***Meeting 26th April 2019***

**Retrieving Lost Bridleways**

*Are you totally satisfied with your “riding country”? Or, would you like some more off road riding?*

*We want to tell you how that could be possible.*

*Many thanks to those of you who have replied about this meeting and have reserved places.*

*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**

*Last week we went to see one of the people who are going to talk to us about this issue and it has opened our eyes to what is a real challenge.*

*There is no doubt that over the years many footpaths and bridleways that should have been placed on to Parish Council definitive maps have not. In many cases rights of way have also been recorded as footpaths when historically they have always been used by carts and people on horseback.*

***This means that in 2026, the cut-off point as laid down by government, it will no longer be possible to reinstate them. They will, in short, be lost forever****.*

*So what might this mean for you as a walker, horse rider or cyclist? You may think that there aren’t any tracks near you that will be affected but we were alarmed by the fact that in the area covered by the person we went to see there are innumerable tracks to which this applies. Two of our members also started looking at their own parish before illness prevented one of them from going any further and once again were amazed to discover just how many paths and tracks they found which were simply not recorded on the definitive map.*

*It is important, therefore that each and everyone of us do what we can to prevent these rights of way being lost. It is not something that can be left to the committee of South West Riders, The British Horse Society or the Ramblers association to deal with. The job is simply too big. We all need to look at our own area. There is also evidence that in Devon we are rather behind compared to Somerset or Cornwall. In fairness Devon County Council did some work on this a little while ago before the spending cuts began to bite but you will see when you look at the website below that Cornwall have logged 2102 paths on the site, Somerset 350 and Devon 34. You will find the website a mine of information and will enable you look in detail at your own area.*

*Fortunately in recent months some incredibly useful resources have become available on the internet. Look at the bhsaccess.org.uk/dobbin website. It is open to everybody and the password is 2026. Another valuable resource is the National Library of Scotland (digital resources) website where you have free access to masses of historical maps throughout The British isles and can find your own area in great detail and this can also show important evidence of a Right of Way. Here you can also see if something was a right of way and is no longer marked as such on the current map*

*So when you have found a potential lost right of way what do you do then? Well that is the main purpose of our meeting. To give you the tools to do the job and, put you in touch with experts who can guide and mentor you.*

*It may be that this research is not for you but it is still important that you attend anyway as we all need to be aware of what precisely is going on.*

***Please can those of you who have not yet responded to say whether or not they can come do so now. This will not be a “dry as dust”. We promise you that you will be riveted by what you hear and there will be refreshments and a chance to chat at the end.*** *There will be no charge.**If you have to cancel nearer the time that is no problem but clearly with something as important as this space may be a factor and we want to ensure South West Riders have the first opportunity to attend. We also intend to invite reps from the Devon Branches of The Ramblers Association and Cycling clubs in Devon.*

*Many thanks for taking the trouble to read this.*

*Kind regards,*

*Richard Leonard*

*Press and publicity officer*

*South West Riders.*