

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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From the Chairman

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER CRISIS

Our Constitution states that our primary object is 'Creating and preserving open spaces, public access rights and rights of way' in eight northern counties. But have we bitten off more than we can chew? Have we, or our predecessors, allocated more territory to ourselves than we can competently handle?

The question was posed this month by two respected members from West Yorkshire who felt that our Stockport headquarters is too far away from their home area for our assessors to make any valid comments about footpaths there. Our membership is very thin on the ground in West Yorks, as it is in Merseyside, Blackpool, Derby and other places in our outer fringes.

Should we face facts, admit that we are not doing the job as well as we might and pull out, leaving the preservation of footpaths to RA groups on the spot with local knowledge? It would be quite wrong of us to second-guess or inadvertently oppose decisions made by such bodies.

Where we are well represented by members, inspectors and agents we will of course continue to bend all our efforts to continuing the pursuit of our century-old objects but is it now time to admit that our membership is weak at our fringes and unlikely to strengthen?

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Should we contract our claimed territory and deal more efficiently with our core area? These questions strike at the basic principles of the PNFS but they have to be faced. No decisions will be made until the membership has been consulted and the matter discussed at Council. If we proceed with a proposal to 'downsize' this will have to be put before an Extraordinary General Meeting. If passed, the Charity Commissioners will have to be informed as will the Local Authorities who are obliged to notify us of footpath changes. We hope as many members as possible will attend the Council meeting (to be arranged) to take part in the discussion. Meanwhile, please give it some thought.

We are also considering changes to the format of the AGM and the Annual Dinner. It is proposed that next year the AGM would be held on Saturday morning, followed by a buffet lunch and the opportunity for an informal get-together and exchange of information in the afternoon. What do you think? Please let us know.

When Adrian Littleton retired as Secretary after his triumph with the Inspectors' Conference

many people have been asking how he is and whether his health is bearing up. The short answer is 'Very well, thank you'. He, very sensibly, took a minor stroke as a fair warning to cut down drastically on his work load and concentrate more on fun, games and holidays. That doesn't by any means imply that he has disappeared completely from Taylor House. The reorganisation of our filing system is still his baby, occupying him several hours a week and I will always be grateful to him for his unfailing moral support and legal advice in difficult times.

The part of Adrian's old duties involved with the recruitment and training of Inspectors has been taken over by Bob Dumbarton, who is himself an Inspector, and collator of Footpath Faults. A busy man!

Some other busy people were the vandals who ripped off the stainless steel 'Panorama' plaque from its plinth on the top of Shutlingsloe (the Matterhorn of the Peak District). The plaque was installed by the PNFS and RA in 1979 in memory of Arthur Smith, another dedicated Hon. Secretary. Whoever spent his time up there, working away at its removal, must have gone up

armed with the tools to do it. Disaffected youth? Fortunately the park rangers rescued it before it could be thrown down the hillside. It will be replaced when it has been straightened out.

-oo-

THE CONFERENCE AT QUARRY BANK MILL ON 21 JUNE 2002

The objects of this Conference were a mix of the Society's gratitude to members for their contributions to its work; the opportunity of members to socialise and the imparting of

technical know-how.

If you attended, and feel that a two day's programme was crammed into one, blame this on my servitude to the lines in Kipling's *'If'*

*"If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds worth of
distance run,"*

aggravated by obstinate optimism that there must surely be time for an extra ten metres.

Any repeat of this Conference should contrive more time for



An impromptu map reading session arranged for the press photographer shows it to rt, Mrs Ros Bourne, Peter Burns, Dennis Flinn, Adrian Littleton, Jane Krause (Cheshire CC), Derek Seddon and Peter Crofts (Consultations & Orders Manager).

Photo courtesy of Macclesfield Express

discussion and less looking at the organiser's watch.

The contribution which I found most fascinating was the talk by Jane Krause from Cheshire County Council about the Footpath Improvement Exercise. Our much-loved footpaths network was created by thousands of historical accidents. The occupants of Greenacre Cottages needed to walk to Cobalt Mill; where most of them worked; the non-conformist chapel in White Dog Lane, and the Silver Plough public house. Each destination was most speedily reached via paths across fields.

When the Definitive Map was compiled all these paths were put on to it. Since then, rural slum clearance has flattened the Cottages; after unsuccessful use as an antiques emporium the Mill burnt down; the chapel is now a dwelling and the pub is an architect's office. However the paths are much used for recreation; and would be still more popular if links were created to Redhill railway station and the local outlet for Black Lamb Ale at Pinkstoke. That's what Footpath Improvement is all about.

What Jane could not be explicit about were resources. Before approaching your local highway authority with a shopping list of fifty Footpath Improvements, brood on the cost benefits of each and the likely reactions of landowners, including the alchemy whereby neglected coppice becomes prime agricultural land as soon as a highway authority tries to put a public footpath through it.

My grateful thanks to everyone else who attended the Conference.

Adrian Littleton

Anyone lost a brolly?

A gent's folding umbrella was left behind at Styal Mill after the conference. Ring Taylor House if it was yours.

THE LESLIE G MEADOWCROFT MEMORIAL FUND

The fund in memory of our late lamented President now stands at £320. Further donations may still be sent to the Hon Treasurer, Keith Wykes at Taylor House.

THE DISCOVERING LOST WAYS PROJECT (DLWP)

Where would *Signpost* be without our regular appeals for volunteers? This time the call is different and is aimed at those with an inquiring academic mind who relish burrowing among old maps and dusty records. One of the offshoots of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 is the provision for the addition to the Definitive maps of any hitherto unrecognised way which can be shown to have existed by means of historical evidence.

The Act sets a limit of 25 years for this research, after which no further application can be considered. Two years have already passed.

Jane Krause, Cheshire County Council's Countryside Access Manager is anxious to co-operate with walking and equestrian groups to work on the task, which may involve as many as 500 cases in the county. The 5 Cheshire RA groups' footpath officers are forming a group to trawl the archives in a systematic manner and an appeal is out for research-minded members of the PNFS to join them. In addition, any member who knows of a used but non-definitive path

which ought to be claimed should contact us at Taylor House with map reference and as much background detail as possible while we have the opportunity.

...but hold everything...I have just received a leaflet offering family history CD ROMs for sale. These include OS maps of Cheshire 1870 revised 1910 at twenty five inches to the mile. The purchase of a set of these by the PNFS would allow members to do their research in the comfort of their own homes with a definitive map along side for comparison. We must look into this

A MINI MASS TRESPASS

Well no, it was more an assertion of our legal rights when three of your officers helped to swell a party led by Don Lee of the Open Spaces Society plus members of the Manchester RA.

Manchester FP254 in Peel Hall, Wythenshawe had been repeatedly blocked in its passage through Chamber Hall Farm. Three signposts had been removed in succession and a notice displayed saying 'Beware of the Rottweilers'. Undaunted, our party pushed open the gate marked 'Strictly no admittance' and a very friendly collie came out and rubbed itself against our



Peter Crofts asserting his right of way

legs. We saw no other wild life except the 'farmer' who wants to convert his land to airport car parking without interference from walkers. Having established our right of way we retired to continue lobbying Manchester Council.

To Frank Hackney and Ian Ray - our apologies

In the last issue of "Signpost" we reported in error, the resignation of Frank our Inspector in the Bagnall, Biddulph etc area of Staffordshire Moorlands. Members can be assured that Frank has not resigned and is continuing to enjoy the rewards of a very well filled retirement. However, Frank is a realist and he does see that as his retirement interests grow, he has less and less time to spend on inspecting footpaths. He will continue to soldier on and be the PNFS

representative in that area and give as much time as he can spare but he would be very happy if hear from any member who would be interested to take over from him and become the Society's next Bagnall, Biddulph etc Inspector.

And it does not stop there ..

Ian Ray was, in June, our newest Inspector and we were very pleased that he had chosen to give the PNFS the benefit of his skills and experience. We all knew he had selected the Derbyshire Dales Ashford in the Water, Bakewell etc area for his Inspection work. So why did we report that he was taking over some other area?? Blame the water at Taylor House for making such an intoxicating brew that even the computers became a bit squiffy.

"Signpost" offers its sincere apologies to Frank and Ian and promises to do better next time.

WIND FARMS - THE ARGUMENT GOES ON

From Graham Turner

I believe the proposal for Europe's biggest wind farm to be that of 250 turbines on the Isle of Lewis. It would incorporate an underwater link to the mainland and the developers suggest that its output would match that of a small nuclear power station. On holiday there last month I found the proposed site to be four miles from the nearest house and local comments re the project to be positive. It is of course very early days yet.

Denmark would now appear to have been overtaken by Germany as the world leader in wind energy, with four times as many turbines. My understanding is that the new Danish government has cancelled support for offshore wind farms and proposes to reduce funding for research and development programmes. I have no knowledge of their power prices but as five-sixths of their electricity comes from other sources I cannot believe that wind is the major factor in Danish prices being 'almost twice as much as Britain's'.

Under the policies of the

democratically elected governments of most of the windy countries of Western Europe, wind energy has been 'on a roll' since around 1997 with installed onshore capacities increasing each year at the rate of 30-40%. The two main exceptions are France, politically nuclear, and the UK, where the installation rate is now increasing and may well match the continental rate in 2003 - albeit from a lower baseline. Considering new plant in the UK, subsidies apart: onshore wind is now far cheaper than either nuclear or oil, and is competitive with coal. At the moment natural gas is cheaper but its charges are rising whilst wind is free —and then of course there is the environment.

Just a thought:- sometimes 'Signpost' says "not on the hills" and sometimes "down with wind energy". Would not the Society gain by accepting that wind energy has advantages and is in the UK to stay and at the same time seek extensive dialogue as to where turbines should be placed i.e. "not on the hills"? Lobbying against the whole wind industry is unlikely to be a winner.

Derek Seddon replies....

.... production costs of the various forms of power are not

my major concern, though I do feel that, like nuclear, the biggest costs for wind power will come in the future when later generations want to get rid of the house-sized chunks of concrete which will be spread over the countryside.

I don't recall writing 'down with wind energy' because I have in the past come out in favour of off-shore developments. Your comments on the Lewis proposals are interesting. I wonder what the island's population is and how many of them have gone to have a look at one of the big existing farms? Have they really thought about those 250 house-sized blocks of concrete?

From Graham.....

.....the Isle of Lewis is around four times the size of the Isle of Wight - but with only one sixth of that island's population. It is arguably the windiest part of the U.K., and the proposed wind farm site consists mainly of somewhat exhausted peat bogs with rock foundation. The scenic value is low, there are no dwellings within miles and walkers non-existent. With an expectation that the turbines would be sourced from a local, at present unused, oil fabrication

yard, I believe this to be a prime location for a large wind farm.

Planning conditions normally specify that upon decommissioning a site be returned to its original use: a bond is often required to guard against insolvency and to ensure that this work is effectively carried out. Maybe landowners should insist, at the planning stage, on more stringent decommissioning practices. My personal horror of concrete is of the legacy of each redundant nuclear power station reactor encased in a large expanse of concrete three metres thick and remaining a no-go area for at least one thousand years, i.e. around forty generations.

Please do not be put off visiting Lewis and the adjoining Isle of Harris by the above. Most of the terrain is fascinating, sometimes beautiful, and thoroughly recommended for a holiday — not forgetting the walking!

From Derek...

...yes I'm prepared to go along with wind farms if they are kept off hills in open country.

MIDWEEK WALK REPORTS

26th June. Leader Harry Scott

This was the first walk I have organised for the PNFS and it was also the first time I had led one using public transport. I arrived with Peter O'Dowd my walking partner and loyal back marker at Rushton Spencer. We waited by the bus stop and 20 minutes late the bus arrived with 10 or so walkers. The remainder arrived by car, there being 21 walkers including Peter and myself. Our walk took us along the Gritstone Trail, leaving this at Hawslee. The weather was good to us and we stopped for lunch at the top of Greasley Hollow. We then took the unclassified road, with good views down to the Ship Inn at Danebridge. After some of our party had quenched their thirst we set off down the River Dane and over the top via Hollinhill and Brandy Lee back to Rushton Spencer. Everyone had a good day out, we said our goodbyes and Peter and I set off for home. I look forward to next year when I hope to organise a walk over Hen Cloud. Happy Walking

31st July. Leader Peter Crofts

The midweek walk which I led

in August 2001 had near perfect weather with over fifty walkers. It is a tribute to the keenness and hardiness of the regular Wednesday walkers that my walk this year attracted one-third of this number in spite of continuous, heavy and penetrating rain throughout the day.

It had rained during the night and was falling steadily as I walked to Marple station. I had planned a circular walk of about seven miles, including some less commonly used paths, and found several walkers already waiting. When the train arrived ten minutes later our numbers were doubled to fourteen with three more due on the next train.

We walked down the hill, turned into Brabyns Park and followed the riverside path by the swollen and fast—running River Goyt past its confluence with the Etherow and uphill to the Peak Forest Canal. Pausing for a coffee stop, we continued along the towpath to the top of the flight of sixteen locks and the junction with the Macclesfield Canal, where the latecomers joined us. At Brick Bridge we turned off the canal and down the path by which Samuel Oldknow's eighteenth century apprentices had walked up to church every Sunday, to

Bottoms Bridge and up the lane past Linnet dough Scout Camp to Mellor Golf Course.

Cutting across the corner of the Golf course by the little - used But unchallenged footpath Marple 132 we continued on the Same numbered path for a short distance to our lunch stop under trees. The heavy rain had been falling for so long by now that these provided no protection whatsoever, and several walkers ate their lunch standing under umbrellas. Three who lived locally had wisely left us by this time, but the majority were well past the point of no return.

We continued across the upper part of the golf course and then downhill, avoiding the steep and very rocky bridleway 149 (signed "Unfit for Horses"), in preference for the easier footpath 206. Several turns brought us back to the golf course and on to the Cown Edge Way, across the railway and down to the turbulent River Goyt now carrying even more water than in the morning. The bridleway led us past the Roman Lakes back to Bottoms Bridge and uphill to the edge of Marple, and a short walk to the station.

I left my sodden friends facing considerable journeys, one by Road to Sandbach, others into

Manchester with further train or Bus rides to its remoter northern parts, with their thanks for a Most enjoyable day's walking ringing In my ears. As, fifteen minutes later, I lay in a hot bath, I reflected on their toughness And enthusiasm. With walkers like these, the future of rambling is assured.

28th August.

We regret that this meet had to be cancelled because of the rail strike.

Forthcoming:

25th September: Woodley to Marple Leader Jeff Lewis 0161 766 4683

30th October: Macclesfield circular Bob Dumbarton 0161 439 8720

27th November: Disley Circular Roy Standring 0161 483 3459

No walk in December (Christmas Day)

29th Jan 2003: Chelford Circular Janet Cuff 0161 431 7654

BOOKS

The Ramblers' Association, North Wales Area has published two new books, obtainable from Dave Hollett, 69 Wethersfield Road, Prenton, Wirral CH43 9YF. 0151 653 3612. Cheques payable to RA North Wales Area. The books are:

THE PIONEER RAMBLERS 1850 -1940 by Dave Hollett £8.95 + £1 p&p Includes the struggle for access, Highlands in the 19th century, Commons Preservation Socy, Pioneer Rambling Clubs, long distance walking, establishment of the RA and YHA, the Mass Trespass etc

THE CLWYDIAN WAY LONG DISTANCE TRAIL (New edn). The 122 mile route Prestatyn-Corwen-Brenig-Clocaenog Forest-Prestatyn, plus 12 short circular walks. Coloured maps & illustrations £6.95 + £1

....and MAPS

CHESHIRE PARISH MAPS

18 different parishes in Cheshire have published footpath maps of their areas. Most cost £1 and can be obtained from The Public Rights of Way Unit, Cheshire County Council, Goldsmith House, Hamilton Place, Chester CH1 1SE. Tel 01244 603010.

We will be ordering a set to be held

for reference at Taylor House.

PNFS members may order UK All Weather (LAMINATED) Maps at a 20% discount from CHARTEC, 01433 621779, e-mail info@aqua3.com. Foreign maps are also stocked and are subject to the same discount. Quote Ref: PNFS01.

All Inspectors are encouraged to equip themselves with maps of their patches and pass the cost on to the Hon Treasurer Keith Wykes at Taylor House.

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

It was a sad day for us this month when Charles Peers who has served as an assessor of footpath diversions for 24 years, left us to go and live in the North East. The team at Taylor House will miss his cheerful presence and sage advice. He has been granted a well-deserved Honorary Membership and we wish him a serene uncontroversial retirement.

TAKEN SHORT AT TAXAL?

On the Midshires Way, in the Goyt Valley and the Peak Park is the ancient church of St James, Taxal. Set into the churchyard wall is an almost equally ancient toilet which may have been the saviour of many a poor rambler. The local people

fund for the replacement of this now decrepit facility with a modern stainless steel unit, fully disabled-accessible and likely to cost £6000+. As a charity, we are unable to deploy any of our funds to aid such a project but any of our members who would be sympathetic to its aims and could foresee a time when they might make use of it are urged to send donations to Mrs Margaret Headington, 5 Reddish Lane, Whaley Bridge, High Peak SK23 7DW.

**LAUNCH of the
FRED PERRY WAY
Saturday 21st September**

Fred Perry? Who's he? Well, for younger members, he was probably England's greatest tennis player, born in Stockport, three times winner of Wimbledon and the last Englishman to do so. In his honour Stockport are launching a 14 mile walking route from Reddish in the north to Woodford in the south, via snickets, ginnels and green spaces. Walks over two short sections will be led from the Community Centre, North Reddish Park and Dialstone Centre, Offerton at 10.30am on 21st September. A minibus will be at Woodford to return those who tackle the whole route. Maps are available of the full distance. Ring Ian Goodwin on 474 4593 for details.

**A FUNNY THING
HAPPENED**

Many local boroughs in our area have set up discussion groups called forums (fora to those with a classical education) to accommodate the opinions of the various bodies whose members like to enjoy the pleasures of open country. We are fortunate that the PNFS is well represented on a number of these groups but there is a continuing need for more volunteers as more are set up. It is important that our presence is felt and would be of great help to the society if volunteers with local knowledge would offer their services to attend on our behalf. Meetings are usually quarterly and reasonable expenses would be paid.

Please inform the Chairman at Taylor House if you could attend one of these:

Peak Park Annual Access & Footpaths Meeting, 10am 5th October, Old Hall Hotel, Buxton.

Forest of Bowland Users' Forum, 7pm 24th October, Preston Town Hall.