with ease.

All at BTCV would like to thank ESCC and everybody involved in the projects mentioned, especially Mary Moulton in the Rights of Way department, Thank you for the support you have all given us.

Lee Davey, Richard Cannon. BTCV

Beachy Head Group

The Beachy Head Group was formed in 1984 and is affiliated to the Ramblers Association. Formerly the Sussex Rights of Way Group and the Eastbourne Rambling Club, the Beachy Head Group now cover the parishes of Herstmonceux, Penhurst, Westham, Pevensey and other parishes in South Wealden. The work carried out in these parishes is extensive and the group attract a great deal of support from the County Council, parishes, local companies and grant funding bodies. The latest grant of £250.00 was made by the Halifax Building Society for work carried out in Warbleton.

As a result of the last war, many paths were neglected and became overgrown, stiles were rotten and some bridges had been removed as anti-invasion precautions. Many paths were unusable. Between this time and the late sixties little was done to improve the path network until the Sussex Rights of Way Group was formed.

Since 1969 the group have made major improvements to the rights of way network in the central part of the county building many hundreds of stiles and a large number of major bridges. Since 1984 the group has erected or repaired in excess of 400 stiles, 36 bridges (8' to 30' in length) and 100 signposts, not forgetting the many miles of clearance that has been undertaken. Harry Comber, one of the founder members of the Sussex Rights of Way group, says that 'the members enjoy participating in this type of work. And when a path has been re-opened, by providing a complete set of stiles or a new bridge, there is an immense feeling of satisfaction in the knowledge that more of the countryside has become accessible.'



Taking a break. The Beachy Head Group enjoying the sunshine and a well earned rest.

If you would like more information about the group or are interested in the work they do please contact either: Harry Comber of the Beachy Head Group at 254 Victoria Drive, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 8QT or Mary Moulton, Parish & Volunteer Officer, East Sussex County Council, Transport & Environment, County Hall, Lewes BN7 1UE (01273) 482354.

These books were made for walking...

Ten Walks From Lewes – Lewes Footpath Group

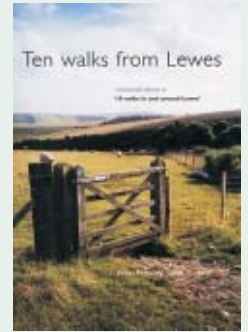
As part of the Lewes Footpaths Group's objectives of encouraging walking, a new booklet entitled **Ten Walks from Lewes** was published by the group in 1999.

The walks encourage the use of public transport rather than the car and are mainly linear, finishing at either a railway station or bus stop from which public transport returns to Lewes. Two of the walks are circular and it is possible to devise other circular routes by using parts of the walks which interconnect.

The walks were very cleverly designed by Francis Baden-Powell who also drew the maps and took wonderful photographs. Other group members trialled the walks, edited the outcome and drew some of the maps.

The group are also re-issuing their other walks booklet entitled **10 Walks in and around Lewes** which was first published in 1986. The routes have all been walked and checked and the booklet is presented in similar format to the above.

The new issue should be available in the late spring and will be available from various outlets in Lewes including Cliffe Bookshop and Lewes Tourist Information Centre.



The Millennium Walk & 8 circular walks in the Parish of Maresfield

This walks booklet was researched, collated and published by Maresfield Parish to celebrate the Millennium. Many people in the parish devoted a great deal of time to this project to devise and walk the routes. The book is full of the history of the area and the walks take you 'In the footsteps of the past'. The end result is a booklet that provides a series of walks in the parish that will enable the walker to explore the area fully and enjoy the wonderful countryside and wildlife.

This has been a communal project with which the County Council has been pleased to assist. Bridget Rose of the County Council's Presentation Team, assisted the parish with the production of the booklet, whilst David Munn of Rights of Way helped with the production of the waymarks and arrangement of some of the works. The County Council's work team also contributed by making good some of the stiles and installing dog latch stiles.

The book can be purchased for £2.00 from various outlets in the Maresfield area including Potters Bookshop, High Street, Uckfield; Whitewoods Stores, Nutley and Peter Selby, The Parade, Maresfield.

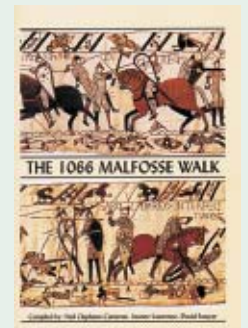


The 1066 Malfosse Walk – Battle and District Historical Society

The publication of this booklet marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Battle and District Historical Society. **The 1066 Malfosse Walk** follows a route in and around battle where historians have found evidence of specific events associated with the Battle of Hastings.

The publication will enable those who have an interest in history to explore the Battle area and gain a deeper understanding of the events that occurred in 1066. You will find a detailed description of the events and extracts of research associated with the Battle.

The booklet can be purchased for £3.95 from the Coffee Shop at the Almonry, High Street Battle or from The Battle & District Historical Society, Memorial Hall, High Street, Battle, East Sussex TN33 0AQ.



Walks Around Wivelsfield – Wivelsfield History Study Group

Walks Around Wivelsfield is a compilation of 12 walks in Wivelsfield that have been researched, walked and documented by the Wivelsfield History Study Group. The publication represents years of work undertaken by the study group.

New Volunteers

The groups and associations are always pleased to recruit new members. Not every member of a voluntary group carries out practical work, many people get involved in surveying the paths or helping with light clearance. The type and number of groups represent all path users from four wheel drive clubs to ramblers. Many volunteers represent their parish council and either carry out maintenance of rights of way or act as liaison between the landowners and the County Council.

The County Council considers the work undertaken by the volunteers to be invaluable and is always looking to encourage more people to become involved in the work. If this type of work appeals you and you would like more information about the groups and parishes in your area, please contact me.

Mary Moulton

The members of the group are delighted with the finished book. The route descriptions are clear and they are accompanied by information that highlights points of interest. The routes introduce walkers to places and buildings of local interest whilst raising the profile of the history of the area.

The book is in the final stages of production and should be available by Easter. Copies of **Walks Around Wivelsfield** can be obtained from Margaret Goodare, (01444) 471394

