

**From:** Alison Heath [mailto:alisonheath71@hotmail.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 20 May 2016 11:39  
**To:** Pushman (External), Richard  
**Cc:** ross osborn; Clark, Jonathan  
**Subject:** Rights of Way - historic research

Dear Mr Pushman,

Thank you so much for your response to my concerns about the organisation of this research. I do understand that some historic evidence is useful for those who are researching lost footpaths, but it cannot be used to the same extent with regard to research on tracks with higher rights. It is not for nothing that bridleways used to be called bridle roads. They were roads and left a bigger imprint than footpaths. Those who are trying to get higher rights on certain routes recorded have access to more historical evidence such as the old travellers' maps for Bucks, which date back to the eighteenth century, and the tithe maps which are of little or no use for research into lost footpaths.

This means that research for tracks with higher rights than footpaths needs to be conducted on a larger scale than footpath research. Volunteers have been asked to say which areas they are interested in researching - parishes or clusters of parishes. While this may be ideal for research into lost footpaths it does not serve the interests of those who are mainly interested in researching routes with higher rights.

Phil Wadey and Sarah Bucks recommend that research should be carried out on a systematic basis and that researchers should draw up their own research maps to record the tracks of interest to them and their progress in carrying out research on them. This enables researchers to communicate with other researchers and prevents research being duplicated. These maps are based on the Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps. My particular research area is based on the Explorer Map 192 at present i.e. Buckingham & Milton Keynes. I do think we need to rethink what we are doing here so that the research can be properly coordinated.

I note that you refer to the lack of bridleways highlighted in ROWIP. It also notes the fragmented nature of the bridleway network. I am finding that all the DMMO applications I have so far put in are helping to create important connections between bridleways so historic research appears to be of particular importance in helping to create a connected bridleway network.

I have one other concern about the research as it is now operating. All researchers have been asked to work on both footpaths and bridleways. While I am happy to look for lost footpaths in the parish where I live (Hogshaw) because I walk as well as ride here I would not be able to research footpaths in an area which is not familiar to me. With this in mind I think it is unfair to ask volunteers to research both footpaths and bridleways in the area they want to cover if their real interest is in routes with higher rights. As I have said, these volunteers need to research a larger area, not just clusters of parishes.

Lastly the ROWIP refers to safety issues and the need to take walkers, horse riders and cyclists off busy roads. This is of particular importance with regard to horse riders. Much publicity has rightly been given to accidents relating to cyclists but the statistics are even more horrifying for horse riders. While the government figures for

hospital admissions for accidents with vehicles (2012-3) was 2820 for cyclists it was 4052 for horse riders.

I will of course continue with my research into routes with higher rights in north Bucks and keep Ross Osborn informed of what I am doing. I am very ready to co-operate with anyone working in the area I have outlined and to share what experience I have with other researchers.

I am sorry to bother you with another long email but I do feel it is important that we put our thoughts down in writing.

Kind regards,

Alison Heath

LAF member and BHS County Access and Bridleways Officer for Bucks

#### Note from the highway authority

The LAF project is to research definitive rights, see if there are any errors and to 'restore the record' – whether that be identifying missing routes or seeking to change the status of an existing route. Volunteers will be able to research 'whole routes' that cross parish, district and county boundaries and communicate between each other to eliminate duplication of effort.

The volunteers do not have to be experts; the vast majority of applications received are from every-day people who are not experts in rights of way or historical research. They just need to present to us their findings and why they think the definitive map is wrong; we will do the rest. It is hoped the training has given the volunteers an idea about the documents they can research and the confidence to make an application. They do not have to look at every piece of evidence, so it is hoped this will not put people off. While familiarity with an area can help, it is assumed both footpath and bridleway research can be done 'remotely' by comparison between the definitive map and reference to the historical data.

Feedback from participants of the training day has been very positive.