

Newsletter

Winter 2020

## **THE FUTURE OF MID CHESHIRE BRIDLEWAYS AND NOTICE OF THE 2021 AGM**

Mid Cheshire Bridleways is 30 years old this year and is now at a real crisis point! Initially we had nearly 90 members and at one point had a committee of 11 including a social committee. At last year's AGM, Ray Hall stood down after 25 years as Chairman, as did Di Hall and Tony Overland and Ray made a plea for some new blood. Although we had some initial interest, we now only have a skeleton committee of 4 members, with no Chairperson or membership secretary. Our treasurer of 20 years, Sue Ward would like to retire, but has kindly agreed to carry on for a while until a replacement can be found.

Our key aims are:

- To lobby for rights of way improvements
- To research lost routes and to get these added to the definitive map
- To promote safe riding by ensuring routes are kept open and usable
- To create new routes for riders

Our key achievements are:

- Opening up several obstructed bridleways to create the Aston Ring
- Helping create new routes for riders including the Delamere Loop, the Bishop Bennett Way, the Oakmere Way and producing leaflets for all these
- Working with public authorities and agencies to create routes for riders at sites including Old Pale Woodland at Delamere and in Northwich Community Woodlands
- Getting bridleway routes added to the definitive map
- Promoting MCBA through the website and Facebook pages
- Organising rides and other social activities to raise funds

We still have some valuable work to complete such as the Oakmere Way extension once COVID restrictions allow this project to continue. We also have some smaller projects ongoing such as signage improvements and mounting blocks for Northwich Woodlands. We are also in the process of submitting several applications to have routes modified to bridleways. We also respond to many bridleway queries via our website and Facebook pages and help users report any issues.

We realise it's difficult to attract new members and support while we are in the middle of a pandemic, but bridleways have been well used by walkers, cyclist and horse riders last year and it is more important than ever to keep these routes open and usable. None of this work can take place without members and at the moment our only form of income is membership fees, so we do hope that you will continue to support our work. It also allows us to continue our research and help fund small bridleway improvements. Our membership has dwindled and our current membership is mainly those who renewed at last year's AGM as renewals were not sent out.

This year we hope to achieve a revival and attract new supporters by promoting our bridleways and encouraging people to ride, be proactive and report any problems. Rights of way departments only have a skeleton staff and do rely on users to report any issues. Our Facebook pages have been invaluable in sharing information regarding routes and issues and also helping people find someone to ride with. It does help to have a good membership when it comes to lobbying to improve access for equestrians. Although the ongoing lockdowns have constrained activities in 2020, it is important to have a plan of action for when the situation improves, hopefully by this spring or summer! As this is our thirtieth anniversary, we are also open to ideas for marking this!

### **2021 Virtual AGM on Thursday 4 February at 7.30pm via Zoom**

An agenda, the minutes of last year's AGM and a 2021 membership form are attached. Please forward any nominations or offers to join the committee to Sue Griffiths on [susangriffiths@metronet.co.uk](mailto:susangriffiths@metronet.co.uk) or please get in touch if you would like to discuss what is involved. As committee meetings can now be held virtually, this should make it much easier for people who have busy lives to engage. It would also be useful to second a few volunteers who would be willing to look at any bridleway problems in their area and report back. Sharon Angus-Crawshaw has kindly agreed to chair the meeting and a link is included in the email. If you can't attend you can forward apologies and submit any questions to: [enquiries@midcheshirebridleways.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@midcheshirebridleways.co.uk)

### **Ray Hall – Our Chairman for 25 years**

Ray Hall was one of the founder members of Mid Cheshire Bridleway Association which formed in 1991 and he acted as Chairman since 1995 for a period of 25 years! Ray has worked tirelessly all these years to improve bridleways and secure new routes despite not riding himself. Ray stood down at last year's AGM and we just wanted to acknowledge some of his dedication and hard work, although this resume doesn't do him justice.

Ray has been instrumental in opening up many routes for riders including the Aston Ring in the early nineties, the Delamere Loop in 2009 and the Oakmere Way in 2014. The photos below show the opening of the Delamere Loop at Cuddington with some members and staff from Cheshire County Council. Ray initiated discussions about this route back in 2007 and it took 15 years to complete! Ray was involved with various landowners, the Forestry Commission as well as the Council and evidence had also to be given at a public inquiry to get the Cuddington section upgraded.



Ray (Centre) at the opening of the Delamere Loop in 2009, the culmination of 15 years of hard work

In the early years before health and safety legislation constrained activities, Ray organised work parties to clear overgrown or obstructed bridleways, helped erect signs, fencing and gates. He even helped install the sleeper steps onto the Whitegate Way at Cuddington! These works were sometimes carried out in conjunction with rangers from the former Cheshire County Council before the financial crisis and all the Council staff cuts. Ray forged a good relationship over the years with Council officers, landowners and other user groups.

Ray has also attended many rights of way forums and meetings in the past with various local authorities across Cheshire and contributed to access consultations, upgrading of routes to bridleways and has raised many issues that affect horse riders.

Ray also helped promote MCBA's activities by arranging for stands at the Cheshire and Nantwich Shows and helping organise the displays. He also helped with many fund raising social activities such as the annual quizzes.



Ray (left) at the opening of the Oakmere way in 2014

### **What3Words**

I'm sure many of you will already have this App on your phone as it has been promoted by the BHS and the Horse access Facebook group amongst others. If you are unaware, the world is divided up into 3 x 3m squares, each one allocated 3 words. If you are lost, breakdown or require the emergency services, you can quote a precise location without a road name or post code. Simply, it can save lives and is widely used by the emergency services.

### **Peckforton**

We have just heard that the Peckforton Estate have agreed to extend their permissive routes for a further 10 years subject to agreement by Cheshire East Council ROW to carry on with the upkeep which sounds good news. If anyone wants a copy of the route plans, please get in touch.