

## BHS Access Achievement Award to Ray Hall

In the last newsletter, we included a resume about Ray Hall, one of the founder members of Mid Cheshire Bridleway Association. This award for excellent service to Equestrian access has recently been presented to Ray who has worked tirelessly since we formed in 1991 to improve bridleways and secure new routes in Cheshire despite not riding himself.

## Virtual AGM Report

We held our first virtual AGM on 4 February via Zoom and thanks to everyone who attended and for some useful feedback. We are pleased to welcome three new committee members who kindly volunteered – Susie Marriott, Liz Holmes and Janene Hamilton who are all keen riders and have some new ideas which is great. Sue Ward has kindly agreed to carry on as treasurer for another year but we will be seeking someone to take over from the next AGM in early 2022. Kath Wurcbacher is also acting membership secretary for this year and again we will need someone to take this on next year. As we have been without a Chair since Ray retired at the 2020 AGM, Sharon Angus-Crawshaw kindly stepped in as acting Chair for this year and chaired the AGM very well. As Sharon has recently moved to Shropshire, we will need someone to assume this role too. AT present all our meetings are held by Zoom.

## Hack 30 Challenge

As Mid Cheshire Bridleways is 30 years old this year, we thought that we should mark the occasion in a way that can go ahead despite any possible ongoing COVID restrictions. At our AGM it was suggested we do a 30 mile challenge ride and our 3 new committee members are kindly organising this during July to encourage riders to use our bridleways and other off road routes. More details and entry forms will be available shortly on our website and via our Facebook page. You will need to track your progress on a smart phone and submit this with your entry and some photos to receive a special rosette. A Paypal account is being set up which should make it easier for people to enter this, future events or even pay subscriptions. The entry fee will be £10 for members and £15 for non-members but this will include 6 months membership. This will help support our ongoing work to improve our local bridleways.

Cheshire Endurance do some pleasure rides which some members may be interested in and the next one for Cuddington is 24 July and it's worth looking at their website for other rides too as if you are a MCBA member as we are affiliated to the BHS. See their website:

<http://www.endurancegbcheshire.co.uk>

## Bridleways Update

Not good news yet as both Bridleways Acton Bridge 10 (between Acton Bridge and Crowton Church and Willington (past Tirley Garth) are still officially closed. Cheshire West ROW have quotes for these jobs but progress is being held up by lack of funds and resources. Both routes are popular for walkers, cyclists as well as horse riders so please feel free to raise with your local Parish Council or Ward Councilors. We will continue to chase but the more people that report issues the better!

**Aston Ring** – We are still chasing CWAC ROW about the promised repairs to the section along Pickering's Cut. Although there are signs of recent badger activity, the route is fairly dry in at the moment. If you do choose to ride this route, the safest option appears to be via the diversion using the two bridle gates and keeping to the vehicle tracks which avoids the badger activity. The other option is to dismount as previous advice and carefully lead your horse between the two mounting blocks provided.



We are aware that several riders have ridden this route recently without any problems and we welcome feedback as always. Parking can be a problem and the Leigh Arms car park is only open to patrons and the roads here tend to get very congested, especially at weekends. It may be possible to park at the pub at off peak times by arrangement and use of the facilities on your return. A copy of this route and some others is available to download from our website. We also have many laminated copies of this, the Delamere Loop and Oakmere Way which we hope to make available again at local outlets soon or you can get in touch via our email address below.

**Northwich Community Woodlands** – Our grant application to the BHS access fund for two sandstone mounting blocks, one for Marbury Park car park and the other for Anderton has been approved in principle. This is for 50% of the total cost with the Friends of Anderton and Marbury kindly agreeing to fund the balance. We have sourced some stone locally and it has been delivered and we are just awaiting the installation. This will save riders having to take their own mobile mounting blocks.

Since Lockdown ended, riders are getting out and about more so please feel free to post any photos or routes ridden on our Facebook pages as we have a public and a closed group. Also if you do come across any issues do let us know as well as reporting these yourselves. You will find the links on our website.

## BHS 2026 Researching routes

Dobbin Data is a new mapping tool where you can share or find information on equestrian use of selected features on public rights of way, roads and certain other routes. The BHS are gathering data on features such as tarmac roads which are not slippery, railway crossings, routes alongside railways, motorway bridges, commons, forestry and shared use trails (such as disused railways). All equestrians are being encouraged to share their examples of the selected features, to build up a repertoire of examples and case studies.

The following link which is also on our website takes you to the BHS Dobbin page and has a link to the 2026 page too. Do check this and add any routes you ride regularly if not public rights of way: <https://www.bhsaccess.org.uk/dobbin>

There are various training opportunities also on the BHS access page if anyone is interesting in researching any routes via this link: <https://www.bhs.org.uk/enjoy-riding/events-and-competitions/results?cat=Virtual+Training+and+Events>

There are also some historical documents covering Cheshire which are being edited and are available on the BHS cloud. Sue Nixon, one of our members from the BHS Cheshire committee is happy for anyone to get in touch for further information by emailing: [siouxnixon@outlook.com](mailto:siouxnixon@outlook.com)

**Accident and Incident Reporting** – The BHS have launched a new app for smart phones, **Horse i** that allow easier and immediate reporting of incidents, than via the website. These do not have to be traffic accidents and can be incidents due to dogs, fireworks or drones for example. The BHS cannot lobby for changes unless they have these figures available.

We have recently made contact with the new BHS Access Field Officer for the north and north west, Victor Pogson. He has a huge area to cover, but we hope to invite him to one of our meetings this year. He was instrumental in getting our grant application approved for the mounting blocks.

## Publications of Interest

**Bare Hooves and Open Hearts** - by one of our former members, Fran McNicholl who is a consultant surgeon and a keen amateur equestrian:

*"Bare Hooves and Open Hearts" tells the story of my chequered journey from traditional eventer towards a more thoughtful and holistic type of equestrianism. The book includes stories and guidance based on experience around barefoot performance, healthy diet, sustainable horse keeping, mindset and horse-human connection."*

Bare Hooves and Open Hearts is available to order direct from Sea Crow Press, Amazon & bookstores . Price on Amazon £12.23 but currently discounted to £9.99 while signed copies from Fran are £12 in person or £12.99 posted.



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"Fran McNicol's quest to improve the physical and mental health of her horses never ends. Her journey is a voyage of discovery."  
~Tania Kindersley, author of The Place of Peace: Change Yourself, Change Your Horse and The Happy Horse: An Amateur\* Guide to Being The Human Your Horse Deserves

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