

ARCHIVED NEWS 2009

## CARNYORTH MOOR

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11th May 2009

### **CARNYORTH MOOR - CATTLE NOW GRAZING**

All 10 new gates are now in place and a small group of longhorn cattle are now on the moors. The cattle have recently been photographed using the stones of Tregeseal Circle as rubbing posts and are likely to cause damage - as we warned months ago.

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13th May 2009

### **CARNYORTH CATTLE TAKEN OFF THE MOOR**

The herd of longhorn cattle referred to below have been taken off the moor - they were seen in an adjacent field on Wednesday morning (13th May). Is this semi-permanent? Is it just a coincidence that this happened the day following the forum? The Cornwall Ancient Sites Protection Network (CASPN) has been informed that cattle were seen using the stones of Tregeseal Circle as rubbing posts.

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19th June 2009

### **CATTLE AROUND STONE CIRCLE**

A beautiful peaceful area formerly perfectly safe for ramblers, dog walkers and horse riders has been turned into a virtual no-go area with new barbed wire fencing, numerous gates and longhorn cattle that have a habit of congregating at Tregeseal Stone Circle and using the stones as rubbing posts.

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1st July 2009

### **SAVE PENWITH MOORS MEETING WITH ARCHAEOLOGISTS**

On Wednesday 1st July two supporters of Save Penwith Moors (Craig Weatherhill and Ian Cooke) had a site meeting at Tregeseal Circle with Anne Preston-Jones, Senior Archaeologist with Cornwall Council Historic Environment Service, and an official of English Heritage. Some 5 or 6 stones of the circle were found to be loose – two significantly so: it was uncertain whether this had been caused by cattle rubbing against the stones or shrinkage of the ground due to the hot weather – probably a combination of both. SPM made their case

against fencing and grazing of the moors and stressed that although landowners/tenants had the right to graze the moors this was seldom, if ever, done in recent times unless public money was forthcoming, and that these areas represented the last few safe cattle-free open spaces left for the public to enjoy.

### **CHILDREN ON THE MOOR**

The Manager of Carnyorth Environmental Centre has been informed of current developments and potential risks on the moor, since they regularly take groups of school children there for environmental education activities.

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8th July 2009

### **CARNYORTH MOOR AGAIN**

I walked this moor on Wednesday 8th July and noticed the gate where the nasty accident happened on 20th June was totally missing its catch so that if the wind was in the 'wrong' direction it could blow open and cattle would be able to escape onto the road. This has been reported to Natural England.

Also the cattle, that spend a lot of their time in two small fields adjacent to the moor where they have their only water supply (the 2 moorland water troughs have still not been installed), have again been around Tregeseal circle. It was very noticeable that they have only eaten grass within the circle and not trampled any of the small areas of bracken there. (pictures below taken 8/7/2009)



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12th June 2009

### **NATURAL ENGLAND LISTENS TO THE PUBLIC**

A letter by Peter Bowden of Natural England was printed in *The Cornishman* ‘What do we all want for Penwith in 20 years time?’ (28/5/2009). In his letter Bowden, writing of the mounting blocks provided on Carnyorth Moor on tracks that are not definitive bridleways but have been ridden for many decades, states that this demonstrated “local Natural England staff have listened and continue to listen to views from the community”. This paltry concession is not convincing. St Just Town Council – unlike Natural England, an elected body representing thousands of local people – voted 8 to 2 on 29th September 2008 that HEATH Project proposals to erect fencing, stiles and gates on Kenidjack Common (Carnyorth Moor) would have an adverse effect on access and tourism, yet, despite this overwhelming vote of no confidence, the Project has provocatively gone ahead.

Mr Bowden’s letter also mentioned that local people have an opportunity to have their views “aired and discussed” at the Penwith Moors Forum. But this is a closed forum not open to members of the public: few people are likely to know who to contact. Save Penwith Moors is therefore asking for forum meetings to be announced in local newspapers with a contact name, phone number and email, so that members of the public can send in their opinions.

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17th July 2009

### **ANOTHER MISERABLE FAILURE**

Cattle grazing in and around Tregeseal Stone Circle have spectacularly failed to trample any of the local bracken and simply confined themselves to eating the grass. In an effort to alleviate the pressure of cattle on the circle the County Historic Environment Service has therefore had to organise the mechanical cutting of surrounding bracken – not what the HEATH Project was designed to do but what Save Penwith Moors has always campaigned for: manual and/or mechanical clearance of ancient sites. Oddly, bracken within the circle has been left untouched. The loose stones of the circle are now reported to have been stabilised with rab packed around their base.

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3rd August 2009

### **CARNYORTH CATTLE GRID**

Further to the report of a narrow escape by a dog on a cattle grid at Carnyorth Moor (see under 29/7/2009) it is known that Joe Oliver, the former Natural England official for the HEATH Project, was asked last February if warning signs could be put up: this request was denied with the excuse they would be too visually intrusive! A serious case of selective eyesight: it was NE that was responsible for installation of gates, fencing and the cattle grid itself.

This incident has now been reported to the Cornwall Council senior enforcement officer with the comment that the cattle grid has, allegedly, been installed illegally right across a public footpath and should be removed, and that there is an apparently illegal diversion of the path through an adjacent gate. An urgent response was requested from both the legal and safety points of view.

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8th August 2009

### **COMMENTS TO NATURAL ENGLAND LETTER OF 28/7/2009**

#### **CARRY ON REGARDLESS**

The tone of the letter implies that Natural England intends to go ahead with their plans regardless of public opinion and concerns: “Natural England will continue to offer agri-environment agreements to farmers and other land owners”, and that “the gates at Carnyorth and Kenidjack Common will not be removed while the area is being grazed”. This despite the commission of a report by John Waldon whereby it is said by NE that: “There is now an opportunity for us [NE] to listen to the community, in the widest sense”. Many requests for information from the various agencies, over which Natural England has overall supervision, have failed to get any satisfactory replies or even any acknowledgement. They should have done all this ‘consultation’ before presenting the public with a fait accompli whereby Carnyorth Moor and other areas were enclosed in preparation for grazing – no wonder people are so angry.

#### **FARMERS IN CHARGE**

It appears that farmers do not have to keep their cattle on the moors during the whole of the grazing period but are permitted to give their animals “extra feed or mineral supplements” in

back-up fields. In other words there is not sufficient nourishment on the moors for cattle to prosper, and the idea of them trampling bracken and improving biodiversity will, consequently, take a 'back seat'. Farmers are also to be left to their own judgment as to how many cattle graze the moors and when, if at all, they are reduced in number or removed altogether during busy holiday periods.

## INJURY

Mr Bowden's letter disingenuously implies that the latch which "allegedly injured a horse" at one of the gates on Carnyorth Moor was the result of vandalism to the latch. This is not true. The horse was not **allegedly** injured but **was** injured, and seriously at that. When I first saw this gate during early May 2009 some time before the assumed vandalism it was clear that the latch had not been properly fitted: of the two bolts fixing it to the granite post, one was screwed right in but the lower one was half out and at an angle, indicating that it was not properly fitted and could well have fallen out altogether through the gate banging shut or, even, by cattle pushing around this gate.

## HERBICIDES

The alleged improvement in the biodiversity/management of Bodmin and Dartmoor is often held up to us [SPM] as an example of success in improving reduction of bracken etc, yet these areas have been subjected to aerial spraying with herbicide for some years – a method not intended for West Penwith. It is therefore misleading to make any comparison between these areas.

## DOGS AND BIRDS

As regards cattle, dogs and ground-nesting birds, some breeds of dog may indeed chase after birds but many breeds most certainly do not. Slow moving cattle (and people) will assuredly be unable to avoid trampling on nests even if the adult birds do fly away.

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5th September 2009

### **MOORLAND MADNESS**



We have been informed by a local resident that when she was walking with her dog on Carnyorth Moor about mid-day on Friday 4th September, she saw something not dissimilar from a Carry On film (her words).

“The farmer was trying to get the cattle out of their field. He was riding around the fields on his quad bike, shouting with his two dogs, appearing out of control, barking. The cows (understandably) were completely spooked and charging around! From what I could see he was unsuccessful in his attempt to get them onto the moors because everything then went quiet. Possibly he realized there were people around or possibly he stopped for a cup of tea before resuming the madness, or perhaps they trampled him! This whole scene was scary to watch because it appeared so out of control. If these cattle are docile then they won't be for much longer with this type of behavior, plus they will not take too kindly to dogs when they do eventually graze the moors. Can this total madness continue?”

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12th September 2009

### **ENCOUNTER WITH LONGHORNS**

On Wednesday 9th September I went for a walk with my partner and her dog on Carnyorth Moor which is looking particularly beautiful at the moment. While we were walking a public footpath (St Just 139) we could see the group of longhorns in the distance by the path, as we got closer we shouted to try and get them to move - they refused. After some 15 minutes of hanging around, we decided it would be too risky to walk past them, especially with a dog in tow, so we back-tracked to the road and then had to walk down Trewellard Hill. for about half a mile before regaining the moors by the cattle grid at Hectors House. We were extremely angry - to put it mildly.

It is disgraceful that these selfish and arrogant officials sat in their offices - how often do they ever walk or ride these moors? - dictate to locals how the moors should be 'managed' and spoil what little open access land we have to enjoy in peace. The ill-feeling they are creating will explode one day.

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### **NOT VERY HELPFUL - CARNYORTH GATE**

I sent an email to Peter Bowden of Natural England on 3rd September regarding the narrowness of a gate on Carnyorth Moor.

"Also re your remarks about the narrowness of the gate where the accident to a horse occurred by Hectors House: you said the track was too narrow for a wider gate yet the HEATH Project built two short sections of Cornish hedge either side of this gate that significantly narrowed the width of the track itself."

The reply I received a few days later (below) confirmed both the lack of detailed knowledge of what had been done under the HEATH Project and the determined arrogance of Natural England.

"I am unsure as to how wide the gate or the track were before or if they have changed. The HEATH Project finished at the end of December 2008 and there is no intention now to widen anything – gateway or track. Horse riders are using this gate, but If they find this gate too narrow they could use the next one about 100 metres further on."

Here is the gate in question. Note how the width of the path has been considerably reduced by recent Cornish hedging.



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7th October 2009

### **YET A THIRD EQUESTRIAN ACCIDENT ON CARNYORTH MOOR**

THE SECOND RIDING ACCIDENT: caused by faulty gate catch on Carnyorth Moor (20 June 2009)

On Sunday 4th October there was yet a third potentially nasty accident involving a horse rider on Carnyorth Moor. A lady rider was cornered by longhorn cattle against a gate and thrown off her horse, suffering a sprained neck.

Following this incident an email was sent by Craig Weatherhill to Vaughan Robbins of Natural England pointing out that they had previously assured Save Penwith Moors that any concerns arising from the new gates and fences would be dealt with immediately. The previous incident, which caused severe injury (not alleged as NE has previously stated) to a valuable horse, was caused by a poorly installed gate (not vandalised as NE also alleged), the state of which had been reported five weeks previously. The Heathlands Forum had also been informed that there were problems with the gravity returns on all the gates, and it had also been reported that, where mounting blocks had been placed, they were on the wrong side of the path (a horse is mounted from the left side). That was three months ago and nothing has been done.

Again it was reported that the large gate at the top of Devil's Lane was not only too large and heavy for riders to negotiate, but that its opening side was right next to a projecting wooden stile that created an immediate danger to horses. That was four months ago. Nothing has been done.

To have three accidents directly linked to formerly reported hazards is not just tragic, but is an avoidable consequence of poor installation and/or selection of materials from an organisation supposedly having such wide experience, and a failure to accept responsibility for that same installation or take any note of SPM at the Forum. This makes Natural England – not the farmer – culpable as the moorland 'hardware' handover to the farmer should, we consider, have included a risk assessment.

It was also proved to the Forum that the intimidatory signs, erected by NE and bearing its name, were unlawful under the terms of the CRow Act 2000, and yet they are still in place. Their effect has been readily apparent this summer, with walkers reduced to a quarter of their usual number; riders to around one tenth.

Enough is enough. After several months, the longhorn cattle have not touched the bracken but simply concentrated on grasses growing next to paths, gates and within the stone circle. That is, when they venture out of their fields at all. The two proposed water troughs have never been installed. The scheme has utterly failed. Admit that this project was ill-conceived. For heaven's sake, admit that this project was ill-conceived. End it, remove the alien fences, gates and cattle grids and take note of the proposals that Save Penwith Moors have put to you.

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31st October 2009

### **FORMAL COMPLAINT & UNLAWFUL OBSTRUCTION**

Save Penwith Moors has made a formal complaint to Cornwall Council that the cattle grid installed during December 2008 across the complete width of public right of way St Just 147 at approximately SW3821/3335 near Hectors House, Carnyorth Moor, is causing an obstruction to walkers – especially those with dogs and/or small children whose legs can (and have already) been trapped in the grid. And that since there has, apparently, never been a Modification Order application to divert the footpath around this grid then this obstruction should be removed forthwith and the footpath reinstated.

A reply was quickly received from the County Environment Service Manager on 28th October (my emphasis below): “I acknowledge your report of a cattle-grid obstructing the public right of way ..... and having considered advice from the Legal Services team at Cornwall Council, it is our view that the cattle-grid is **an unlawful obstruction** on the public footpath.”

Negotiations are ongoing to get this cattle grid removed.

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14th November 2009

## **DANGEROUS CATTLE GRID**



The cattle grid near Hectors House on Carnyorth moor is the subject of an official complaint to Cornwall Council since it has been installed across the complete width of a public right of way (St Just 147). It is now impossible for anyone to exercise their legal right to walk this path, especially with a dog; also, if you walk with a toddler there is the likelihood that its feet will get stuck in the grid. There is thus the potential for serious injury. The grid was installed as part of the Natural England HEATH Project and has been confirmed as an "unlawful obstruction" - we want it removed.

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