

# SIGNPOST

## Newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Number 24

April 2007



**Sir Martin Doughty, Chairman of Natural England and his North West  
Director Richard Leafe visit Taylor House**

### **Chairman's Report**

Of late the priority alongside Footpath related issues has been the compilation of the Annual Report and preparation for the April 28<sup>th</sup> AGM. It will be a close run thing as to which you receive first, the AR or this Signpost! I hope we again have a large and enthusiastic turnout for the AGM (formal invitation is on page 3) but even if you can't make it please feel free to write to me with any relevant topic or opinion you would like to be raised.

Membership growth continues steadily and at end February totalled 1268. During the last Quarter we welcomed **Sir Martin Doughty**, Chairman of Natural England and his North West Director **Richard Leafe** to Taylor House to meet with the four trustees to discuss footpath related subjects. A précis of the informal and productive meeting is on page 6.

Another meeting took place with our affiliate, the Mid-Cheshire FPS to review the arrangement in use over the last few years where their members carry out inspection work by proxy for us. We came to an amicable agreement that this had run its course and was now superceded by our New Way of Working mandate. Our thanks for services generously rendered go to **Bernard Cook, Mike Harris, Tony Harbottle, Mike Makinson and John White**. We will in due course seek to cover the areas involved with new PNFS inspectors, so, expressions of interest from volunteers to **Hilda Bowler** at Taylor House, please, for any of the Chester/Northwich/Kingsley/Halton or S. Warrington areas.

The Society is indebted to member **Michael Guest** who kindly gave of his time and professional expertise to revalue Taylor House as required by the Land Registry when we updated the nominated trustholders at the Half year meeting. The current valuation is £105,000.

Our February longer walk was well supported and for the second year running **Martin Riley** lead us through the Upper Castleshaw Farm rubbish tip on FP Saddleworth 55 to demonstrate the public's rights. Again **June Mabon** alerted the local press and they were in attendance with excellent publicity resulting in articles and photos in both the Oldham Evening Chronicle and Advertiser. The former followed up with Editorial comment and our reply letter has been published in full (see page 9). **Roy Spoors** has followed up with a formal letter to Oldham MBC setting out our expectations. We will not walk away from this challenge.

On March 5<sup>th</sup> our newly funded bridge taking FP Rainow 23 over a previously unspanned Harrop brook was handed over to Cheshire CC with the Macclesfield Express present to record the event. The need for a bridge was highlighted by **Fred Ogden** who was forced to take a detour with a walking group when the brook was in spate. Sadly for the Society Fred will stand down as Signpost Officer (Admin) at the AGM having completed 2 separate tenures in the post and we will all miss him for the energy and quality he puts into his work—not least at Officers' Meetings where he is not shy to say his bit irrespective of whether or not it accords with the majority. His regular opening line on a Monday morning has been to declare “I am resigning” but then a coffee and a couple of biscuits soon gets him back in harness!. **David Morton** has kindly agreed to stand for the position at the AGM and is already learning the ropes with Fred.

You will learn from the Annual Report and accompanying paperwork that the rationale and proposals for a 2008 subs increase firstly in principle and then secondly by amount are on the AGM Agenda and I am sure lively and constructive debate will ensue on these topics.

**The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

will be held on  
Saturday 28th April 2007  
at the  
**BRITANNIA HOTEL**  
Dialstone Lane Offerton Stockport

**10:30am Coffee for 11:00am start**

**A HOT BUFFET LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED FREE TO  
MEMBERS**

**Please book with  
David Bratt 107 Common Lane Culcheth Warrington WA3 4HQ  
Tel: 01925-762 472 or email [bratty41@hotmail.com](mailto:bratty41@hotmail.com)**

**asap but no later than 21st April**

**Neil Collie** came up with the suggestion we should consider a modest stall at the Cheshire Show (June 19th & 20th) at Tabley to publicize the Society and recruit members so in time honoured fashion he has accepted that the ideal person to take the project forward is---the originator. So its Neil's baby and we are all looking forward to helping to break new ground—well for this management group at least. Call in and say hello if you are at the show! Volunteers (admission free) are required for just a few hours please on one or both days to man the stall. Kindly call Neil on 0161 440 9424.

**David Bratt**

**PNFS PEOPLE**

**Ted Whittaker**, who will be fondly remembered by old hands as our long-serving (14 years) Membership Secretary, died recently at the age of 88. He had also been Secretary of the Manchester branch of Holiday Fellowship and an ardent walker for most of his adult life until he was laid low by back trouble in his last few years. A sad end to a life of service to others.

We received very generous donations from **Mrs Claire Mottershead** and friends in memory of her mother **Olive Hugo**, who died aged 91 on the 10<sup>th</sup>

February. She was active with Stockport CHA for over 30 years and did not stop walking until she was 87. As per instructions, there were no flowers, just her hat, gloves, socks and boots on her coffin.

Brand new member **Dennis Firth** saw one of our signs on Derwent Edge and rang Taylor House to ask who we are and what we do. On being told, he took out 5-year membership and sent a donation to the Signpost Fund. He is part of a group of 60 people claiming a right of way in the Curbar area, walked for years but recently locked off by Severn Trent Water. The PNFS will assist where possible.

Inspectors **Ken West** (Blackburn & Darwen)) and **Brian Taylor** (Bury) are retiring from their labours for the Society with grateful thanks from all at Taylor House for their services.



**Obstruction of Culcheth path by manure. (Being progressed by Area Officer David O'Leary with Warrington UA)**

## **Progress in Doncaster**

Members may recall from the April 2005 *Signpost* details of problems in Doncaster Metropolitan Borough on Fishlake/ Sykehouse green lanes (damaged by offroaders) and Thorpe-in-Balne FP 2 (bridge missing since 1949) and the difficulties we were facing in getting action. Due to constant

pressure in many quarters I am pleased to be able to give an encouraging update that suggests it may not be long before these issues are part of our history.

A campaign of pressure on the Fishlake/ Sykehouse green lanes issue at the highest level locally and to MPs has brought action. The wheels of authority turn very slowly but turn they do if you push for long enough and hard enough and following legal notices served on Doncaster MBC by Byways and Bridleways Trust and the threat of more from PNFS we have already seen improvement works. Several of the lanes are now walkable and the Rights of Way Dept. of Doncaster MBC have put together a funding bid of £880,000 over 5 years to radically overhaul this network, much of which has not seen much maintenance since the 1930s. The Senior Rights of Way Officer, **Simon Houghton** deserves recognition for the scheme he has put together to sort out the problems here and for pushing within the council for action to avoid further legal notices. To avoid further damage by vehicles barriers have been installed in places with access for authorised landowners. The situation is complicated by outstanding claims for byway status along these footpaths but our pressure has brought a commitment to decide these issues, we have been consulted and Orders are imminent. It looks highly likely that the documentary evidence will support claims for vehicular use but as the claims by offroaders were not made in the correct legal form prior to the cut-off date of the new NERC Act, the highest status that can now be afforded these routes is Restricted Byway, which prohibits vehicular use and will put an end to years of claim and counter claim. PNFS Officers have offered £500 to fund waymarking of these lanes subject to successful works and permission to affix our Join Us plaques, which offer has been well received.

On Thorpe-in-Balne FP 2 a package of new paths has been proposed to do away with the need to cross the drain by Sickle Croft Bridge (shown in error in *Signpost 16* as Saddle Croft). This has been promised for many years but our ongoing pressure, including contacting the Environment Agency directly, has moved matters on. We have been consulted on the details of the proposed Orders and are assured that they are about to be made "imminently". In fact, by the time you read this they will probably have been made.

This shows what can be achieved by a credible society which is prepared to take action at the highest level to get issues resolved. Constant pressure brings results, albeit that progress is often measured in years rather than months. With your ongoing support PNFS Inspectors and Area Officers, backed up by Taylor House, are getting the job done.

**Andrew K Overton**.Doncaster Area Officer

## WEBSITE UPDATE

The PNFS Website is now receiving 2000 hits per month with, surprisingly, 20% coming from North America. In the hands of **Geoff Errington and Clarke Rogerson** it has undergone a major refit. The new Bulletin Board is designed for Area Officers, Agents and Inspectors, allowing them to ask questions, express opinions or share experiences with their peers. Security is important and those with email addresses have already been informed and given the passwords to get in. The number of people registered to use the Bulletin Board is increasing but for everyone to get most use of it we still need more. Please register and use it.

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**Sir Martin Doughty**, long an honoured Vice-President of this Society was wearing his other hat as Chairman of the new authority Natural England when he came to see us at Taylor House, accompanied by his NW Regional Director **Richard Leafe**. Both were friendly, open and enthusiastic about their new agency.

Natural England came about as an amalgamation of 3 overlapping bodies – English Nature, The Countryside Agency and Rural Development. They have 6 offices with a headquarters in Sheffield .

Among their responsibilities are :

The administration of the Single Farm Payment which should cut out the bureaucracy dogging the previous system.

Control of Urban Nature Reserves which have risen in number from 30 after the 1949 Act to 1200 today.

Administration of the 1949 and CRoW Acts, including control of Access Land . Departments cover Rural, Urban, Coastal and Marine interests.

Richard told us that when dealing with awkward farmers it is best to show poor landowners how good ones behave, or using a genetically modified stick that looks like a carrot, as Sir Martin says. His motto: Natural England 's customers are the population of England .

## WEDNESDAY WALK REPORTS

27 December **Cheadle Hulme- Poynton**, leader **Jeff Lewis**. 11 out in reasonable weather. We were pleased to see the footbridge at SJ9212, reported as

obstructed last year, was now clear. Given the time of year, the leader thought it in order to stop for a drink at the Bulls Head, Poynton before staggering on to the train back to Manchester..

### 10th January. **Greenfield to Stalybridge** leader Clarke Rogerson

The group started off from Urmston Station, where a prospective new member, Diane, was introduced, thereby increasing the local contingency numbers even more. It was a good start, though things went somewhat downhill as we lost our leader in Manchester and it was raining as we reached Greenfield, where we were met by Colin and Martin. However 9 of us set off and the rain soon stopped. Clarke had 'phoned to say he would meet us along the way, which he duly did, better late than never, as he was able to enlighten us a little about the local area, including the origin of the Stalybridge name. There was a little more rain along the way and the towpath was quite muddy, however, on balance it was an enjoyable walk culminating in a couple of drunks, sorry, drinks! at Stalybridge Station buffet bar.



**All smiles at Stalybridge Station**

January 31st **Moobberley Circular**, leader **Eileen Leonard**. 11out, 10 miles, via the tunnel under Manchester airport runway and part of the North Cheshire Way.



February 14th **Marple Station to Brookbottom** leader **Dave Morton**

17 out on a very fine, sunny day; thanks to **Fred Ogden's** "Probus" group. We all watched navvies rebuilding a canal lock and collapsed wall, then passed a capped mineshaft, looking like a single "dragon's tooth". The sun shone as we crossed the Fairy Bridge over the Goyt and hurried past Windybottom Farm, before climbing up past the golf course, then down to "The Fox" for a pint (it now serves lunchtime food midweek). **Keith Wykes** seized every opportunity to hand out our leaflets to passers by. As we returned, we had a good view of a kingfisher on the Goyt and a brief discourse on Samuel Oldknow and his Mellor Mill before parting at "The Royal Scot".



February 28th **Saddleworth 55 Protest**, leader **Martin Riley**. See Chairman's Report.



..... and this is what someone (no names) thinks about Oldham waymark signs.

**Letter to the Editor**– published 20th March

The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society greatly appreciates the interest the Oldham Evening Chronicle has shown two years running with regard to the Upper Castleshaw Farm footpath designated Saddleworth 55.

Your photographs and reports of our February 2006/07 protest walks followed by your editorial Comment no doubt help the local public realize that currently their rights are being overridden by a landowner in massively obstructing the footpath. And this has gone on for years.

This footpath like all others on the Definitive map is legally enshrined and protected and no landowner has the right for whatever reason or pretext to interfere with them or to challenge walkers using them in a responsible manner. We are not a militant organization but we will use peaceful means and the law to protect the precious footpath heritage that belongs to us all--- past present and future.

On our most recent protest walk we went over both the immensely difficult path line as well as a slightly lower route which we found enjoyable convenient and safe.

We have been working quite hard with Oldham MBC now for some time to try and negotiate a satisfactory solution and whilst some small progress has been made it has to be said that at every stage the landowner fails to cooperate.

We intend continuing by negotiation to arrive at a lasting solution.

Its time to move forward and remove this slur on the good name of Oldham and Saddleworth.

**David Bratt** Chairman PNFS



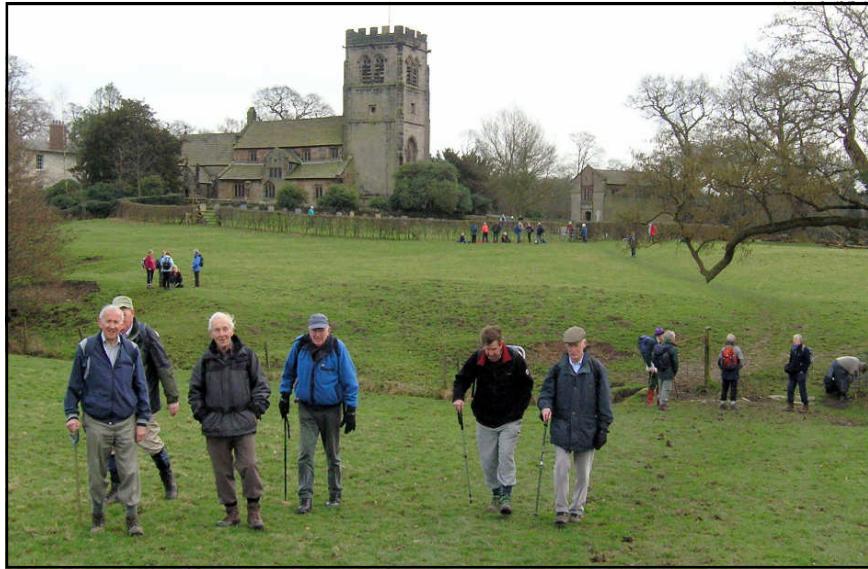
**The new bridge near Further Harrop Farm on Rainow 23, paid for by PNFS and erected by Cheshire CC with particular assistance from RoW officer Richard Ankers. CCC will be in charge of future care and maintenance. The bridge has anti-slip decking.**

## **SIGNPOST NEWS**

No less than ten signposts are in production at the moment, being prepared for the attentions of the outdoor team, who face a busy spring.

We will be testing the lasting qualities of a couple of new posts made of recycled plastic, comparing their durability with our current oak posts. Check here in ten years time for a report.

Altrincham Rambling Club had a 50-plus turnout for the re-dedication of our post No 211 marking 4 paths behind Nether Alderley church. Placed in memory of 4 ARC committee members who died in 1988, the original had suffered badly from being used as a cattle scratching post. The new one is better sited and was dedicated with a speech from the President **Fred Stuffins** in the midst of a walk led by **Keith Wykes**.



**Altrincham Rambling Club members leaving the site of the new post behind Nether Alderley church (in the dip, centre) after the dedication.**

**The Peak & Northern Footpaths Society**

**SIGNPOST CHALLENGE 2007**

**Visit all 243 of our signs, bridges, plaques etc to:**

**Win a 5 Year Membership or a Bottle of Moet**

**The challenge starts on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and finishes on 31st March 2008. The challenge is open to members and non-members alike. All completers will receive a certificate. A full list of our signposts can be found at [www.peakandnorthern.org.uk](http://www.peakandnorthern.org.uk) together with the rules for the challenge.**

**The winner will be announced at the AGM 2008.**

## Longer walks Programme

### Wednesday April 26<sup>th</sup>

Leader **Brian Morrison** 0161 483 8957

DISLEY. 10 mile walk starts from Disley rail station at 10.15. Bus service 199 from Stockport bus station at 09.35. Or by rail from Man Picc at 09.37. Please bring lunch

### Wednesday May 23<sup>rd</sup> ( NOTE-- not the last Wednesday)

Leader **Clarke Rogerson** 0161 749 8412

BROMLEY CROSS. 12 mile walk commencing Bromley Cross rail station at 11.30. Train from Man Vic at 11.00. 1300 ft ascent. Walk is Nr 35 in leader's book Walk! The South Pennines. Please bring lunch.

### Wednesday June 27<sup>th</sup>.

Leader **David Bratt** 01925 762472

STALYBRIDGE. 12 mile hilly walk commencing Stalybridge station at 10.30 and visiting GR SE 000000 (and railway heritage pub option on return) . Train from Man Picc at 10.12—also Man Vic options. Please bring lunch.

## Shorter walks Programme

### Wednesday 11th April

Leader: **Neil Collie** 0161 440 9424

WILMSLOW, BOLLIN VALLEY TO HANDFORTH 6 miles

Man Piccadilly 10.34 (fast train), walk starts Wilmslow Station at 11.00, return from Handforth Station.

### Wednesday 9th May

Leader: **Wally Smith** 0161 485 7764

WHALEY BRIDGE 6.0miles approx.

Man Piccadilly 10.37hrs walk starts at Whaley Bridge Station 11.15hrs

### Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June

Leader: **Martin Riley** 01706 848408.

NEWHEY 6.0miles approx

Man Victoria 10.30hrs walk starts at Newhey Station 10.55hrs.

**The Peak and Northern Footpath Society**

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