

PEAK & NORTHERN FOOTPATHS SOCIETY  
ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS  
1999



PEAK & NORTHERN  
FOOTPATHS SOCIETY



# ANNUAL REPORT 1999

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*The cover photograph was taken by Darren Warner who kindly gave his permission for us to reproduce it. It shows the Society's footpath sign at Chapel Gate (GR 099834)*

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## PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Leslie Meadowcroft

7 his year's Queens Speech was listened to with considerable interest by outdoor people. Some of us journeyed to Langsett where, at an outdoor rally, over portable radios we heard Her Majesty announce there would be forthcoming legislation to provide greater access to the countryside. This announcement was not received with surprise as many of us had long campaigned for such changes but we felt our efforts had not been in vain. However we must now be prepared to battle our way through the legislative troops of parliament and its inevitable bureaucracy of a Parliamentary Bill.

Access to the countryside is not just a matter of access to and freedom to roam over uncultivated land. Our particular forte is to protect and enhance the existing rights of way network and land as outlined within our constitution

Make no mistake, there will be those persons who will attempt to use the new legislation to impose restrictions on existing facilities or create further limitations.

There are proposals, to which we have already responded, which have both good and bad in their favour and we shall support or oppose as is necessary with our parliamentary representatives. But this will not be enough, we shall need the active support, dear reader, of yourself. Also your MP to motivate amendments through the parlia-

mentary committee stage, for this is where the action lies and the dangers lurk.

Highways and rights of way are highly technical subjects and we are few in number with our specialised knowledge. We shall need the help of other members to relieve us of less restrictive duties so that we may concentrate on this important matter in hand of legislation for our future years and benefit.

Magistrates' courts, public inquiries and research are already over demanding on some of our officers.

We currently have half a week of unused space at our new HQ ~ may we offer you a seat?

In carrying out its main function as protector of rights of way, the Society is often consulted or makes representations about related subjects nationally, regionally and locally. These include national park plans, unitary development plans, British Standards' specifications (eg stiles), access to the countryside and improving rights of way. Also consultants who wish to pick our brains when preparing reports for and recommendations to their clients.

We provide both advice and statistics to members of parliament and local authority elected members who all too often normally receive such advice only from their own officers.

We also make presentations of the Society's activities to local authority committees, as well as mounting our mobile display at various events.

It is important to be aware that some local authorities now provide facilities for questions to be asked at certain meetings of their committees and members are advised to take full advantage of such opportunities when appropriate.

There is never a dull moment within this Society!

## Did you know?

that all the people who work for Peak & Northern  
are **volunteers** ...

... volunteers work as  
**inspectors** or **agents** in the  
areas covered by the Society



... the **office work** at Offerton  
is carried out by volunteers

... the **signpost team**  
is manned by volunteers



... **court work** and **public inquiries**  
are taken by volunteers

**But there are not enough of us ...  
... we need more help ...**

Can you spare some time to help the Society  
maintain its presence as the foremost rights of way  
Preservation Society in the North of England?

Contact your Chairman (01663) 745690 for further details

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Norman Edwards

**T**urncroft Lane has now been occupied for over a year. We were privileged to have our Vice President, Andrew Bennett MP, officially open the building on the 7th May. All were impressed by the layout and appreciated the step the Society had taken in acquiring the property. It was also appreciated that another of our vice presidents, John Houfe, and his wife journeyed down for the occasion and of course we were very pleased to see them. Our President, Leslie Meadowcroft was also involved and our thanks go to him for being present and taking on the burden of the Society's spokesman. It was good to see so many members and friends at the opening.

Staying on Turncroft Lane, we are getting to the stage of almost knowing where things are. I think I echo the thoughts of all who have the privilege of working at Turncroft Lane that it is a pleasant place in which to work. Light, airy and warm which is probably as well because the workload has increased over the year. Consultations are now flowing in, orders are still far too many but usually have their objectionable points amended at the consultation stage. Indeed there is a feeling that some consultations are sent to us by highway authorities in the knowledge that we will inform them that it is not suitable and if an order was made the Society would object. There is then silence as though the highway authority has informed the applicant that it is not a viable proposition to make an order.

We were missing out on orders made by the Department of the Environment who do not, it seems, have a statutory need to

notify us. We caught these orders via newspaper notices. With the good help of our vice-president, Andrew Bennett MP, we are now receiving these direct from the department. The only drawback is that many of the closures are of parts of public highways, perhaps for road widening or development. We now have a complete picture of all that is going on in the areas in which we operate and occasionally in other parts of the country. The paper mountain grows week by week.

The year has seen the death of two stalwarts of the Society. Vice president **Philip Daley** died during the year; as mentioned in the 50 year report, he was our general secretary in the forties and, until his move south, he was in constant touch with us. **John Harrop** died during the year; he was actively involved at Hazel Grove and his typing abilities will be missed as much as his stories about the railway. It was a privilege to dedicate a signpost just outside Lyme Park to his memory; the post and plaque were donated by his friends at the COSA unit. It was nice to see his family at the dedication and they greatly appreciated the ceremony. It has been said that working at the Society is like a social working club and so, when one of our members leaves us, it is a sad moment. Sadly another hard worker for the Society has found it necessary to give up his visits to the Cosa unit and we all say thank you to **Harold Brimelow**. His maps and indices are a lasting memory to him.

It is very difficult to thank members for their help over the year as one invariably misses someone out. To our inspectors, agents and workers at Turncroft Lane I say a very sincere thank you. Without your help the Society would very soon flounder. We need to give our appreciation to the Society's officers and their assistants. It is very much a team effort and I am privileged to be at the head co-ordinating things. Yes, we have had our problems but with a sense of purpose coupled with a sense of humour these have in the main been overcome.

I must again draw your attention to the amount of work your Secretary gets through. Fortunately we have a great sense of understanding and can bounce ideas and thoughts off each other. Our thanks also to the spouses who so willingly give up their other halves to enable the Society to function as efficiently as it does. We have an excellent relationship with most highway authorities and ranger services.

The President mentions the new legislation threatened by this government in respect of rights of way. We felt the Access Bill would have some shocks as rights of way were to be coupled with the bill, maybe as a sop to landowners. We are concerned that it will be much easier to divert or close rights of way if the bill goes through. The consultation paper was anything but encouraging to the Society which is, of course, concerned primarily with existing rights of way. The position will have to be watched very closely. Yes, your rights of way are still under threat.

With the start of a new millennium, where is the Society going in the coming century? Like many old societies there is a lack of younger members coming through. Now that I am retired there is no officer who is still gainfully employed. Some are well in their seventies and we cannot expect them to continue their current work rate indefinitely. Unless we can get younger members interested we shall probably have to go down the road of having a paid (part time?) executive combining closures and diversions with obstructions. This would have an obvious effect on subscriptions. Now that we have our own offices there is a chance to be involved at times suitable to you. How about coming in to help lighten the load of the oldies here in Offerton.

I assume this report will mention our victories over path closures. The main that spring to mind are Hazel Grove & Bramhall 103 and Leek 8. Our President and Legal Advisor pulled out the stops in both cases. We were also successful in preventing a closure of a passageway used by children

and visitors to a clinic. The owners of the adjoining land objected to the noise and inconvenience and wanted to take the passage into their land. Hence our remit is still very wide and not confined only to country footpaths. Are there any retired lawyers out there who would be prepared to take on an occasional case either in the Magistrates court or at an inquiry?

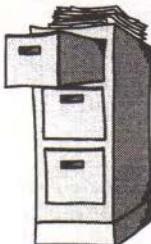
You will no doubt have seen our old cast iron footpath plaques. What a fine advertisement to the Society these are, some with the heights embossed on them, and not only walkers are impressed by them. Several have disappeared over the last 12 months including two off the Snake path above the waterworks at Hayfield. They are extremely heavy and would have needed a very strong person to carry them off after dismantling the post. Another in the Ladybower area was taken after a vehicle smashed through fencing to get to the site. The police seem to have no idea who is responsible. Are these signs now a feature of someone's garden or have they gone for their scrap value? The countryside is a much sadder place without them although when we receive sponsorship they will be replaced by one of our new signs. Anyone out there with £125 to spare to replace one of these posts and signs?

The Buxton rights-of-way audit was carried out for Derbyshire County Council. In some places there were considerable problems; in one case the surveyors were threatened by the landowner. There were 75 statutory signposts missing! Many thanks to those who assisted.

What 2000 will bring I do not know. This is your Society and we need you as much as you need us. The Society's work is still crucially important and the Secretary's report describes our battles against apathy in many quarters. Funding by highway authorities is as low as they dare. The officers are very willing but hindered by restraints. Without our pressures one wonders where we would be.

## GENERAL SECRETARY

Derek Taylor



**I**n 1987, the Countryside Commission set the target that ...

*... all Rights of Way should be legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised by the end of the century.*  
Well, the end of the century is here so what better time to consider if that target has been met.

In my report to members in December 1995 I said that, with just four years to run, the question on everyone's lips was ... will the target be met? I said I was prepared to put my head on the block and say that in 80% of authorities it would not. I was wrong, of course, my estimate should have been 100%.

Having said that, great progress has been made over the 12 years mainly because the Commission has poured vast amounts of money into the scheme by making grants to local authorities. Assistance with staffing and with special projects have been particularly beneficial and when one considers that in almost all cases local authorities have had to match grant aid funding, much has been achieved. So into 2000 and we wait with bated breath to see what the new millennium has in store for us.

In my following observations on the various local authorities you will see repeatedly the word ... 'communications' ... mostly expressing concern at the lack of. I continue to stress quite strongly to local authorities that the Society will always look favourably on authorities which communicate with us. If a matter cannot be resolved for any reason and the council will tell us, giving good reasons, then we are quite prepared to amend our reminder procedure from once every three months to once a year or even longer if required.

In my report this year you will note that I have introduced a system of star ratings, which reflects my opinion of the local authorities handling of rights of way matters. You will also note that only one achieves the maximum of five stars.

## **CHESHIRE**

### **Cheshire County Council\***

In my considered opinion, the County has not yet recovered from the trauma of local government reorganisation when they lost Warrington and Halton to unitary status.

The new rights of way maintenance unit at Whitegate Station, Winsford, continues to exist (or so I believe) in a silent world where very little indeed emerges other than acknowledgement letters.

Discussions with senior officers of the rights of way department, which took place immediately before the year end recognised the problem is one of lack of communication. I am told that much work is being carried out on the maintenance front but we are just not being told about it. There are promises of better things in the 21st century. I am, as ever, hopeful. A poor star rating due mainly to lack of communication.

### **Warrington BC\*\***

Some improvement with positive noises coming from the liaison meetings. I can't say that I am entirely happy with the way responsibility for maintenance appears to be split between the borough council and

the Mersey Valley Partnership; I just don't like split responsibilities. My star rating reflects improvements since the borough became responsible for its own network but introduces a cautionary note.

## **GREATER MANCHESTER**

### **Bolton MBC\*\*\*\***

Continues to make progress but still a long way to go before all paths are open and signposted. We meet regularly with council officers and communications between the borough and the society are first class.

### **Bury MBC\*\*\*\***

Again there is definite progress, most obstruction problems are dealt with promptly and efficiently but, as with many authorities, shortage of funds means that several major problems cannot be dealt with.

### **Manchester City Council\*\***

There are several long outstanding matters which the council fails to address but with regard to requests for signposting issues, these are mostly dealt with quite promptly. However with few 'field footpaths', as the council likes to call them, the situation should be almost perfect ... it isn't.

### **Oldham MBC**

Nothing changes, I have a number of outstanding matters which may or may not have been addressed, I just don't know. There is without doubt a communications breakdown. No that doesn't quite sum up the situation ~ to have a breakdown of something suggests that the thing worked in the first place. There has never been a communications link with the Society so a breakdown it most certainly is not. I get the impression that, so far as this society is concerned, Oldham think we don't exist, though they do consult on closures and diversions, as they must. Star rating nil.

### **Rochdale MBC\***

Again we have an authority which feels that there is nothing to be gained by establishing good communications, I know that some work is going on in the borough and I get reports from our representative to that effect, but anything in writing from the council, negative. The \* star rating reflects this lack of communication skills.

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## GREATER MANCHESTER (continued)

### Salford City Council\*\*

The appointment of a new footpath officer coupled with a relatively small footpath network should have meant a vast improvement in the network. The fact that improvements have been only minor suggests the so-called footpath officer spends a fair amount of her time on other matters and so to rejoice in the title 'Footpath Officer' is I believe a misnomer. The saga of Swinton & Pendlebury 51, which it was said would be resolved by the Millennium and which appears to have been running for the last 100 years, well perhaps only 99, is still not resolved and therefore reflects in my star rating.

### Stockport MBC\*

What a mess, this authority just cannot get its act together with regards to rights of way, there are many problems which somehow just don't get addressed. The new footpaths officer is aware of the problems and it is only as the year turns and we have received support from the Chairman of Highways that the situation is beginning to clear. The Society had two totally unnecessary legal battles with the authority this year (reported elsewhere) and these with other outstanding items reflect the lowly star rating if only to perhaps encourage improvement in 2000.

### Tameside MBC\*\*

Last year I said that I sensed a change in the attitude towards rights of way by this authority. Yes, there has been a change and that is certainly for the better but there is a long way to go before we can be perfectly satisfied this council has at last recognised its responsibilities. We are now meeting regularly with the authority; that at the very least establishes a line of communication which has been sadly missing in the past.

### Trafford MBC\*\*

As I understand the situation, this authority did have a footpath officer, but I suspect he was nothing like full time with other issues taking up most of his time. I understand he has now moved on and a new appointment is pending. There is also a suggestion that a departmental move into new premises may have caused problems but I find this difficult to accept.

### Wigan MBC\*\*\*\*

A first class rights of way section with better results constrained by poor legal back-up. This authority would have received a five star performance indicator if it had not been for the many outstanding matters, mainly with legal implications.

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## DERBYSHIRE

### Derbyshire County Council\*\*\*

At last obstruction problems generated as far back as 1995 are being addressed on a parish by parish basis. This long overdue work is being carried out by a small team operating on short term employment contracts which, as I see the situation, may terminate at any time unless specific funding is provided by the Countryside Agency and matched by the County. My rating reflects an improving trend.

*continued on next page* ▶

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## DERBYSHIRE (continued)

### Derbyshire Dales DC\*\*\*\*

Problems are few and dealt with reasonably promptly.

### North East Derbyshire DC\*\*

This authority continues to cause concern. Acting as agent for the County Council as it does, my opinion is that the Council cannot be fulfilling its responsibility under the Highways Agency Agreement. As such the County should be inviting the District Council to improve its dealings with rights of way or indicating that it will revoke its agency agreement for public rights of way

as it did with High Peak. There is of course a problem. Should the County Council take this course of action, which I don't suppose for one moment it will, bearing in mind the relatively poor record by the County will we have a better service. I doubt it. I would award one extra star if the District Council would take more positive action on ploughing and non-reinstatement. This district is the worst in the entire area we cover at taking positive action against farmers who habitually obstruct paths in this way.

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## LANCASHIRE

### Lancashire County Council\*\*\*

The Council has a large team working on obstructions, definitive map reviews, closures and diversions but has not, as yet, demonstrated to me that it can cope with quarrying and its effect on rights of way. Complaints to the appropriate department languish for months before any sort of reply is received and then most often it is delaying tactics instead of positive action.

### Blackburn & Darwen BC

I don't ever admit defeat in dealings with local authorities but what I do have to admit in this case is that over the years I have exhausted my stock of words to describe this authority. To say that it is pathetic would be under describing the situation but I cannot think of anything worse to say. I have come to the conclusion this Council does not care one jot about its rights of way network. If that is not the case then perhaps they will tell me just what they have done over the last four to five years which would perhaps make me change my mind.

Communications with this authority cannot be said to have broken down, for they never existed. Star rating NIL.

### Chorley BC\*\*\*\*\*

I am tempted ~ yes, why not, to award my maximum rating for prompt attention to problems and, most importantly, excellent lines of communication.

### Rossendale BC\*\*\*

Always difficult to know what to say about this authority, we don't have a great number of outstanding matters with them and now once again we are down to minimum inspector cover so I don't expect the situation to change. There have been moves with regard to paths destroyed by quarrying at Britannia & Facit quarries in Whitworth and we are looking at the quarry owner's alternative proposals at this time. Out of the goodness of my heart and because I have no evidence to the contrary I award \*\*\* but it could really be one either way.

## WEST YORKSHIRE

### Calderdale MBC\*

This Council has always languished at the bottom of my league table. I send in complaints and for the most part I receive acknowledgment cards but nothing more. A rights of way liaison group has now been established for some 12 months but as yet I have failed to see anything positive coming from it except perhaps that we now have an input and an opportunity to voice our concerns. A mere \* reflects my continuing concern.

### Kirklees MBC\*\*\*

Improvements continue although I detect a slowing down of the pace. However lines of communication are good and with that established, all things are possible.

## STAFFORDSHIRE

### Staffordshire CC\*\*

The County Council continues to hide behind its priority system which means you can never be sure if a reported problem will receive attention this year or next. The Council tells me that they have a system which involves sending a card to a complainant when a way is deemed to be clear. If that is the case then nothing I have sent must have been cleared for I have yet to receive a single such card. Must try harder.

### and finally...

... my thanks to all who have helped in any way during the year, with particular thanks to inspectors and agents and those who are assisting with new computer systems at Turncroft Lane.

## The Society's slide lecture

The President will be pleased to present the Society's slide lecture to any interested organisation ...

Please contact him (0161 483 2482) for further details



## OBSTRUCTIONS and CLEARANCES 1999

county	local authority	obstructions	clearances
<b>Cheshire</b>	Cheshire CC	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>
	Warrington BC	7	-
<b>Derbyshire</b>	Derbyshire CC	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>
	North East Derbyshire DC	80	24
	Chesterfield DC	1	-
<b>Greater Manchester</b>	Bolton MBC	9	17
<b>Manchester</b>	Bury MBC	4	1
	Manchester City	-	-
	Oldham MBC	-	-
	Rochdale MBC	-	-
	Salford City	2	-
	Stockport MBC	3	12
	Tameside MBC	2	1
	Trafford MBC	-	-
	Wigan MBC	3	4
<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>Lancashire CC</b>	<b>3</b>	-
<b>Lancashire</b>	Blackburn with Darwen BC	6	1
	Chorley BC	1	-
	Rossendale BC	-	-
	Rotherham MBC	1	-
<b>South Yorkshire</b>	Barnsley MBC	3	-
	Doncaster MBC	4	-
	<b>Staffordshire CC</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>West Yorkshire</b>	Calderdale MBC	9	3
	Kirklees MBC	13	10
	<b>totals</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>117</b>

The above statistics reflect the situation which has applied this year. However, the clearance figures relate to paths which have been cleared this year but were most probably reported as obstructed in previous years. Therefore I would not wish you to make any sort of comparison between the two sets of figures.

It should be noted that I do not accept a clearance report from a local authority until it has been confirmed by one of our inspectors.

## ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY

Derek Seddon

**7**he problem of **wind farms** in our area has been coming to a head in the past year. What problem? say some members who approve of them in the hope they will help replace polluting conventional power stations. But an application for what would have been the largest wind farm in the UK was turned down by the inspector with the comment that the comparatively small amount of energy it would produce would not compensate for the visual damage it would inflict on unspoiled countryside. There's more than one kind of pollution.

I remain convinced that, if we were serious about conservation, a vigorous campaign to cut out the waste of electricity would be far more cost-effective ~ but the power companies are in the business of selling electricity, not saving it.

The wind farms which threaten all down the vulnerable South Pennines (outside the protection of the National Parks) are beginning to creep upon us. The Society has opposed the proposal for 13 turbines plus an array of ancillary buildings and roads on top of Great Hill, Littleborough; there is also considerable local opposition. The hill is criss-crossed with rights of way and, indeed, the local authority has asked the developer to change the site of one turbine which would have been planted squarely on top of one path. It seems likely the planning authority will refuse even the amended plan but that it will go to appeal.

Coincidentally, Rochdale are processing an application for nine turbines on Hogshead Law Hill near Bacup and we have sent our objections. A decision is expected on the 21st February. The ancient track called Limersgate runs over Hogshead Law and there is a proposal to connect up other old packhorse routes to make a 30-mile continuous trail from Rochdale to Clitheroe. A pity if when this is achieved it will be accompanied all the way by wind farms.

The **four-wheel drivers** are back in action again, leaving both the Roych path by Brown Knoll near Hayfield and Shatton Edge path near Bradwell in a terrible mess where they had obviously been revelling in the muddy conditions for yards either side of the path. Local people have also complained to me about the state of the Hornby Road, north of Slaidburn. This Roman road over wild moors has received such a battering that at least six original culverts have been wrecked. Lancashire CC know the situation but catching the culprits or even monitoring this remote area is a permanent problem. So it is also in the Peak District.

But justice did catch up with the shooting syndicate responsible for the devastation of the access path up **Stable Clough** in Longdendale. Their application to use the path for vehicles was refused with an order to reinstate the damage. They appealed and lost but in the end were allowed to use the path on no more than 10 days a year on the understanding that a Land Rover should be made available for moorland management and fire fighting. They got their modified way in the end but I am reliably informed that their three year fight will have cost them £100,000.

We were further heartened by the RA's victory over **Mr van Hoogstraten** and trust the local authority will now do its belated duty and open up the path he has comprehensively blocked.

## ANNUAL DINNER 1999

Our annual dinner on the 14th May 1999 was certainly different. Not that there was any deterioration in the quality of the food or the service we received at the Freemasons' Hall which was again of the highest order.

The difference was that our speaker Mike Crabtree, Head of Conservation for North West Water, brought along a collection of slides showing the work of the conservation section of North West Water. In a very impressive presentation, Mike opened up a new vista on conservation and, as the evening lengthened, it was only those needing late night transport who were anxious to get away.

Mike did us proud and, coupled with the fact that his company had made a very nice donation to our development fund, rounded off a first class evening.

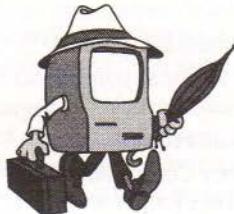
In 2000 our annual dinner will be held on the 19th May at the same venue when the speaker will be Harry Lowe, Chairman of the Park Management Committee, Peak District National Park Authority.

We hope to meet you then.

### *Environment Secretary's report (continued from page 14)*

The **Right-to-Roam** should have been the big event of the year but seems to be on hold. I wrote to the Secretary of State deplored the statements I had read that this legislation was being delayed to make parliamentary time for the 'seriously flawed' Freedom of Information Bill. Mr Meacher replied, telling me *not to believe everything you read in the papers* which seems to be an approved phrase for when a straight answer is inconvenient. We're still waiting. But a Bill **has** been passed forbidding cyclists over 16 from riding on footpaths.

Wearing my other hat as Vice Chairman and handyman at **Turncroft Lane**, I can report that the transfer from Hazel Grove went without a hitch due to the many willing hands guided by our Secretary's meticulous planning.



Derek also designed and helped to build the complex map cabinets which are an essential part of our central control room, a hive of activity on Mondays. Many other shelves and racks have been fitted upstairs and down. A computer system is in place, the garage cleaned out and its roof repaired (thanks to Bill Johnson). Venetian blinds and a burglar alarm have been installed professionally. We look forward to the bulbs and shrubs planted by Bert Platt-Chance in the little garden giving us a show this spring. The whole place performs well and is a pleasure to work in ...  
... do come and see for yourselves!

## MATTERS from the MINUTES

### January

- Illustrated lectures given at Hyde & Prestbury
- Much work on 1998 annual report
- Concern over Cheshire County Council's lack of response

### February

- Meeting with Trafford MBC, Sports Federation & Bolton MBC
- West Coast railway modernisation causes level crossing problems

### March

- Attendances at AGMs of Manchester Area RA, Stockport CHA and Sports Federation
- Distribution of annual report
- Concern over senior appointments to new Countryside Agency
- NW Water grant received
- Kinder Advisory Committee (National Trust) meets after long interval

### April

- Society's AGM
- NW Sports Federation
- Hazel Grove & Bramhall 103: first & second court hearings
- Lottery Grant of £4767 received by President

### May

- The uncompleted Benfield Footpath saga continues
- Stockport volunteers needed for our new HQ
- Open days at our new HQ
- Meeting with Trafford MBC postponed indefinitely

### June

- HG&B 103 third & fourth hearings completed to our satisfaction
- After much delay, Tameside organise a footpath liaison group
- Meetings with Stockport Volunteer Bureau
- NW Sports Federation
- Disastrous event with Stockport Council

### July

- Objections lodged against wind farms at Rossendale and Rochdale
- President appointed Chairman of Kinder Advisory Committee

### August

- We exhibit with NW Water at Rivington
- Society's presentation to Stockport MBC
- Hazel Grove & Bramhall 103 continues in court

### September

- Dedication of John Harrop private subscription memorial signpost
- First meeting of Tameside Advisory Group

### October

- Kinder Advisory Committee meets
- Cheshire County acknowledge volunteers at Tatton Park
- Area MP and Stockport MBC Highways Chairman visit new HQ
- Countryside Agency stresses need for user group involvement
- HG&B 103 - Court accepts our suggested diversion and agrees closure

### November

- Society gives lecture to Wildlife Trust at Altrincham
- Stockport YHA AGM
- Special NW Sports Federation meeting
- New access legislation proposed

## COURTS & INQUIRIES

Adrian Littleton



**O**n the southern edge of Oldham, a new housing estate has recently been built around a narrow non-definitive footpath 80 metres long, which connects Selbourne Street to Marland Fold Lane. The planning permission for this estate allowed this footpath to be incorporated into adjacent house plots. Oldham Council and the developers intended to provide a substitute path across public open space adjacent to the very busy A627 Ashton-under-Lyne to Oldham road. To implement this scheme, a diversion order was made.

A similar inquiry was held in respect of a 24 metre long passageway between Boundary Grove and Bebbington Close, Sale. Owners of the adjoining two houses obtained planning permission to incorporate it into their gardens and a stopping up order was made, but there was evidence of substantial public use.

At both inquiries, witnesses gave two contrasting images. Diversion/closure was supported by people living near the paths, who alleged they were dens of drug abuse, muggers and glue sniffing. Other local residents contended the paths were precious getting quickly from A to B facilities which must be preserved.

After both those inquiries the inspectors concluded the disadvantages of closure outweighed the planning merits and refused to confirm the Orders.

Both inquiries demonstrated, not for the first time, that concoctions of legal argument and elaborate recitations of government circulars are not the keys to successful objection. This is achieved by people such as our member, Robert Fysh, who gave evidence at the Sale inquiry, spending 30 plus minutes standing at the end of a path with a clipboard recording the numbers and types of users.

Your president and I were occupied at Stockport Magistrates Court for almost five days on the tribulations afflicting **Hazel Grove & Bramhall 103**; this had ceased to be a through route in 1972 when a connecting path was diverted. A house had been built over it which no one would buy until 103 was extinguished. Finally our objection induced Stockport Council to make definitive an alternative footpath linking Valley Road to the Ladybrook Valley, which was the pre 1972 function of footpath 103.

There's nowt so cheeky' as objectors to diversion orders, especially in Barnoldswick where a resident complained to a planning inspector that, if a diversion order was confirmed, his dog would not lawfully be entitled to foul the diverted route. The Council replied that the existing path was subject to its byelaws on dog fouling and the diversion, which was acceptable to this Society, was confirmed.

In the course of travelling round Derbyshire refurbishing our signs I come across cast iron signs dated 1905 onwards; these are well crafted with sharply cut letters and on the back is cast ~ R. Mower, New Mills. I have asked local historians about this company but they do not know of it. Our President passed to me recently a letter from the Archives dated 1908 from Thos Mower of Torr Street, New Mills. He writes that four plates had been made ~ Nos. 33, 34, 35 and 36 ~ but did not explain by whom. Another piece of the puzzle and I would like to know more.

Requests for commemorative signs continue to be made and the search goes on for suitable locations.

As ever we had the assistance when necessary of the Ranger services also, this year, the National Trust volunteers. This help, together with information from officers and affiliated clubs regarding the condition of signs, is invaluable. We value it highly.

#### New signs erected

**SP265** Hollingworth Hall Farm (GR008984)  
Donated by Ashton CHA  
in memory of Ron Edwards

**SP266** Lyme Park - Platt Wood (GR959832)  
Donated by colleagues from the COSA  
unit in memory of John Harrop

#### Work in progress

**SP97** Jacob's Ladder (GR088862)  
New sign being made

#### Repairs and Maintenance

**FP7** Oaken Clough (GR067861)  
Replaced rotten post, painted sign

**SP8/28** Chapel Milton (GR034800)  
Replaced rotten post, painted signs

**SP81** Flittowgate Farm (GR707782)  
Painted sign

**SP85** Jacobs Ladder (GR086862)  
Replaced rotten post, painted sign

**SP119** Lyme Park (GR963841)  
Painted both signs

**SP120** Mellor (GR002905)  
Repaired rusted base of post

**SP136** Agden Brow (GR713862)  
Painted sign and post

**SP141** Knutsford (GR730763)  
Painted sign

**SP157** Charles Head (GR983794)  
Replaced post and plaque, painted sign

**SP161** Jenkin Chapel (GR984766)  
**SP176** Jenkin Chapel (GR980768)

Replaced arms, new plaques fixed, painted posts

**SP184** Stoneheads (GR813006)  
Painted sign and post

**SP189** Lamaload (GR976751)  
Painted sign and post

**SP207** Hawkhurst (GR999818)  
Replaced arm

**SP215** Phoside (GR037861)  
Replaced arm, painted post

**SP241** Bottoms Hall, Marple (GR969382)  
Painted sign, replaced post in ground



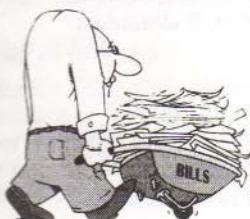
## TREASURER'S REPORT

Keith Wykes

**7**he Society's £158,397 funds represents a moderate 8% increase in worth compared to 1998's £146,319 value. This is due largely to the transfer of an increased surplus of £7,632 (£5,265 in 1998) from the Income & Expenditure Account.

- This is again commendable, especially as that account has suffered a full year's charge of £1,924 in relation to Turncroft Lane's running costs (£741 in 1998 part year charge).
- Although pleasing to report an overall 10% increase in **subscription income** (£4,259 set against 1998's slightly declined £3,839) this modest increase is far outweighed by the 23% decline in **investment income** from £7,117 to £5,471.
- Overall, these changes reflect a £1,226 loss of income this year and, in combination with the one-off £4,767 of grants received, the real value of the £7,632 surplus is much reduced.
- It is partly for these reasons, and to protect our income, that increases in subscription are recommended and sought in the year 2000.
- The **Development Fund** continues to be wound down and is carrying a reduced residual balance of £2,192 (£2,619 in 1998).
- The 19% decline in the **Signpost Fund** year-end balance of £1,389 (£1,720 in 1998) is worrying and reflects a decline in donations.
- The **Defence Fund** balance of £6,543 (£5,050 in 1998) increased due to many donations including the Society's first receipt of *Gift Aid*.
- **Asset & Investment values** remain much the same as previously; however an increased substantial sum remains on deposit, all at 12 months' notice excluding the £5,000 minimum balance with the Hampshire Trust.
- The Inland Revenue debtor £466 (1998 nil) reflects a tax reclaim in respect of Covenant Income going back to 1996/97.

*All in all a good financial year which shows us to be well positioned or poised to face the new millennium!*



# BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December 1999

		1999	1998
<b>Assets</b>			
<b>Fixed</b>	Freehold property at lower of cost & valuation	60,153	60,153
	Furniture, fixtures & fittings	2,209	2,107
	Computer equipment	1,116	1,230
		<b>63,478</b>	<b>63,490</b>
<b>Investments</b>	<b>Long Term (at market value)</b>		
	Government stock	19,183	19,061
	UK equities ~ Woolwich Plc	2,907	3,077
		<b>22,090</b>	<b>22,138</b>
<b>Short Term</b>			
	Hampshire Trust 12 month Deposit	63,007	54,717
	Cafcash High Interest cheque	14,621	11,176
	Royal Bank of Scotland • Current	150	150
	• Bus. High Interest	112	893
	Skipton BS Matured Instant Access	100	500
	Leeds & Holbeck BS Charityline	100	100
	Cash: postages float	8	41
		<b>78,098</b>	<b>67,577</b>
	Badge stock on hand	129	144
	Debtor: Inland Revenue	466	112
	2000 income accrued to 1999	14	-
		<b>164,275</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
	Funds of the Society	158,397	146,919
	Ten year membership suspense	4,693	5,191
	Five year membership suspense	1,159	903
	Advance Subscriptions 2000/2001	26	45
	Creditors	-	403
		<b>164,275</b>	<b>153,461</b>

Signed KD Wykes, Honorary Treasurer

4 February 2000

*Keith D Wykes*

## INCOME & EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 December 1999

<b>Income</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>
	£	£		£	£
<b>Subscriptions</b>			Secretariat	1,073	1,259
Ordinary	919	770	Travel	1,702	1,193
Joint	688	656	Turncroft Lane		
Ten year transfers	1,332	1,316	• Running costs	1,924	741
Five year transfers	454	311	• Depreciation	858	286
Junior	5	6	Annual Report (net)	789	867
Affiliations	861	780	Postages	652	835
total subscriptions	<b>4,259</b>	<b>3,839</b>	Telephones	320	445
<b>Investment income</b>	<b>5,471</b>	<b>7,117</b>	Stationery	245	308
<b>Other income</b>			Photocopying (net)	179	213
Grants	4,767	-	Subs and donations	123	154
Advertising	597	710	Sundries	78	367
Affiliation service	75	105	Maps	19	27
Lecture fees	72	-	Computer consumables	92	18
Sundries	554	207	Publications	109	-
total	<b>6,065</b>	<b>1,022</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>8,163</b>	<b>6,713</b>
<b>total income</b>	<b>15,795</b>	<b>11,978</b>	Transfer to Gen Funds	7,632	5,265
				<b>15,795</b>	<b>11,978</b>

### Income & Expenditure Account ~ notes

- Income has increased by 31% to £15,795 (£11,978 in 1998) due to the significant (£5,000+) increase in Other Income
- Expenditure has risen by 22% to £8,163 (£6,713 in 1998)
- The Turncroft Lane related costhead reflects a full year's charge as against 1998's half year.
- Most other cost headings show a reduction in expenditure with the exceptions of Computer Consumables (£92) and Publications (£109)

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Ernie Sutton



**T**is with a sense of relief that this year I am able to report that the Individual membership figures have not, as in the past few years, been subject to a reduction. In fact we can show an increase of two. Such an increase is obviously no cause for rejoicing but rather for hoping the downward trend has been arrested and for continued improvements in the near future. Although the greatest losses have been in the **Annual** memberships, it is in this section that we have welcomed a goodly number of new 'recruits'. This is due in no small measure to the efforts made by our officers who so willingly give their time to promote the aims of our Society to various organisations. I am concerned at the number of non-renewals amongst the **Ten year** members even though there has been a good transfer from this group to the **Five year** section.

Please forgive me for repeating my appeal of last year to give as much publicity as possible to the work of our Society, if only as a thank you to those officers and others who give so much time and effort in the day-to-day running of the Society at the Turncroft Lane offices.

Lastly I would again express my annual and most sincere thanks to the individual members and affiliated societies for their continuing and most generous financial support to our funds.

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
annual	429	391	360	339	<b>318</b>
Ten year	612	616	607	571	<b>556</b>
Five year	-	18	49	79	<b>117</b>
Honorary life	13	13	13	10	<b>11</b>
Juniors	2	2	4	4	<b>3</b>
total	1056	1040	1033	1003	<b>1005</b>
Affiliated	94	91	89	89	<b>85</b>

## AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

1 Alderley Edge, Wilmslow & District FP Society	30 Hayfield Civic Trust	57 RA Bolton Group
2 Altrincham & District Rambling Club	31 HF Bolton Group	58 RA Congleton Group
3 Barlborough Parish Council	32 HF Bury Group	59 RA East Cheshire Area
4 Barnsley Mountaineering Club	33 HF Manchester Group	60 RA Manchester Area
5 Blackbrook Conservation Society	34 HF Nottingham Group	61 RA New Mills Group
6 Brookdale Ramblers	35 HF Warrington Rambling Club	62 RA North & Mid Cheshire Area
7 Buxton Field Club	36 High Lane Residents Association	63 RA Oldham Group
8 Buxton Rambling Club	37 ITT Rambling Club	64 RA Sheffield Group
9 CAE	38 Knutsford Civic Society	65 RA Stockport Group
10 CHA Bury & District	39 Ladybrook Valley District Scout Council	66 RA SYNED Area
11 CHA Bolton	40 Leek Footpath Rambling Club	67 RSPB High Peak Group
12 CHA Eccles	41 Littleborough Civic Trust	68 Rucksack Club
13 CHA Manchester Rambling Club	42 Longdendale & Glossopdale FP Preservation Soc	69 Sheffield Clarion Ramblers
14 CHA Mansfield	43 Macclesfield Rambling Club	70 Sheffield Co-op Party Rambling Club
15 CHA Nottingham Rambling Club	44 Macclesfield & District Field Club	71 Sheffield U3A Walking Group A
16 CHA Oldham & District Rambling Club	45 Manchester & District Retired Teachers Assn	72 Shirland & Higham Parish Council
17 CHA Rochdale	46 Manchester Associates Rambling Club	73 St Catherine's Rambling Club
18 CHA Sheffield Section B	47 Manchester Field Club	74 Stockport & District Federation of TWGs
19 CHA Stockport	48 Manchester Pedestrian Club	75 Stockport East Area Bridleway Association
20 CHA/HF Ashton u Lyne	49 Manchester Rambling Club	76 Stockport Field Club
21 Cheadle Hulme & Bramhall Natural History Society	50 Marple & District Rambling Club	77 Stockport Rambling & Social Club
22 Cheshire Tally Ho	51 Marple Community Council	78 Sutton in Ashfield Rambling Club
23 Crescent Ramblers	52 Marple Naturalists	79 The Wayfarers Rambling Club
24 Dane Bank Residents Association	53 Mellor Society	80 Toc H
25 Derbyshire Footpaths Preservation Society	54 Mid Cheshire Footpath Society	81 West Lancashire Footpath Group
26 Derbyshire Pennine Club	55 North Western Naturalists Union	82 YHA Central Region
27 Eyam Village Society	56 Poynton Rambling Club	83 YHA Stockport
28 Geriatrics Group		84 Zeneca Club A-Z Hiking & Rambling Sctn
29 Halcyon Rambling Club		

# Letter from Scotland

from John Houfe

Although now living 200 miles from the Society's centre of activities, Rhona and I keep in touch through receiving Council minutes each month and from my editing and typesetting the annual report.

We were thrilled to be present last May at the official opening of the Society's splendid new offices at Turncroft Lane. Vice President, Andrew Bennett MP, gave his usual very pertinent and thought provoking speech. We can only add our sincere thanks and congratulations to all who have contributed to this wonderful achievement and for making us so welcome. Here's hoping the Society will be as formidable in the 21st century as it was in the 20th.

We continue the good fight here north of the border. We are actively involved with various wildlife and environmental groups and I represent the Scottish Rights of Way Society on the Regional Access Forum ~ Dumfries & Galloway is four times the size of Cheshire! Meeting five times a year, this is convened by the Regional Council and has representatives from users (walkers, cyclists, horse riders), landowners (eg NFU, SLF and National Trust) and government bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage. So far there has been more talk than action but that is now changing including the appointment of two fulltime access officers.

Forestry is another area for more optimism. Since the last war, SW Scotland has suffered from extensive planting of blanket Sitka spruce. Coinciding with far more public consultation, we are seeing big changes which should be echoed in other parts of the UK. New plantings have greater variety of species and ages, more open spaces, fewer straight lines, more regard for the topography and hilltops unplanted. In a few years, this beautiful part of the country should become even more attractive ~ and more accessible.

## SIGNS

There are some signs that say 'No Right of Way',  
Whilst others say 'Private Keep Out'  
But a short cut can pay  
On a wet windy day,  
If there are no farmers about.

When you see 'Bull Beware' on a gate,  
Then take care,  
It's something I always do,  
And so will you  
When you scramble through  
A hawthorn hedge or two.

If a sign says 'No Way',  
'Grouse Shooting today',  
Then keep well away from that spot,  
Just heed what is said  
Or you may end up dead,  
As dead as the grouse they have shot.

These are some of the signs  
I've seen in my time,  
But the one sign I'm still glad to see  
Is the sign that hangs o'er  
*The Rock Tavern* door,  
That's always a good sign for me.

*with acknowledgement to E Ormiston  
and Mine Host at ...*

## THE ROCK TAVERN

Glossop Road  
Marple Bridge  
Cheshire  
SK6 5RX  
tel: 01457 852418

### Accommodation

*Winners of the Good Food Award*

