

SIGNPOST

Newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Number 19

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We now have 1000+ members

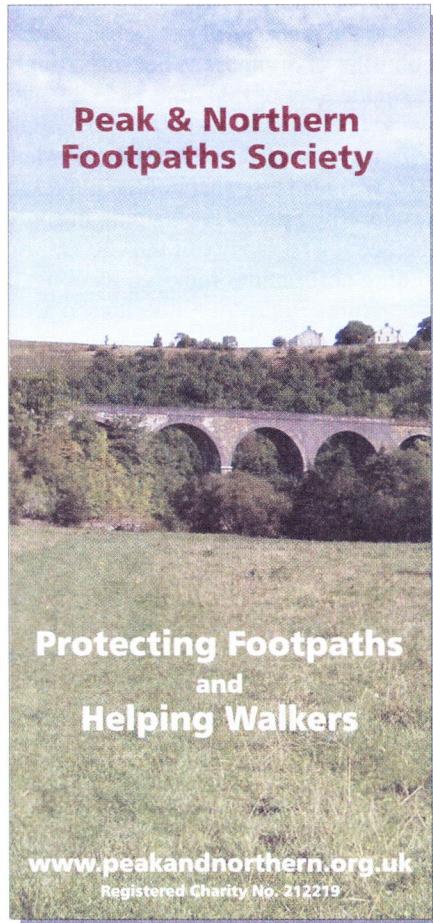
Chairman's Report

Well, we have made the magic thousand with membership standing at 1040, a rise of a hundred since September and the highest level since 1997. The all time high of 1103 is most definitely now within our sights.

Today (mid December) the presses are rolling on our impactful new publicity/membership leaflet (see right). A copy for your perusal is being included and it would be most appreciated if you could use it to sign up a new member (or two)! Our thanks and congratulations go to the team that have done such a super job- leader **June Mabon** ably assisted by **Andy Overton, Peter Coughlin, Graham Sencile and John Harker.**

A major innovation took place in October when close on 50 members attended the first ever half-year meeting –a most positive and productive event with the report on page 10. We will certainly go forward now with the two meetings a year approach.

The Society slide show and lecture has long been an asset in informing the public of our work and recruiting members but it was in



need of a drastic overhaul. **Peter Ritman** kindly scanned all our slides into digitised format so now we can display with the latest technology projection and incorporate recent photos and video clips into a lecture tailor made for a given audience. I gave the new style lecture recently to the Timperley Coop users group and **Peter Rhodes** did likewise with the U3A in Macclesfield. I am delighted that Peter has offered to be our Presenter of future lectures and already has bookings for 2006. Peter for good measure is also the manager of our website and publisher of **Signpost** so not surprisingly he has pulled out of FP Faults and Obstruction work where **Jerzy Matuszewski** has taken over and is working with **Hilda Bowler**. You will read elsewhere of the impressive results **Roy Spoors** is obtaining in applying the Section 63 facility of the CROW Act in getting obstructions removed by obligating the various Highway Authorities to act.

Its been another good quarter for volunteers coming forward- **Neil Collie** with a stand alone project to convert our score or so of uninspirational economy tubular 'bus stop' signs to square plates. **Reg Boot** (remember him leaving the members' meeting with his arm up his back!) has picked up a hot potato representing us at the Stockport Walkers Forum with a brief to find what makes SMBC tick- (or more accurately not-tick) and to pursue Cown Edge Way matters. We can still use plenty more volunteers- give me a call (01925 762472) and arrange to come in on a Monday and we will match your skills and interests to a mutually beneficial job.

At year end our Treasurer **Barry Starkie** will stand down to take on new outside

challenges having completed his remit with distinction. The Sage computerised accounting system was put in by him and the Society's finances and insurances thoroughly overhauled as well as the Tax man agreeing to reimburse Gift Aid. Barry is owed a great debt by both the PNFS and me personally and he will continue his work as one of our Inspectors. It is very gratifying to report we have **Alan Postill** (yes another most welcome recent volunteer) currently working alongside Barry as Assistant Treasurer. Alan will become Acting Treasurer at year end and I'm sure be elected Treasurer at the AGM. He will also make a fine Trustee.

Numbers on our last Wednesday in the month walks remain in the not-quite-10 region but are sufficient to continue the innovation. Thank you leaders for your ongoing support- you will see the Jan-May programme on page 11. The February 22nd walk has an extra dimension- **Martin Riley** will lead us from Greenfield station and we will walk FP Saddleworth 55 which for years has borne the stigmas of deliberate obstructions and verbal abuse. The PNFS will in effect that day be testifying that we will not accept such behaviour and Oldham MBC must resolve matters once and for all.

I hope I can count on your continued support in 2006 and send my warmest regards for you and yours to have a happy and healthy year.

David Bratt

NEW PNFS POLICY STATEMENTS....Part 3

By Roy Spoors

This is the final article of three covering our policy statements. In the first two articles the following policy statements were covered,

- Alleygating
- Common Access Land
- Windfarms (includes mobile phone masts etc.)
- Proposals to alter the Rights of Way Network

If you missed any of these earlier articles then all of our policy statements can be found on the Society's website.

At the Officer's meeting in December it was agreed to make a number of important changes to a couple of existing policies and to add a new one; so this final article will cover,

- Section 63 Orders (includes s56 Orders)
- RUPP's and Green Lanes
- Important change of emphasis on Diversions and Extinguishments

Section 63 Orders (and Section 56 Orders)

The CROW Act 2000 enacted under section 63 a number of new sections to the HA 1980 covering the removal of obstructions. These are important new provisions that give significant new powers to not only the Society but, to any member of the public.

There is a very clear procedure to be used with pre defined forms to be filled in together with set time limits between each step. This is all defined on the DEFRA web site and the forms can be down loaded.

Crucially for the Society, s63 orders could progress to a magistrates court where if the magistrate finds against it costs could be awarded. Further if an authority chose to challenge the magistrates decision then high court hearings and potential costs could be very detrimental to the Society's finances.

For this reason while the Society does wish to use the new s63 provisions it must also be very cautious in the potential exposure to costs. Especially as these are new provisions and there is very limited experience in their use and also how

magistrates will make orders for costs. Any Inspector or Agent who believes that the Society should start the procedure for a s63 order MUST get prior authorisation from the Courts and Inquiries Officer at Taylor House. It is MANDATORY that this is done before even a Form 1 is issued.

Once authorised then the procedure may be taken up by either an Inspector or an Agent or by Taylor House dependent upon the circumstances. Any member of the Society may clearly choose to start the s63 procedure in their own right without any authorisation, however, it must be clearly understood that if this happens then it is the individual who carries any risks associated with award of costs.

Where faults or obstructions are brought to the attention of the Society they will be assessed before being entered into the 'faults database'. Those which are considered dangerous, blatant, repeated problems, and are within the scope of s63, will have a 'Form 1' served IMMEDIATELY on the Highway Authority.

RUPP's and Green Lanes

The CROW Act 2000 included provisions for another attempt to regularise the unsatisfactory position with RUPP's (roads used as public paths). The issue of higher rights has never been resolved so the current change will re-classify all RUPP's to 'Restricted Byways' where use by 'motorised vehicles' will be prohibited.

However, the exception to this is where a RUPP is already the subject of an application for a Modification Order to upgrade to a BOAT (byway open to all traffic). This is leading to an increasing number of green lanes being subjected to 4x4 and uses for which they were never intended.

Wherever possible and, certainly where these Modification Orders are for green lanes or equivalent, they will be opposed. However, these particular orders require detailed evidence, are time consuming to prepare, complicated and always subject to interpretation so the Society will only be able to maintain objections to a Local Public Inquiry in a very few cases. If where we have opposed an order we either lose or have to withdraw our objection we will always put the Highway Authority on notice that we will regularly inspect and if we find damage that causes a problem to walkers we will reserve the right to serve notice on them.

Change of Emphasis on Diversions and Extinguishments

The previous version of the policy covering Diversions and Extinguishments was such that the Society would assess each consultation/order and then decide whether to object after having lodged a 'holding objection'.

Throughout 2005 there has been a significant increase in the number of proposed Diversions often to move a footpath away from a newly purchased or recently developed private dwelling. Closer examination of the way in which Order Making Authorities are dealing with these applications is the reason for the change of emphasis by PNFS. It appears that the majority of Order Making Authorities are accepting these applications and processing them without applying due consideration themselves. All a landowner has to offer to meet all the costs involved in getting the order confirmed and implemented on the ground. Our response to this has to be now to automatically oppose consultations/orders for Diversions and Extinguishments and then to inspect locally and assess whether to maintain our objection, or not.

This might seem to be a quite subtle change but it is a very important one in that it means that PNFS will now always start with a presumption of opposition.

PNFS "Bares its Teeth"

The Crow Act 2000 (s63) enacted new powers for anybody to get certain defined types of obstruction removed by Highway Authorities. These new powers are proving to be very valuable to the Society now that we have tried them. During October we served our first batch of six orders on three Highway Authorities and by the end of November all six obstructions miraculously had been removed !!

We started this by selecting the Highway Authorities that were considered to be the worst performers at responding to our requests to get obstructions removed. Some would not respond, some would not take action and some used every standard excuse to avoid having to do anything; one in particular was adroit at all three, sometimes simultaneously. Then we carefully decided the type of obstructions to be used for serving notices. This was important because s63 covers only certain types of obstruction, so we chose barbed wire or wire across a path; stiles with no footboard which were therefore fences; fallen trees over stiles; manure or slurry heaps deposited on a path.

The process to be used is covered in the article on PNFS policy statements elsewhere in this issue of *SIGNPOST* so suffice it to say that detailed instructions and the forms needed can be found on the DEFRA website. (cont. p.8)



New bridges in Staffordshire

Have you considered walking in the southerly parishes of the Staffordshire Moorlands and the upper parishes of East Staffordshire? Volunteers working for Staffordshire County Council have carried out a great deal of work in the Parishes of Draycott in the Moors, Checkley and Leigh, over the last 3 years. During 2005 volunteers have erected 68 stiles, 8 sleeper bridges and a 20ft oak bridge kit. Volunteers come from a variety of organisations and walking clubs, Harry Scott the P&N Agent for Staffordshire along with David Hewett a P&N member, organise and run the volunteer team for Staffordshire County Council. The photographs show work carried out on footpath 36 Checkley Parish, the footpath has been unavailable to the public for a number of years.

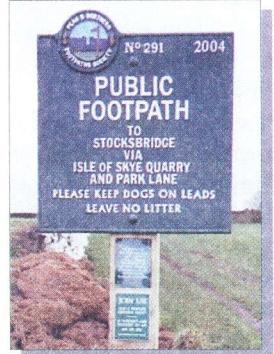


On the September walk, led by Vince Joyce, the party encountered an unusual solution to a fallen tree across a path in the Gathurst (Wigan) area. Rather than cut up the trunk the local authority placed a stile over it.



Jack Burling once a Sheffield stalwart but now retired to Newquay Cornwall, sends a couple of pictures of the ceremony for planting of the memorial to Ted Spencer

who died aged 95. Jack reports: Ted was a great walker and worker for the RA and many other organisations, being Chairman of Sheffield RA back in the 1960s. The Society signpost is situated on the edge of Greenmoor Cricket Ground.



(Left) Jean Arnett's November walk at Bowstones. Far right is Neil Collie who has undertaken to replace all our old "bus stop" signs (top left hand corner of picture) with the newer bigger square signs.

g. **Kay Wells** said she wondered why Blackburn HA had been identified as a poor performer in FP matters—in her time as Inspector they had always been efficient and helpful. **Roy Spoors** said this was no longer the case but we were striving to help them improve.

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PNFS People

We regret to report the death of our member **W H (Bill) Shercliff** of Poynton at the age of 87. He had many interests throughout his long life - Local History, saving the environment - and was largely instrumental in the setting-up of the Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail, running from Cheadle to Lyme Park. He was the author of the official guide to the route as well as several larger books including "Nature's Joys Are Free to All", the history of outdoor recreation in N E Cheshire. He was a member of East Cheshire RA and of Poynton Local History Society.

Following our anguished appeal for a Minutes Secretary in the last issue, we now have the welcome personage of **Paula Mead** who now comes in every Monday to type our correspondence .

Adrian Littleton has resigned as Inspector for Wilmslow etc after serving the Society for many years, but he will represent us at the Public Inquiry in Lancaster on 25th February where we need his extensive knowledge of footpath law. (see below) Our thanks to **David Hibbert** on his retirement as inspector for Peover and district. In comes **Jerzy Matuszewski** as his replacement,, Jerzy is already

working at Taylor House on the computer records of obstructions to footpaths.

Steve Hird has now been appointed Inspector for Rotherham, where he will assist **John Harker**.

Public Inquiry in Lancaster

At Bolton-le Sands near Lancaster is a 20 metres long path which runs through a cottage garden. Unfortunately when the Definitive Map was made this path was not put on it. The path is cherished by the residents of all but one of the dwellings in Town End because it provides easy access to the village. For 38 years it has been detested by the owners of the cottage.

In January 1990 Lancashire CC made an Order putting the path on the Definitive Map. The landowners objected. In 2004, without any consultations, LCC attempted a pending tray clearance exercise and recommended the Planning Inspectorate **NOT** to confirm the Order. LCC is now neutral. At the public inquiry in February 2006–16 years after the Order was made– and with enthusiastic support local residents I shall be presenting the case for confirmation of the Order. Watch this space!

Adrian Littleton

Signpost Developments

SP 27, pointing to Eccles Pike, had been accidentally knocked down, but was re-painted and re-erected in November, It first went into service in 1906 so will be celebrating its

centenary of service this year.

On January 19th, SP307 will be dedicated to the memory of **Russell and Alice Prince**, CHA Manchester Rambling Club. **David Bratt** and **Fred Ogden** will represent PNFS at the Manifold Valley location.

We are in negotiation with Staffordshire County Council over the construction of two new footbridges and a possible three 'railway sleeper' crossings of the Hoo Brook at Butterton.

Legacies

In the past year the Society has been the grateful recipient of three legacies which, like all the others, will be put to good use. They allow us to expand our work on the preservation of footpaths and the erection and maintenance of our collection of Signposts

The new money means that we can be ambitious in our co-operation with local authorities in the building of bridges over water courses in our area yet keep our own subscriptions at the current low level.

YOU could kindly help carry on this work by remembering the Society in your will or, perhaps, in a donation added to your subscription renewal.

WALKS PROGRAMME

JAN—MAY 2006

Kindly check rail/bus times are valid near to date of walk

WED JAN 25 HADFIELD (5 RESERVOIRS) CIRCULAR

Leader **David Bratt**

(Walk 23 in Clarke Rogerson's book -

(Walk! The South Pennines)

Man Piccadilly 09.47. Walk starts 10.30 from Hadfield Station. Walk is 10 miles. Bring lunch. Any queries please call 01925 762472.

WED FEB 22 GREENFIELD

Leader **Martin Riley**

(Walk will demonstrate that we can use FP Saddleworth 55 –despite a long history of verbal abuse and obstructions.)

Man Picc 09.27 or Man Vic 09.11. Walk starts 10.00 from Greenfield Station

Walk is 10 miles. Bring lunch. Any queries please call 01706 848408

WED MAR 29 DISLEY

Leader **Judith Halman**

Man Picc 09.37. Walk of 10 miles starts from Disley Station at 10.10 Bring Lunch. Any queries please call 01565 633316.

WED APR 26 WHALEY BRIDGE

Leader **Ted Wolfe**

Stockport Railway Station 09.48, Stockport Bus Station 9.05 or 9.35 Walk of 10 miles, hilly, terrain starts from Whaley Bridge Stn at 10.25. Bring lunch. Any queries please call 01625 267964

WED MAY 31 HADFIELD TO GREENFIELD

Leader **Vince Joyce**

Man Picc 10.18 Walk of 10miles starts from Hadfield Station at 10.50 and ends at Greenfield Station.

Leader advises purchase Wayfarer or GMPTE Senior Concession. Bring lunch. Any queries please call 01942 603626.

THE PNFS LECTURE

relating the story of our Society from the struggles of its earliest days to the problems of the present is now

AVAILABLE FOR BOOKING

The slides have been completely re-mastered into digital form and presented using digital projection.

Clubs and Societies wishing to book the lecture should contact Peter Rhodes on 0161 439 6448

New book from Clarke

Rogerson- PNFS member

By the time you read this newsletter our member Clarke Rogerson's new book "Walk! The South Pennines" will be in the shops. Published by 'Discovery Walking Guides' the book is one of 10 new books covering the UK. The book was launched on 7th January at Stanfords book shop Manchester, before going on general sale on the 16th January.

The following description is taken from the cover of the book:

The concept for this series of walks was conceived, as these things often are, over a few pints with a group of like-minded friends. Fuelled with bonhomie and wanting to get out into the hills on a regular basis, unencumbered by the car, and not

restricted to a quick half before driving home, the idea, "let's see how many walks we can do using that cheap rail ticket" was born. I don't remember volunteering, but the task of planning was left to me. As with all walking groups, this bunch was a bit choosy, high quality routes "were definitely expected".

We cover four counties taking in ancient tracks, packhorse routes six rivers and four canals. There's plenty of interest along the way; something for everyone including art, archaeology, bird watching, botany, industrial and landscape history. I've included the record breakers - deepest, highest, longest and shortest. Add the promise of real ale served in more than a few pubs, many with local food cooked on the premises, and you have walking utopia.

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