

Green Lanes ... finding them!!

So you've got the 4x4 and you want to use it, but where to go?

There's a bit of preparation required, I won't discuss the 4x4 prep as that's covered elsewhere, but preparation for finding, and making sure they're legal, green lanes to drive.

First step get an Ordnance Survey map of your area. 1:25k is best, 1:50k is also very useful as an overall and quick guide. Get yourself familiar with the main OS key (slightly different for each map scale, particularly the keys for roads of all types below A or B road status. Not all 'green lanes' are byways, some cracking lanes can be had by following up unclassified roads.

So, Key 1, the Explorer 1:25k, Orange coloured paper maps. We're only interested in roads and rights of way at the moment.

ROADS AND PATHS		Not necessarily rights of way	
	Motorway		Service area
	Dual carriageway		Junction number
	Main road		
	Secondary road		
	Narrow road with passing places		
	Road under construction		
	Road generally more than 4 m wide		
	Road generally less than 4 m wide		
	Other road, drive or track, fenced and unfenced		
	Gradient: steeper than 20% (1 in 5); 14% (1 in 7) to 20% (1 in 5)		
	Ferry; Ferry P - passenger only		
	Path		





So look at the map, we can mostly discount the Motorway system and A & B roads as only being useful to get somewhere, the roads and tracks we need to look for are ...

	Road generally less than 4 m wide
	Other road, drive or track, fenced and unfenced

All of which can be useful to us, especially the unfenced roads as they are also sometimes single-track, un-kept and can be really quite rough ... just what we want!


However, the 'real' green-lanes are amongst the following


PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (Rights of way are not shown on maps of Scotland)



 Footpath
 Bridleway
 Byway open to all traffic
 Restricted byway (from 2nd May 2006 roads used as public paths were redesignated as restricted byways. They provide a right of way for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and other non-mechanically propelled vehicles)


Public rights of way shown on this map have been taken from local authority definitive maps and later amendments.
Rights of way are liable to change and may not be clearly defined on the ground.
Please check with the relevant local authority for the latest information
The representation on this map of any other road, track or path is no evidence of the existence of a right of way

OTHER PUBLIC ACCESS

 Other routes with public access (not normally shown in urban areas)
The exact nature of the rights on these routes and the existence of any restrictions may be checked with the local highway authority. Alignments are based on the best information available

 National Trail / Long Distance Route ; Recreational Route

 Permissive footpath
 Permissive bridleway } Footpaths and bridleways along which landowners have permitted public use but which are not rights of way. The agreement may be withdrawn

 Traffic-free cycle route

The lanes of interest to us are the boats. Byway open to all traffic.

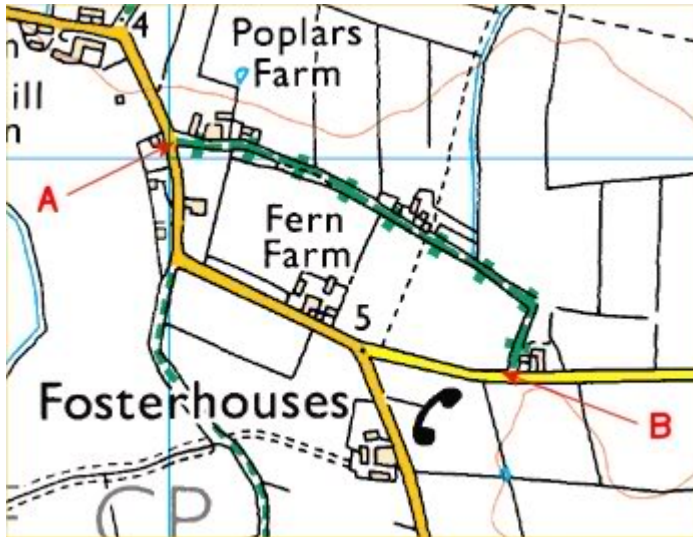
Restricted Byways (formerly rupps) are supposedly of no use (legally) for vehicular use any more, but more of that later. We CANNOT drive on footpaths or bridleways, end of ! Unfortunately many footpaths and bridlepaths are obviously used by 4x4's (or vehicles at least) but local farmers are likely to have an agricultural easement for access to use these, so just because they're allowed to doesn't mean we can!

The 'Other routes with public access' (ORPA) routes are also useful in that many long distance rights of way are open to vehicles, such as Peddars Way in Norfolk. Again, these are potentially interesting if there's one near you, but you must check it's legality first before driving!

So, it's the lines of green crosses (Red crosses on 1:50k maps) that denote the lanes we can drive on. They are often un-kempt, scratchy, boggy/muddy and rutted as there are too few of them for the number of people who want to drive them. But they are the gold-dust we want ...

So, what do they look like on a real map? How can we tell they're legal, and how can we tell they might be interesting?

Consider the following map section ...

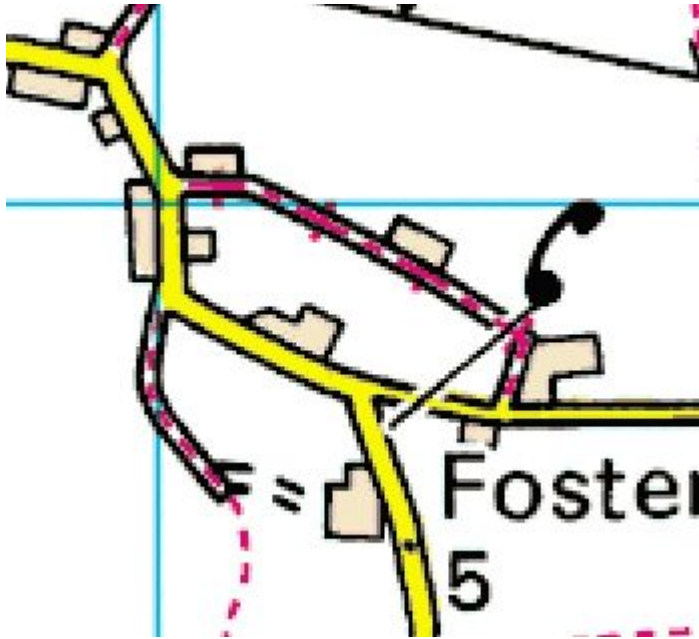


You can see the line of green crosses going from A to B or vice-versa. This is a Byway Open to All Traffic, a BOAT, and we should be able to legally drive it. Indeed it's close to my area and I know it's also marked BYWAY with a proper signpost at each end.

I know it's legal because I've been onto the local councils website and searched their rights of way section where it's named as a legal Byway and mentioned on the definitive map. Ordnance Survey get a lot of their information from the definitive maps so a lot of the time what's on the map should be OK to drive, but it's worth checking first as a section 59 notice won't be a pleasant addition to your paperwork! To check legality you need to note the grid reference points at start and end of the lane, then either visit your local council website, phone the rights of way officer, or visit the council offices in person. I've done all three of these to check lanes before and will continue to do so in future as I'm a married man who has a wife and kids and I don't want to be taken to court by our draconian rights of way and justice system. (rant over!)

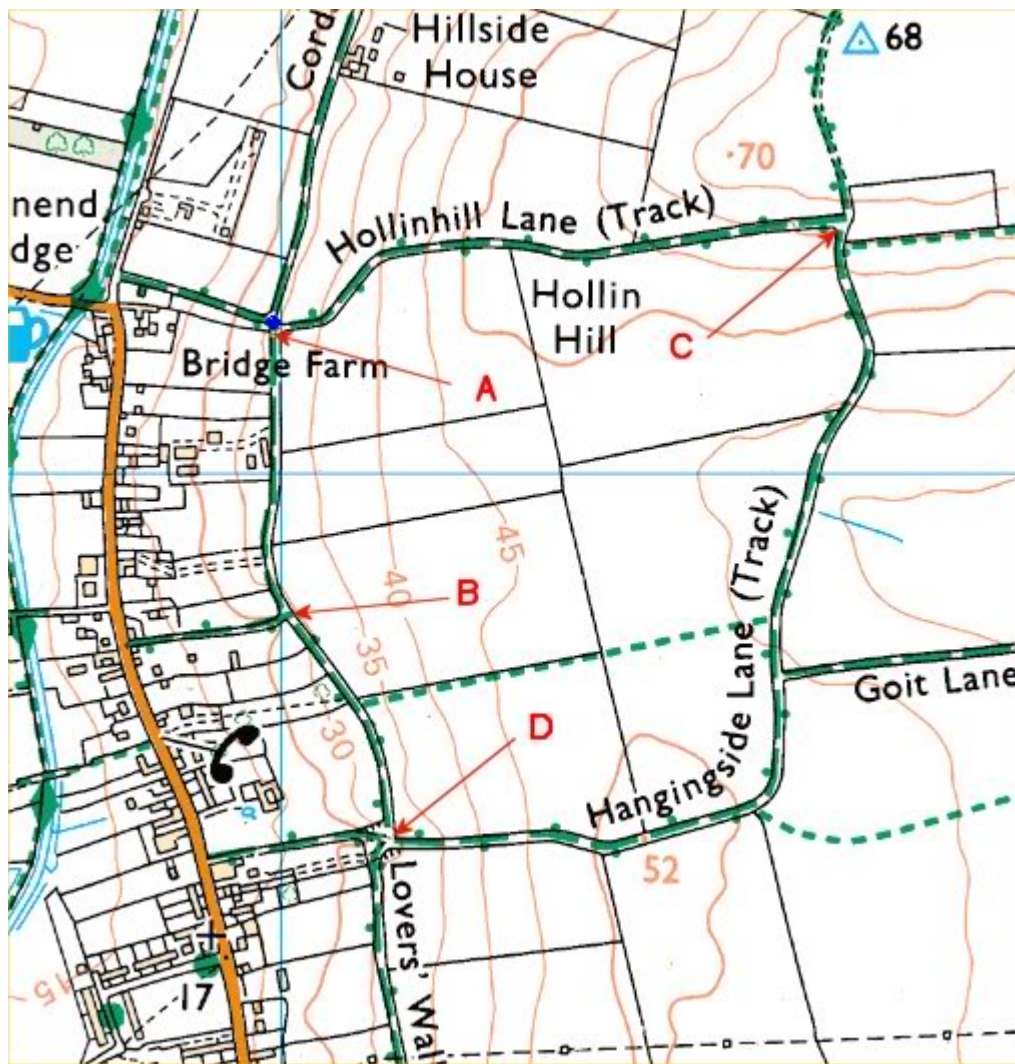
So how do we know it's interesting? Well, we don't until we drive it, but some clues are there. Contour lines, the brown coloured squiggly marks. This area is flat, so anywhere with a couple of contours on it should at least have a little gradient or slope, OK, in this case it's not much, but it's there and is not far off the only place around with some. The little blue squiggly line running North to South at about 2/3rds across from the left is a river or stream, so potential for a ford or at least boggy ground. In this case it's a bit boggy and while it looks innocuous enough, there's so much water about, even in hot weather, that the ground sinks under your wheels a little which can be a bit awkward and definitely gives you a queasy feeling. (Close to Hatfield and Thorne Peat Marshes)

The following is the same map section in 1:50k scale ..



There's a lot less detail, and colours are different .. However, it's often easier to plan a route and navigate that route using 1:50 simply due to the lack of extra detail, unless you're going really slowly and need details of junctions of lanes etc when 1:25k is best.

Somewhere a bit more likely as a green lane that might be interesting, ie steep, boggy, whatever and why we don't totally ignore the Restricted Byway or RUPPs (Lines of green alternating T's) until we know their legal status and why we have to speak with the local authorities ...



This is a really interesting set of lanes, all marked on the map as restricted byways but all the restricted bits are actually now BOATS on the Definitive Map and are also properly signposted as Byways ... an obvious example of maps not keeping up with the legal system and a good demonstration of the need to check legality. The lanes we can't legally drive are the bridlepaths, which are clearly visible between A and B, heading North from A and heading East near the 'L' of Hangingside Lane and a couple of footpaths.

So, what makes this set of lanes look interesting on the map and worthy of following up?

First thing is the contour lines, the tracks are all on the side of a hill, going up it, traversing it, following contours and crossing contours. There's a river at the bottom of the hill so the tracks heading West (ish) from A, B and D might be washed out with rainwater run-off from the hill and fields, there's a small valley toward the centre/east that one lane goes through. Lots of clues that it's possibly an area worth looking at and worth taking some time and effort first to research the legalities, before driving out there, especially if as is my case, it's quite far away.

In fact it's a great area, the track heading East up the small valley to B, though only maybe 100 yards long is narrow, steep sided, washed out and is a minor challenge in itself, but most 4x4 drivers don't drive it!?! Short but very sweet. Hangingside Lane is used far too much, probably because it is reasonably long, but it's extremely rutted. It can be driven by standard Discos/Freelanders if care is taken to straddle ruts instead of trying to blast through. Care and technique wins over brute force here, but unfortunately you can't tell that from the map, so it needs to be driven out to and driven over to know!. The lane heading South from D is also a bit rutted and can

easily catch people out, clay, mud, ruts and tree roots all combine to make it a bit of a challenge, with (which can't be seen on the pic) to the south a steep exit, blind onto an A road!

Again, the following is the same map in 1:50k scale, again a definite loss of detail over 1:25k, but as said in the text, this is a later map, by only two years, but shows all the lanes newly revised and now referenced as Byways!! This graphically shows why you need to check with the authorities regarding possible lanes' legal status for drivers and vehicles.



So that's it, that's in a nutshell what I look for on a map, spotting the clues to how good a lane might be, and what to do to check legality. Once you get into map-reading and relating the lines and colours on paper to the hills, lanes and other features of real life you also get to know all the other clues and map-reading becomes a bit like reading a book, you can actually see the places in your mind way before you visit them!

I can't and won't take any responsibility for anyone using this information in any way, the above is what I do to find lanes, if you use it that's nice, but if you then drive illegally it's nothing to do with me, I wasn't there, it was the other three .. OK ...

Have fun