

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The New Year arrives in the best possible way - with the promise of hope for the survival of the Society. Not simply hope but the belief that we are on the verge of a fresh infusion of vigour to carry us through the difficulties we have suffered in the last three years. And the cause of all this unseemly optimism? None other than the fact that, after the desperate call for help in the last Newsletter, the Fifth Cavalry rode to the rescue in the nick of time in the shape of **David Bratt**, our Inspector for Warrington, who has offered to take on the post of Chairman at the next AGM. He has been understudying for the job for the last few weeks and has already made his presence felt as a source of new ideas and approaches to problems.

Better yet, **Roy Spoors**, who has entered into the arcane world of Courts and Enquiries officer with such enthusiasm, has been gently persuaded to take on the Vice Chairmanship of the PNFS in his spare time.

There is no doubt that these two competent young(ish) volunteers will make a tremendous difference to the wellbeing of the Society. **Eric Kime** and I are mightily relieved to be able to hand over when the time comes, knowing that the PNFS will be in good hands.

Now, to come back to earth, what we still need is a Secretary. If *Signpost* can bring in a Chairman there is reason to hope that a Secretary will answer the call.

If we could persuade a **SIGNPOST OFFICER** to step forward my happiness would be complete. We need someone (or a group) to take over where **Fred Ogden**, the Signpost Officer (Admin) leaves off, having located the site and negotiated with landowner and local council for permission to plant. We now pay a man for his time and the hire of his van to transport the posts, but we sometimes need assistance to carry posts, tools and cement over fields or moorland. It can be a satisfying, even entertaining, exercise.

THE LESLIE MEADOWCROFT MEMORIAL

The proposed memorial to our late President, which has been most generously subscribed, is on hold for the moment. The most appropriate site(s) on the Cown Edge Way were found to be prone to vandalism.

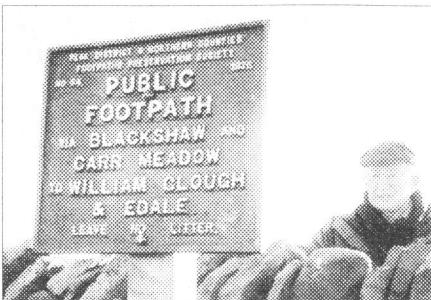
Signposts there seem to have a short life so we are looking at alternatives. **Fred Ogden** is awaiting permission for a stile or gate on the Tissington Trail. We'll keep you informed.

Meanwhile, we received news that the Derek Taylor Memorial Post, the one which features on the front cover of the 2002 Annual Report, had been knocked down. Naturally, our first thought was that the vandals had struck again but investigation by the local ranger reveals that the culprits were the horses which graze on that piece of moorland, the post being the only suitable object on which they can scratch their backsides. We will retrieve the post, which is undamaged, and reinstall it, with an extension length and a cross-bar put through it for extra stability. But should we put up a more attractive back-scratcher nearby to lure the horses away? All designs welcome.

SIGNPOST PLANTING (IN TRIPPLICATE)

December 17th was one of those bright, clear, frosty days when it's good to be out and the right day to pick for the planting of three signposts at

Rowarth. Two were new ones, commemorating the 30th anniversary of New Mills RA and the 35th anniversary of Marple Rambling Club, but the third was a replacement of a



Fred Ogden surveying the completed replacement job on the damaged signpost No 54 (1926) at Rowarth

1926 sign which had collapsed. All happened to be within about 200 yards of each other and all marked hard-to-see stiles over walls en route to and from Hayfield. The local farmer was so pleased to see the route properly marked, thus saving his walls, that he came out to help with his 4 - wheel drive truck. There was a huge overload



Heading for the pub after a good morning's work

of manpower as volunteers from both Marple Ramblers and Probus RC turned out to assist. They made short

work of the carrying and digging but did enough to work up an appetite for their Christmas Dinner at the pub at Rowarth. That's the way to do it!

WIND FARM LATEST

On November 17th, about 250 dedicated anti-wind-farm protesters gathered at the foot of Scout Moor, Edenfield to hear a rousing speech by **David Bellamy**, then followed him to the summit where it is proposed to erect the 26 huge pylons. "If you wanted to build a house here" said the Professor, "you would be refused by the Council, yet these proposals would turn this open moorland into an industrial site". The Council for the Protection of Rural England also came out strongly against this particular development, claiming it would cause permanent damage to the moorland.



Protest marchers passing Owd Betts pub at the foot of Scout Moor

In a letter to the Guardian, **Prof Bellamy** quotes **Neil Kinnock** on a similar proposal in South Wales: "This will not be so much as a farm for making energy out of the wind, as a

farm for making a lot of money out of the taxpayer".



David Bellamy campaigning against the proposed wind farm on the summit of Scout Moor

However, an opposite view is put forward by my old opponent, PNFS member **Graham Turner**, writing not about Scout Moor but offshore wind farms (which we support):

“David Bellamy’s quote that “wind farms are for making up to one billion pounds a year out of the taxpayer by 2010” is a fantasy. The government subsidy to kickstart offshore wind is by a one-off capital grant of £49M, with developers compensated for their initially higher offshore costs by a small levy on the general price of electricity. (However, a substantial increase in the cost of electricity from two years time when the UK becomes a net importer of gas, as the North Sea reserves run down and demand continues to grow).

Many organisations, such as the million member RSPB favour wind.

They 'support the sustainable development of renewable energy such as wind power because it helps mitigate climate change'. The Institution of Civil Engineers offers an alternative view in its enthusiasm for renewables: they are particularly apprehensive regarding the 'security of supply' of fossil fuel imports, much from politically unstable countries. Their recent report states that under current plans 80% of all electricity would be generated from foreign gas supplies by 2020 and "the lights would start to go out within hours if the supply was interrupted".

As you say, the principal of conserving electricity would help remedy the present year upon year increase in its usage. However, in the longer term, there could be a significant extra demand for electricity if, as anticipated, motor transport becomes powered by hydrogen rather than oil."

Back to Scout Moor: Both Rossendale and Rochdale Councils have voted against approval of the wind farm, which would straddle both their districts. The problem will now probably go to a public inquiry.

WAYMARKERS WANTED

Early in the spring of 2004 we will be needing volunteers to help carry out the waymarking of the Cown Edge Way, the 18-mile

footpath that our late President did so much to bring about. The operation will take place over a series of weekends and is being organised jointly by **Steve Slater** (Information Officer, Manchester RA) and **Keith Wykes**, PNFS Treasurer. The Path runs from Hazel Grove to Woodley, Stockport and the job involves putting up a series of the familiar yellow arrows at strategic points. All volunteers welcome. Please ring either Steve on 0161 427 7582 or Keith on 01625 618 164.

SNIPPETS

A report in from the Moorsiders Rambling Club of Urmston tells us that an exciting extra to their charity walk by the Bridgewater Canal, Worsley, was the sight of the fire brigade rescuing a horse which had fallen into the water. Dobbin was lifted to safety by a sling under its stomach and raised by a crane. It was none the worse for the experience. At the end of the walk the 20 members had a whip round and raised over £40 for PNFS funds. Many thanks to you all!

Remember the Ancient Signpost featured on the back page of the October Newsletter? **Fred Travis**, one of our ancient members (85) rang to tell us that he remembered seeing it when he was cycling by at the age of 15.

We have had several enthusiastic offers to deliver new membership and publicity forms to local libraries,

Important Notice

The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held on Saturday 24th April 2004 at

Masonic Temple Bridge St Manchester at 11am

followed by a Buffet Lunch (free)

And a DISCUSSION

on any topic relevant to the Society's activities

Sample topic: DO WE REALLY NEED COUNCIL MEETINGS?

Attendance is down to about 1.5% of total membership at our recent meetings.

Is it time to stop?

Please reserve the date now- 24th April - and let Eric Kime know you are coming. His address is Taylor House or 35 Buxton Lane, Marple, Stockport SK6 7QL Tel: 0161 427 1082

community centres etc. since our appeal last time. Please hold your horses. We jumped the gun with the appeal and the forms are only now at the printers, but we'll get them to you as soon as we can.

Further to our mention in the June *Signpost* about survivors of the great Mass Trespass of 1932. **David Frith**, our Inspector for Glossop, tells me about **Albert Gelsthorpe** of Hathersage who sadly died at the age of 101 during the summer. That leaves only **Edith Stringer** of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, now 82, who was taken on the Trespass when aged 11 by her brother. She was terrified at the time that she was going to wind up in prison.

We are very sorry to lose the

services of two stalwart Inspectors **Professor Harry Sutcliffe**, who still looks lean and fit, has decided to call it a day at 86 and retire from his duties in Salford. We are looking for a replacement for him after his many years of active service.

Graham Wilson, the author of that round-Macclesfield pub crawl 'One over the Eight' we printed in the January and June issues, has also had to retire after a hip operation that is not going as well as it might. What rotten luck! He has our sympathy and best wishes. We are grateful to **Ian Ray** and **John Goodman** who have volunteered to divide his parishes between them and so keep the show going.

-oo-

FROM THE FORUMS

Rights of Way Forums are now an established fact in centres around our area of operations. We are represented on them by a varied group of interested members who report back on their growing understanding of the way local government officers think and of the restraints under which they have to work.

Mike Dearden attended the Rights of Way Forum at Preston:

There were the usual routine statistics about complaints and how they were being handled. One particular complaint was about the number of signposts that are missing. In some cases it was obvious that the landowner or occupier was deliberately removing the signpost to discourage the public from using the right of way. Officials seemed to be paralysed because firm evidence about the wilful removals was hard to obtain, even though the offenders were well-known. I suggested that, in the case of repeated suspected removals by the same offender, the signpost could be treated with marker paint which, although it would be invisible to the naked eye, it would show up on clothing, vehicles etc under ultra-violet illumination.

There was a discussion document on enforcement where development affects public rights of way. There are many cases where buildings are erected or there is a

change in land use which obstruct a path. Although it was officially stated at the meeting that the public should continue to follow the definitive line, if possible, but to report the problem to the Environment Directorate; there was no impression of strong determination to forestall such difficulties at the planning stage. In one case, common enough, where a householder lays out a garden across a public path, so that the more timid users are deterred from going any further, it was held to be excusable that no diversion had been sought because of the estimated cost of £1500 -£2000. The officials did promise, however, to produce a draft document in time for the next meeting in March. Let us hope that it leads to effective action at the sites.

We seem to have entered an era when any possibility of unpleasant confrontation is to be avoided, yet it would only take one or two well publicised cases to bring most offenders into line.

David Walker went to the Peak Park Access Meeting in Buxton and reports:

Rights of Way (*as in the CROW Act*) should be implemented by Autumn 2004, although the landowners' appeals will probably not be completed until June 2004. 500 stiles and signs will be installed at access points in new areas in a two-year rolling program.

One new Ranger has been appointed, three more advertised for, plus 100 part time.

Several groups have suggested new paths/Rights of Way for new areas to link with existing paths in other areas. The Ramblers Association has suggested 15 links. Will the PNFS do likewise? How about a note in *Signpost* to ask members for suggestions? (*Good idea - Ed*)

Quarrying:- It is Peak Park policy to oppose extensions inside the park but they are constrained by a Government Act. **Buxton-Matlock Railway proposals:-** Report awaited before taking any further action.

There then follow several pages of statistics of work done on footpaths in the Park. David asks if this service is common to all local forum reports and would it be a good idea to circulate them to Inspectors in the areas affected? Yes, indeed it would and we'll try to get on to it first thing in the New Year.

Shirley Northcott attended the Pendle Access Forum and came away with a list headed 'Rights of Way complaints and other faults cleared' which will be studied and circulated to those on the ground. She writes:

The Forum is well-attended and efficiently organised. There are two RA members going regularly, one of whom is a real 'heel-biting terrier' of a lady. **Tom Partridge** (RoW Officer) is an

excellent young man. His discussion document on a proposal for a county-wide policy on enforcements has been accepted at county level and will be developed into a working part of every land developer's contract with the county council.

He also wished to know the mind of the Forum as to whether it was in the public interest to take a particular developer to court for building across and totally obliterating a footpath.

The developer has done this several times in the area and the last time he was taken to court the magistrate threw the case out "as there was a road nearby that would do perfectly well". The Forum said "Go ahead" and it may be that with a bit of extra push from the PNFS the magistrate would understand the situation better. Apparently, only one solicitor out of 6 involved in the selling of the homes bothered to do a full search and that, says T.P., is par for the course! (*We will certainly follow that up - Ed*)

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

On looking through old files, I came across correspondence concerning *Signpost* 58 situated on the Snake road above Glossop at the junction with the path to Doctor's Gate.

The sign had been erected originally in 1925 and in August 1938 it had been damaged when a car left the road, hit a wall and broke the plate. Investigations commenced and

a letter was sent to the motorist's insurance company on 13 August of that year, requesting payment of £2 so that the replacement could be effected. The insurance company replied requesting how the sum of £2 had been arrived at. Our reply indicated that our usual cost was £2-10s-0d, but the £2 was claimed for as the wooden post might have been capable of re-use. The insurance company replied that they were investigating the matter. On 15 October the plate had been renewed, and the insurance company said '...the file of papers is out of our hands for investigation purposes, but when it is returned to us, we will look into the question of liability.'

Much more prevarication ensued and on 9 December 1940 (over two years after the accident), there is a letter on file stating '....actually this case was compromised and as your claim amounts to only £2 we are prepared to deal with this in a similar manner and make an offer of 50% for the purpose of an amicable settlement.'

This was rejected and a revised figure of £1-15s-0d was put forward by the Society. This in turn was rejected by the insurance company who indicated '....the plain facts are that we contend we were not to blame for this accident. You have sought to blame from us, and we have made you an offer which we consider reasonable. If it is not accepted we propose contesting the claim.'

We agreed somewhat reluctantly to

accept their offer of £1 and a cheque for this amount was received early in January 1941.

I just wonder how much the motorist's insurance premium was, and whether it would take as long as 2 years 5 months to settle in 2004.

As a postscript to this, on the reverse of the newspaper cutting from 1938, there is an ad:

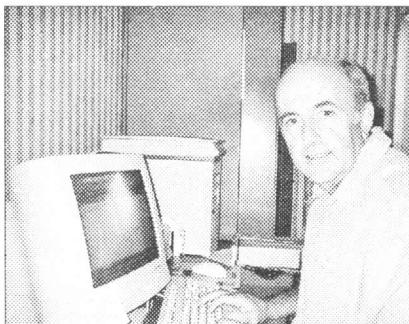
A Lawton & Sons, New Mills, want horses for slaughter. Best Prices. Personal Attention.'

Fred Ogden

-00-

An apology—

unfortunately in the last issue of *Signpost*, the final paragraphs of the piece on **Bob Dumbarton** were omitted. For the sake of completeness the correct version is printed below.



Bob Dumbarton

Role & Responsibilities

Control of emails that arrive on

Society's account. Initial 'thank you' reply to all emails. These printed emails then pass to normal post logging.

Control of all matters on computer front, utilising **Peter Rhodes** for Website matters and Tame Computers for software and hardware updates.

Ensuring backup of PNFS files taken on a weekly basis, with disks being taken off site.

Providing documentation of all computer processes are kept up to date. Liaising with all Inspectors- allocating and amending parishes when necessary.

Raising documentation for all new and retired Inspectors- reporting changes to Officers' Meeting.

Interviewing new Inspectors, allocating new parishes and providing necessary documentation.

Providing backup for **Peter Rhodes** for all matters regarding fault reporting.

Review of Inspectors and Agents

From time to time, the Society reviews its functions and recently we have been looking at the Inspector/ Agent aspects undertaken by some of our stalwart membership. Currently we have over 70 Inspectors or Agents, who help us in the reviews of paths in the Society's area.

As part of this review, we would like to hear from any Inspector or

Agent, who feels that they are unable to continue or fully participate in their role. We would also welcome any member, who would like to take on either an Inspector or Agent position.

Any correspondence should be addressed through **Derek Seddon** or **Robert Dumbarton** at Taylor House.

The quiet lanes scheme: A letter to Cheshire County Council

I have seen a press report which suggests that it is proposed to create harmony on country lanes between walkers and motorists by narrowing country roads to encourage drivers to slow down and by putting up traditional small signposts So that motorists have to slow down to read them.

This report may give a distorted view of the quiet lanes scheme. I hope that it is inaccurate - having been taking country walks for about 70 years and driving a car for about 47, I perceive these two stratagems as formulae for fear, discord and the cacophony of rear end shunts.

A walker using a carriageway or roadside verge needs, above all, the ability to see approaching vehicles before they get dangerously close to him. The most terrifying roads to walk are those on which undulations or horizontal bends mean that timely evasive action is almost impossible. The ability of driver and walker to see each other in plenty of time is thus

the crucial factor. It promotes relaxed walking, happy driving and minimisation of accidents.

Narrowing carriageways will reduce visibility ranges and thus promote fear and hazards.

I am old enough to remember with dismay the type of direction signs used in the 1940s and 50s where one had to get within about 5 metres of a sign in order to be able to read it. I have also driven in about twelve foreign countries and sampled their signage. Much the most dangerous is wealthy U S A where many signs are little more visible than the UK's 1940 ones. A navigationally uncertain driver is a dangerous one; especially if being shouted at by would-be helper/passengers, "There's a sign that says we need to turn right, Fred go right, or will get lost again." 1940s signage will generate accidents; not reduce their number.

Cumbria County Council is very successful at promoting walker safety by doing what Cheshire has recently done on B5166 between Styall and Wilmslow — i.e routing walkers away from carriageways on to public footpaths in adjacent fields. If a walker is not on the carriageway it does not concern him/her how fast vehicles are travelling on the other side of the hedge. He/she is relaxed; friends can chat side by side, children can burn off surplus energy without constant restraint and shouts of "keep

in: car coming from behind." That is what any quiet lanes policy should strive to achieve.

Please tell me if the press summary was an inaccurate travesty of the actual policy; and if so, what that policy is.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Littleton

-00-

PNFS Wednesday Walk -26th November 2003

Start: At the end of the bus route at Langley Methodist Chapel.

On a day with a poor weather forecast in spitting light rain and overcast skies, a total of twelve people set off on the walk up Cock Hall Lane for a quarter of a mile, then over the fields towards Ridgegate reservoir. Then through the forest crossing the minor road and climbing up the forest bridleway to the viewpoint and two seats at Nessitt Hill for a coffee break. Fortunately the rain had stopped and the clouds lifted so that as well as the view down to Trentabank and Ridgegate reservoirs, Teggs Nose area and east to the Cat and Fiddle were all clear. To the west Fiddlers Ferry cooling towers could be seen on the horizon with Jodrell Bank, Frodsham and Alderley Edge with Ringway Airport beyond. South of west, Mow

Cop and the pointed hill near Wrexham were also seen.

The walk continued around the edge of the forest to the Standing Stones car park and onto Forest Chapel for a lunch break in the shelter of the Church porch in bright sunshine. Between the car park and the Chapel there are extensive views down Wildboarclough towards the Cumberland Brook path and left along the ridge, with the Cat and Fiddle on the skyline.

After lunch we went up Charity Lane and instead of the short cut down through the forest, kept on Charity Lane which is rough underfoot but worth while for the extensive views over the White Nancy ridge, Higher Disley to Kinder Scout in the distant North East.

We then went down Hacked Way Lane and across the fields to Clough House, across the muddy path to join the Teggs Nose Trail, following it past the reservoir to Langley, through the village to the Chapel where we were parked, arriving at 2 o'clock, having just missed the half hourly bus! The four bus passengers were given lifts back to Macclesfield station.

The total distance was 7.5 miles with a fair bit of climb in the first half however, everyone seemed happy with this to get the splendid views all round, and no one had done this walk before. Some had walked around Teggs Nose, the Cat and Fiddle, Trentabank and a few over Shutlingsloe, and although they all seemed to be regular weekly Ramblers Association walkers this walk was new to them.

Hilda & Peter Bowler.

Could you lead a Wednesday walk? If you could, please ring Jeff Lewis on 0161 766 4683 for information.

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ORGANISED WALKS - MAXIMISING FUN AND MINIMISING RISK

Yet again the premium for insurance against the risks arising from leading our monthly walk has increased. This policy covers walk leaders and the Society. Insurers are more nervous, damages awards get larger and the American disease of sue when you suffer infects more UK accident victims. No incident on a PNFS-led walk has engendered a claim, but if that happened no insurer would want to provide cover thereafter. What might go wrong?

Sam Sadist's lying excuse reflex blew a fuse when he was asked to lead a walk. "What route will you take?" he was asked. "Barn Hill circular" was the first he could think of.

Six months later Sam drove to Bamdale station with current partner, Cruella. When the delayed train carrying the rest of the party arrived she was cold and cross. Sam muttered "we'll give them a walk they won't forget" : but didn't bother to count them. As he

hadn't walked the circuit for three years and intended to improvise navigation on the hoof, he gave no route briefing; but instead shouted, "I'm Sam Sadist: follow me". He marched up Station Road so briskly that he overshot the Barn Hill path. Refusing to lose face by retreating, he strode another 200 yards, straddled the barbed wire fence and held it down for Cruella to cross. The others could cope without help. Ignoring yells of "wait a minute" Sam did not traverse across to the path but scrambled directly up the steep tussocks of Barn Hill.

At the summit Sam and Cruella paused long enough for two energetic folk to catch up. When breathlessly asked "where to next?" Sam pointed to Mab Top and said, "We'll lunch up there." When four others arrived, puffing and licking blood from barbed wire wounds, Sam shouted "quick march" and strode towards the saddle between Barn Hill and Mab Top, indifferent to shouts of "we're not all here yet".

Half a mile back, Jill sat gasping on a stump. This walk was not for her. Seeking an easy way back to the station she fell into a ditch where she stayed, ankles broken, until she was found the next day.

Jack came more spectacularly to grief. The path chosen by Sam forked. Talking intently to Cruella, Sam took the correct path. The other chosen by Jack and a dozen other members of the party -petered out at

the top of a 45 degrees mud slope. Losing his footing, he slid -fast and out of control - into a tree.

Readers will- I hope -have enjoyed identifying all of Sam's blunders, but how about the shortcomings of the party?

Surely the second accident wouldn't have happened if people near the front of the party had done the things which Sam was conspicuously neglecting -i.e. paused at the fork, studied a map and shepherded everyone else down the correct route?

Don't assume that a walk leader has the qualities of Edmund Hilary and a favourite uncle. If you're not told details of the planned route, ask. If you see poor Jill struggling to keep up, stay with her. If your leader strides through a path's junction assuming that telepathy will tell laggards which route to chose, linger there until they arrive.

No man is an island.

Adrian Littleton

