

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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From the Editor

A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

The Annual General Meeting of April 24th, held as usual at the Masonic Temple in Manchester, ushered in what I am sure will be a revolution in the Society.

The struggles of the last two years to keep the PNFS afloat (and, believe me, it was a close-run thing) have now borne fruit at last in the positive approach from an energetic new management group bursting with fresh ideas.

David Bratt, who was the Inspector for North Warrington district, was elected Chairman. **Roy Spoors**, already Courts and Inquiries Officer, is now also Vice Chairman.

Barry Starkie, ex bank manager and a new member, has been recruited as Honorary Treasurer, taking over from **Keith Wykes**. Keith earns our gratitude for filling this onerous position for the last 15 years. He has been appointed a member of the Signpost team with an ambitious programme ahead of him of planting new posts and maintaining the old ones. More of that inside.

Ernie Sutton was reappointed Membership Secretary, an essential part of the drive for new members now getting under way.

I am delighted to accept the post of President, coupled with that of Newsletter editor. I end this brief note with heartfelt thanks to all in the Society, at Taylor House and out in the field who stuck by me and kept the organisation going through all the difficulties we have come through together.

Now we're moving forward.

Derek Seddon

FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN

Hello ! This is my first note to you all since, very proudly, becoming your Chairman a month ago. On arrival at the AGM there was immediate inspiration for me in that **Kay Wells**, all of 91 years ,was present and proving to be a most nimble handler of her walking aid ! There were around 40 members in attendance and the meeting was one of across the board participation and lively debate.

In my address I mapped out what I see as our immediate objectives. The defence of our footpath heritage, of course, remains our prime concern but there are matters of a domestic nature to attend to also. Firstly the membership has been in decline and is currently in the low 800s. To speak from a position of strength with Highway Authorities, in Public Inquiries and in the Courts we need a growing four figure membership and will target for 1100 over the next three years. A raft of initiatives (more welcome!) have been identified and are already being worked on.

Secondly as a Charity we need to be spending some of our considerable and growing reserves on our Objectives for the benefit of the walking public. There is an opportunity here to kill three birds with the one stone via a five year plan to take our stock of magnificent signposts up from currently around 220 to 400.

The three birds? --we spend some of our funds (a Charitable requirement) --we assist walkers and we publicise the PNFS. In addition we will place a goodly proportion of the new signs outside our Peak District heartland and into our outer territories-- Staffordshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire.

The AGM and subsequently the Officers endorsed the membership growth and signpost objectives. It is of course a doddle to write and agree stretching objectives-- the real work now begins !! Progress reports will follow.

The AGM also voted fully in favour of a resolution (introduced under Constitution item 6c) that our all membership Council meetings will for this year be held Quarterly on a trial basis. Attendance of late by rank and file PNFS members has been very low and you will be most welcome to come along and attend these two way dialogue events--as detailed separately.

So in conclusion may I ask you to keep the faith and spread the word as we strive to take the PNFS on a great leap forward. To contact me directly on any Society matter please either phone me at Taylor House (on Mondays) or at home-01925 762472 or e-mail at bratty41@hotmail.com

Kindest regards,

David Bratt

Vice Chairman's Comments at AGM

The PNFS has a long and proud tradition of campaigning for the preservation and development of our footpath network. We have always tended to be non-confrontational and we have tried to negotiate with pragmatic solutions that satisfy our interests. This approach continues to this day and has stood us in good stead with some notable achievements to our name.

There is no reason to believe that we will not continue largely with this ethos; except there are increasingly times when we need to be more forthright in our views. This change is being forced on the Society; by **Order Making Authorities** who are still less than effective in carrying out their statutory duties; by the increasing appearance of barristers at Public Inquiries; by OMA's who continue to flout the spirit of the legislative framework in using inappropriate procedures.

All of this means that the Society has to investigate on the ground and then prepare a comprehensive position that is based on fact. Once established we must then be prepared to argue our case right through to Public Inquiry, if that is what is needed. This takes time, effort and resources and we will have to decide which are our priority cases. Inevitably this will mean that we will not be able to do everything that we

would like to. In spite of this, we do wish to find some important, high profile situations that we will get very involved in.

We already have a number of potential situations, but if any Members have a suggestion for other 'cause celebres' then please contact one of your Officers. We will assess all of your suggestions and while we cannot guarantee to take them all up, we will undertake to give an early decision on each one put forward.

With such a wide geography to cover the Society is entirely dependent upon Members, Inspectors and Agents; this is one of our strengths. Unfortunately, we do not have the same density of members across all of our area and this leads to some patchy contact with some Councils. If you help us to get more Members generally then we could do more, meanwhile there has been a good response to the proposed 'Flying Squad' made in the last annual report.

It is no secret that the PNFS has been through a very difficult phase following the loss of a number of towering personalities. They have left a tremendous legacy as well as some real gaps. However, with so many changes of Officers at the AGM we are entering an exciting new time for the Society. The challenges are very real, but with **David Bratt** as Chairman and the other new Officers there is a determination to succeed and see the Society flourish as it

deserves to do.

We are all passionate about the footpath network and we know there is a role for the PNFS and that we will make many more contributions to the footpath network in the coming years. We cannot do this alone, please help your Society; by encouraging new members to join; get involved locally; talk to your Officers.

Roy Spoors

CORRECTION to the Annual Report

Under the heading Constitution, page 37, Membership and subscriptions 4 (d) this should read 'individual members of 25 or more years standing, aged at least 70 years, shall be entitled (on application) to Honorary Life Membership'.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR SUBS?

My sincere thanks are due to those members who responded so rapidly and in such numbers to my last appeal for the payment of subs, that I now have to apologise for the delay in acknowledging receipt. However, there remain a good many from whom I am still waiting to hear with their remittance. Don't forget, under the Constitution, subscriptions are due within one month of the AGM. Please don't disappoint me.

Ernie Sutton

THE PEAK AND NORTHERN NEEDS YOU - AND YOUR FRIENDS

It's no secret that our Society, over the last few years, has suffered a decline in membership. To combat this we are starting a major recruitment drive with the aim of raising our numbers over the magic figure of 1000. You can do your bit to help. First, talk to your outdoor-minded friends about the PNFS and what we do. Then, remove the copy of our membership leaflet you will find enclosed with this issue of the Newsletter. Please fold it into three and pass it on. Remember: every new member brings joy to **Ernie Sutton's** heart.

THE RETURN OF THE INSPECTORS' CONFERENCE

Two years ago we held a very successful first conference for our Inspectors at Styal Mill, Wilmslow. This was so well received that a second conference, organised for this year, would seem to be about right.

So, on Wednesday 3rd November 2004 we are going back to Styal Mill for second helpings. The conference will again be primarily for Inspectors and Agents, however, we can accommodate up to 60 people so there may well be room for interested Members. We expect to start at 1000hrs and finish at 1600 hrs and there will be plenty of time to meet old friends, exchange views and give feedback to your

Officers.

Planning for the content of the day is at an early stage, but we are thinking of covering,

- ~update on current footpath issues
- ~new legislation — CROW 2000 Act
- ~policy handbook for PNFS
- ~Local Forum feedback
- ~Better working with Inspectors and Agents
- ~Working sessions/ feedback/ Q&A's

The first conference is a hard act to follow, but we will try to make the second one just as enjoyable and informative. If you are interested then please put the date in your diaries and book your place by contacting **Roy Spoors**, at the Stockport office. There will be NO CHARGE for attending, so all you have to commit is your time and energy to the day.

SIGNPOSTS: FUTURE PROJECTS

Keith Wykes now joins the signpost team which comprises four other members **Fred Ogden, Bill Johnson, Reg Boot and June Tweedie**.

Fred handles the preliminary admin work, dealing with donors who wish to have memorial posts in recognition of past friends or relatives, locating suitable sites and liaising with the landowners for their permission.

Bill Johnson still continues that side

of the work he has carried out for many years. He is no longer able to hump the posts over hill and dale (often on his own) as he has done in the past, but will carry on with the joinery work of fixing the sign plates and memorial plaques to the posts in our workshop.

Keith will supervise the rolling maintenance programme which the Society is undertaking, to repair or replace those of our 220 posts which are showing signs of age or ill-treatment as well as the planting of new posts.

Reg and June are key players in all this, Reg compiling the computer records and June with the arduous role of locating which signposts are in which parishes. As this research progresses, Footpath Inspectors will be notified where posts are in their area and will be asked to let Taylor House know if any need attention.

Meanwhile, with an aim to further recruitment, it is our intention to fix to each one of those 220 existing posts and all new ones in future, a weatherproof plastic plaque with our address and website engraved on it, together with the exhortation JOIN US! These require 4 screws for fixing, with the aid of a gimlet and screwdriver. Another version, in flexible vinyl, will be glued to the tubular metal posts. This is where YOU come in, willing workers are needed to carry out this simple task at a signpost near you or where you like to walk.



The new plastic plaque

If you can offer to help, either outside or at Taylor House with the signpost planting, straightforward joinery or research in our map files, please contact **Keith Wykes** at Taylor House on Monday or Thursday afternoons or at home on either 01625 618164 or 01625 582380.

MORE SIGNPOST NEWS

The memorial post at Rivington to our late Secretary, **Derek Taylor**, the one which a number of grazing horses had used as a backscratcher, was duly replaced with extra cross-bracing and stone reinforcement on May 26th. The picture shows the planting party with new Chairman **David Bratt** on the right, **Fred Ogden** (centre) and **Brian Taylor**.

Two new signposts to replace those that have gone missing (why DO people do that?) will be planted shortly. One will be at Peep o' Day on the Hayfield to Chapel-en-le-Frith road in memory of

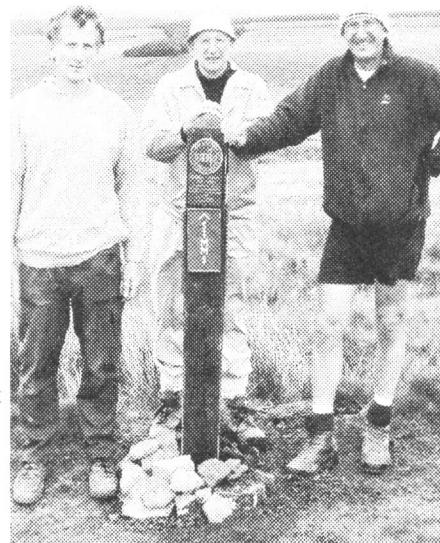
Elsie McNeeny.

The other will be opposite Jenkin Chapel on the minor road between the Goyt valley and Rainow, dedicated to **Doris Morris**.

A completely new post at Glossop is being donated by Longdendale and Glossop Footpaths Society in memory of **Walter Agutter**. This will be sited at the eastern end of the path known as Black Sitch.

We are negotiating with Derbyshire County Council for the installation of a footbridge at Charlesworth, Grid Ref 006 921 in memory of our late President, **Leslie Meadowcroft**. Further details when arrangements are settled.

Meanwhile, the Cown Edge Way



Waymarking project is stalled by bureaucracy. Volunteers will be informed as soon as the situation is sorted out.

Fred Ogden

-00-

People

We regret to report that **John 'Sam' Evison MBE**, one-time PNFS Inspector and a committed supported over many years, has died at the age of 94. He was awarded the MBE for his devoted service to the community and the Scout movement in particular. 'Sam's Hike' was an annual event which he originated and continued to attend until well into his 80s.

Readers will remember the two-part account of a walk linking eight pubs in Cheshire which we published last year, with the wry comment that the author **Graham Wilson**, would have to curtail his walking, having had a hip replacement. Now the good news: his publisher, Millrace, has sent us a cheque for £25, being the discount earned by members who bought the book from which the story was taken. Good news (2) Graham has made an unexpected recovery and is back to walking 8 to 10 miles. Good News (3) He will be contributing another walk article to our October issue.

At Taylor House we have said a sad farewell to three of the mainstays of the Society, three Assessors who feature in the cover photograph of the latest Annual Report. **Pat Milligan, Cliff**

Law and Cliff Wilding have all served loyally round the map table on Monday mornings for more years than we can remember, weighing the implications of proposed footpath diversions sent in by Local Authorities, looking for alternatives or making that fateful decision to object or no comment.

Now they are gone we need replacements. A training scheme for new Assessors is being arranged. Could **YOU** give up your Monday mornings to help with this fascinating, responsible job? It's one of our core activities which must be kept going.

Another old friend who has had to leave us for health reasons is **Percy Hutchinson**. He and **Charles Peers** used to handle the planting of signposts and Percy kept the meticulous records which are so useful to us today. Our grateful thanks for a job very well done go with them both.

JOIN THE FLYING SQUAD AND MAKE YOUR PRESENCE FELT

In the Annual Report and at the AGM the idea of forming a 'flying squad' of interested Inspectors was reintroduced. Basically with such a large area to manage, and with some parts currently not covered by an Inspector or Agent, we need existing Inspectors who are prepared to travel to give the Society more consistent coverage on the ground.

The work will not be too onerous and will usually involve the inspection of and reporting on of footpaths which are the subject of proposed orders or disputes. By looking at each situation locally the Society will be able to provide more informed views and positions to the Order Making Authorities. Some of these proposals are really interesting and challenging, some it has to be said are quite routine, all of them will be supported by Officers in Stockport..

So if you are an Inspector, or would like to become one, and would like to join the 'flying squad' then please contact either **Bob Dumbarton** or **Roy Spoors** in Stockport. Currently we have nine volunteers and in the last year, while it was being formed, it has carried out eight footpath inspections that otherwise we would not have been able to cover.

Please get involved and contact us.

MID WEEK WALKS

January –Janet Cuff

The weather on 28 Jan was atrocious - snow, sleet and rain but I could not see anything in the programme that allowed for cancellation on grounds of bad weather so I set out for the venue (Newtown on the Buxton rail line). However, owing to an unfortunate personal mishap, quite unconnected with the weather, I arrived at Newtown over half an hour late.

No-one was there and I subsequently learned that only one other person was known to have gone to Newtown, and he presumably went home after a little while. I shall make my apologies to him when I see him as, although I had begun to think that I couldn't possibly do my planned walk, owing to the weather, I might have done a few miles along the canal or something like that.

It seems that everyone else either didn't fancy walking in those conditions or assumed that the walk had been cancelled on weather grounds, which was just as well as I didn't make the venue on time.

So I'm afraid that my report for the walk on 28 January is that there was no walk.

February led by Jeff Lewis

Lostock to Daisy Hill (Westhoughton)

29 people were out on a fine clear day for the time of the year. The route mainly followed field paths but explored some rights of way through industrial developments.

A waste disposal plant caused some navigational problems but these were eventually overcome. Between 9 and 10 miles.

March led by John Harker

Newtown to Whaley Bridge.

I led this walk from Newtown Station to Whaley Bridge Station. There were 42 people on a bright, sunny, windy day. The route was: Rocks Farm, Bow Stones Farm, Sponds Hill, Charles Head, Kettleshulme, Clayton Fold, Walker Brow, Whaley Bridge. I found several obstructed paths on the recce (reports submitted). The walk was well received and we reached Whaley Bridge station at 3.50 pm for the 4.02 train to Manchester Piccadilly.

April led by Geoff Daubeny

Blackrod to Appley Bridge

A path in Shevington, found to be subject to a temporary closure order, forced a change in the planned route for this walk, and, as the closed path included a footbridge over the M6 motorway, this was a quite substantial diversion, resulting in the walk exceeding the normal 10 mile limit by about half a mile. A gusty north-east wind greeted us as we got off the train at Blackrod, and rain looked likely as 32 walkers set off through the village and westwards into the fields beyond, skirting the north side



The party fighting its way through a path in Shevington

of Tucker's Hill, before heading for Haigh Hall and on through the park, descending through the upper and lower plantations, crossing the Leeds - Liverpool Canal on the way, and also having our lunch stop in the lower plantation, which was awash with bluebells and other woodland flowers. Pressing on through Standish we used paths in areas which were scarred by coal-mining in the last century, but which nature is quickly reclaiming. Around 3 pm., as we approached the village of Crooke, the rain finally caught up with us, but the Crooke Inn was handy, so we took our afternoon break there. From there, the final couple of miles were along the towpath of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, which had followed a circuitous route through the centre of Wigan since our route crossed it before lunch. This brought us to Appley Bridge in nice time for the 4.38. p.m. train back to Manchester.

Three footpath faults were encountered and reports on each sent to Taylor House.

FORTHCOMING WALKS

Wed 30th June **Grindleford Circular** 10.43 train from Piccadilly.
Leader: **Brian Melling** 0161 224 9803

Wed 28th July **Strines Circular** 9.43 train from Piccadilly
Leader: **Janet Cuff** 0161 431 7654

Wed 25th August: **Bromley Cross Circular** 10.00 train from Victoria
Leaders: **Don & John Moseley**

Wed 29th September **Todmorden to Hebden Bridge** 9.48 train from Victoria
Leaders: **Peter & Caroline Ball** 0161 969 4793

Wed 27th October **Standedge Tunnel Circular** 9.20 bus (184) to Diggle from Oldham Street.
Leader **Eileen Leonard** 01623 874183
11 miles, but a cut-off at Marsden possible.

....or why not try this?

Member **Tom Sadler** has alerted us to the fact that guided walks can be joined

through the old railway tunnels on the line from Buxton to Bakewell.

Enquiries at Peak Park headquarters bring the reply that Ranger Peter Wardle leads parties of up to 20 on a free-lance basis. His telephone number is 01298 871 869.

The Peak Park Authority also have several such walks at different times through the year. Try their phone on 01629 816200, or you will find them listed on their website www.peakdistrict.org or at Information Centres around the district.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

As agreed at the AGM, Council meetings will in future be held quarterly, alternating between Taylor House, Stockport and the Friends Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester. All members and delegates from affiliated Societies may attend and would be very welcome. The next dates are:

FRIDAY JULY 23rd at Taylor House. Start: 7pm

FRIDAY October 15th at Friends Meeting House. Start: 7pm

FRIDAY January 21st at Taylor House. Start: 7pm

There is no reason to feel cut off or excluded from comment by these new arrangements.

Any member with a footpath-related problem can still ring Taylor House on a Monday when we will do our best to solve it.

Otherwise, ring the Chairman, **David Bratt** on 01925 762472.

Or, if you want to alert other members or start a discussion, write a note for the Newsletter.

A LIGHT BREEZE FROM THE WIND FARM FRONT

We do appreciate that green-minded members like ours may well be in two minds on the controversy over wind farms and we realise that views opposite to our objections to turbines on the hills and fells of England can be quite sincerely held. This was brought home recently by a letter from a member withdrawing from membership because, apart from ill health, he objected to our anti-wind farm

attitude, which he called Nimbyism (not in my backyard). I pointed out that these proposed groups of turbines would be in the Nation's backyard - the places where ordinary people go for quiet relaxation.

My indefatigable pro-wind farm correspondent **Graham Turner** takes me to task for claiming that it would take years before each turbine could become cost-effective and produce more fuel than had been expended on its production and erection. He quotes the British Wind Energy Association (naturally pro-wind farm), whose website states the average wind farm in the UK will pay back the energy used in manufacture in 3 to 5 months and 'over its lifetime a wind turbine will produce over 30 times more energy than was used in its manufacture'.

In response, I have a report from the North West Energy Forum, who quote 'market analysts, who estimate that it will take 7 to 9 years for a turbine to recoup its start-up costs, continue to express some reservations about the consistency of supply. (ie the wind has to blow, but not too hard)'. Neither Graham nor I have expertise in this estimating field, so we'll leave it to the analysts to fight it out.

And finally.....

Another item from NW Energy Forum that I feel I must share with you. A new company has been formed by joining an Italian Power Company with Britain's PowerGen. Their website, believe it or not, is.....

www.powergenitalia.com