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We need some order on our green lanes

In the light of recent comments made in the LDNPA's Rights of Way Committee document 'Future Management of Unsealed Sections of Public Roads...', I feel I must throw some light and realism on the subject of the use of 'green lanes' (unclassified roads), within the Lake District and specifically in and near to the Little Langdale Valley.

Until recent times Little Langdale and its surrounding green lanes have been extremely quiet with minimal traffic use. To suggest otherwise is simply wrong. Green lane traffic was largely restricted to farm use. Quarry traffic, now ceased, travelled the short distance along the unsurfaced road to the road at Tilberthwaite or to the surfaced road at Holmground.

Even the main surfaced road through Little Langdale saw little traffic, and as a child I used to 'bogey' (cart with pram wheels and no brakes) from Dale End Farm and all the way down the hill, winding past Little Langdale Chapel, through the village and on to pass the Three Shires Inn with little or no fear of encountering an approaching vehicle.

My father, as part of his job at Moss Rigg Quarry, was supplied with a works Land Rover. He never used it and chose to walk from Little Langdale to Moss Rigg, in all weathers, six days a week. A choice he made to be close to nature, enjoy the freedom, solitude and magnificent landscape of the green lane from Little Langdale, over the ford, to Moss Rigg Quarry.

When as a youngster I worked for Jim Hodgson, then of Wilson Place Farm, he still used a horse (Clydesdale shirehorse) and cart for most jobs, preferring to keep his Massey Ferguson Tractor in the barn. Such was the pace of life.

In 1963 after a long and determined fight by local people, mains electricity came to Little Langdale. We no longer had to read by candlelight but otherwise our world seemed to change very little. Certainly we were conscious that traffic on the main road was increasing year on year, but thankfully the green lanes remained an oasis of peace used mainly by a slowly growing group of leisure seekers – the 'Lakeland Walker'.

It is ironic that in the late 1960s the National Park Authority conducted a study into the merits of limiting all tourist traffic within the Park and providing parking around the perimeter. Apparently the volume of traffic was considered damaging and unsustainable some fifty years ago! Locals were alarmed. How would they continue with their normal lives, sustain their farming activities; would it deter 'holiday visitors' who previously required accommodation and supplied a vital lifeline for the local economy? Of course, it all came to nothing.

Inevitably the roads became busier and more congested while the green lanes remained largely tranquil. Then came the development of the luxury 4x4.

Vehicles that could take the affluent anywhere. Three ton monstrosities that guzzle diesel and throw out pollution for fun. Locals can't imagine why anyone would want to block the roads and speed up climate change by driving them.

Apparently, however, our LDNPA leadership is not of the same mind. They seem unconcerned that these monsters have destroyed the peace and solitude of our green lanes, that they churn up the lane surface, pollute the atmosphere and ultimately physically block the route for the inoffensive pedestrian. In most places, on stone walled lanes around Little Langdale, you have to stop and backtrack and huddle in a gateway, hoping you won't be crushed.

When we were at Little Langdale school we used to have frequent nature walks along these green lanes. Basically this consisted of a group of 'unrulies' running flat out from one agreed stopping point to another whilst the 'swots' actually took in the nature. You can guess which group I belonged to. Today this would be an impossible thing to do. Dogs and children must be under strict control, yet another loss of freedom. And writing this on a beautiful autumn day, I am reminded of a time when we all gathered blackberries, sloes, hazel nuts and later, rosehips from the green lanes around Little Langdale. All the fruits of autumn now covered with grime and dust thrown up by the 'Chelsea Tractors'.

In this world of increasing awareness and concern about climate change and the urgent need to take action, how could anyone support the use of these vehicles on our Lake District green lanes? How could anyone who understands the fragile and special nature of the Lake District

National Park and World Heritage Site not understand that it needs protection from the damaging self-interest of a very few? I believe profoundly that there is no place for these vehicles on these lanes in the heart of the Lake District. For the sake of the many, these lanes must be subject to Traffic Regulation Orders to ban all use by leisure 4x4 vehicles.

I'm very much a local Langdale boy. I have written and photographed over thirty published books on climbing and walking and the Lake District. My books that specifically cover the areas being considered for TROs include *Complete Lakeland Fells*, the photographic study *A Year In The Life of The Langdales* and my own guidebook *Walk The Langdales*.

Currently I contribute articles to *Cumbria* and *Lakeland Walker*.

I'm part of the famous Birkett climbing dynasty which has had a major influence on the standards and ethics of British climbing. I'm a member of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District and the Climbers Club; a member of the British Guild of Travel Writers, The Outdoor Writers and Photographic Guild and the Society of Authors. Although I don't speak formally for any of these bodies the opinions I express here are widespread within all those I have listed.

Bill Birkett, Grasmere

SPECIAL MONUMENT

It was with great interest that I read about the Sir John Barrow Monument (*Cumbria*, October) as it brought back so many memories of my childhood.

My grandparents lived in Little Urswick and as soon as the "peppercot", as