



Would you like to increase the number of bridleways in your area by up to 50%? Well you can, but the opportunity will be lost if you do not act quickly. At the recent MSABG annual meeting Chris Smith introduced the new **Don't Lose Your Way** group. Two MSABG members are a part of this group.

The law is to change on 1st Jan 2026. Any bridleway* that was in existence before 1948 will be extinguished forever if it has not been recorded. There will not be another chance and it is up to 'the public' to apply to have such paths recorded or to live with the consequence of losing these 'ways'.

The **Don't Lose Your Way** group intends to try to pool resources to research paths which might historically have had public access but which for various reasons have not been mapped as such. It expects to:

- Identify paths which have not been recorded or which have been recorded incorrectly (many old bridleway routes are only recorded as footpaths).
- Decide which paths are the most useful -- do they lead somewhere specific? Do they link other paths? Do they form a circular route? Would it avoid people having to use a road?
- Split the research into type -- someone might look at Tithe Maps; someone the Finance Act Maps; someone Railway Maps and so on so that information for all the chosen paths can be obtained from that source in one 'hit'.

YOU NEED YOUR HELP in one of two ways:

1. Help to accumulate the list of paths that need to be looked at, you might:

- Ask any older, local friends and relative where people used to ride in days gone by.
- Check the Ordnance Survey map to see if paths you ride (or would like to ride!) are actually marked as bridleways or byways.
- Notice where a bridleway changes to footpath -- typically at a parish boundary or a road. Something odd there wouldn't you say? Contact Hilary (hilarypierce@btinternet.com Tel: 01444 2429889 Mob: 07970 958204) with any information or oddities that you find. She has some maps and tools that will help to suggest whether 'your' path was historically used on horseback.

2. You could join the research group:

- Some research can be done on-line -- checking what documents are available on the internet and in various archives (we can give guidance).
- The status of paths/roads ridden can be checked on County Council interactive maps on-line.
- Some research can be done by comparing the current OS maps with the old OS maps -- where an old road is now recorded as a footpath or where a bridleway changes to a path of indeterminate status. Alarm bells ring!
- Some research involves visits to county or National Archives. Contact Chris Smith cs@hbhelp.co.uk if you could help with any of these tasks or if you know any local history buffs who would be interested.

The group is collecting paths for their initial list NOW (1st December is targeted). ACT NOW whilst our enthusiasm and resources are high. One small group cannot 'find' all the paths. MSABG members and their friends know their patch. If each looks at their own then who knows what treasure is hidden there. There are said to be about three paths per parish not correctly recorded. Go find! (HP).

*and all other Public Rights of Way.