

SIGNPOST

Newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Number 27

February 2008



photo by Mike Taylor of Cheshire County Council

**Enforcement in action -the line of a public footpath is restored
shown as part of Mike's lecture to the PNFS Enforcement Forum
(see report page 5)**

Chairman's Report

Somewhat amazingly I have to say this will be the last Signpost I will write as your Chairman, four years have passed by in all but the twinkling of an eye. I will have more to say in the Annual Report of the status and progress of our Society but suffice it to say by any yardstick we continue to move in the right direction.

The principal bellwether (I believe) is the membership count and that now stands at another all time high in the 113 year history of the Society at 1430. This at a time when other not just provincial but national footpath societies are suffering membership decline suggests PNFS has a fundamental appeal based on a commitment to righting northern footpath wrongs.

You will see the separate summary (page 8) of our half year meeting but specifically you should note that **Clarke Rogerson** has agreed to be the new Chairman and I unreservedly support his nomination- Clarke will bring new energy and ideas to move the Society further forward . I anticipate having an ongoing, albeit lesser role, in the Society. The AGM will be at the Britannia Hotel, Stockport at 10.00am on Saturday April 26th and I very much hope to see you there.

The last few months have seen a most welcome influx of volunteers both in the field as Inspectors as well as at Taylor House and long may this continue- it is gratifying that such people, usually on retiring , look to put something back into the pleasure of walking and select PNFS as their port of call.

We continue to install new signs and fund bridges- the summary will be in the Annual report- a specific I would mention is a good friend **Julie Boursin** who has funded a sign at Croft (Warrington)- itself a first in that area which is in memory of husband Clem. Julie has also taken out a 10 year membership despite moving to live in Cornwall!.

The walks programme-short and long- continues to flourish as per the separate reports and again we will for the third year in succession under **Martin Riley**'s leadership visit Saddleworth 55 on Feb 20th to assert the public's rights to walk through Upper Castleshaw Farm.

The Legal Events Review meetings continue to generate candidates for action on footpath faults and obstructions- a sizeable number get resolved after we intimate we will take legal action. We do not threaten legal action as a stratagem- in each case we are resolved to stand up and be counted if challenged. Most proposed diversions, after consulting the area Inspector, are not opposed but occasionally we meet one which is not acceptable eg Cuddington 16 which **Terry Norris** will contest on our behalf at a Public Inquiry.

Time then to sign off from Signpost, thank you all for your support over the last four years and, repeating a mantra of mine from way back may I ask you to keep the faith and spread the word.

Footpaths matter. People matter. PNFS exists to bring the two together.

My kindest regards.

David Bratt

With sadness we report the deaths of three long serving volunteers of the Society- **Jim Wild** (Inspector and updater of the Definite Maps) and **Dennis Rowlinson** (Assessor and FP files custodian). Now comes the sad news of **Ernest Sutton**, membership secretary for twelve years. A brave and cheerful soul who suffered from arthritis for many years, he was looked after by his devoted wife **Josie**. We send our condolences to their families.

The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
will be held at the
BRITANNIA HOTEL, Dialstone Lane, Stockport
on
SATURDAY 26th April 2008
Programme
10am Assemble tea/coffee biscuits
10.30am Start of Business
12.30pm A hot Buffet Lunch will be provided to members

To reserve your place please book with David Bratt
01925 76 2472
as soon as possible but no later than 21st April

Buses 383 and 384 pass the Hotel
383 leaves from Stockport Bus Station every 15 minutes
384 leaves Marple Navigation Hotel every 15 minutes



Footpath Culcheth and Glazebury 108 next to Leigh Golf Course has been made impassable during the recent bad weather. We have demonstrated to Warrington BC via photographs that the cause is due to a modified drainage system installed on the golf course. We are assured the matter will be resolved.

Vice Chairman's Report and Appeal

As you will have read in the Chairman's Report I have decided to stand for the Chairman's position when David steps down in April. Under David's Chairmanship we have seen tremendous growth and increased interest in the Society. I am sure that David would be the first to acknowledge that this would not have been possible without the help of his fellow Officers and the hard work of the many Volunteers who give freely of their time.

At the half year meeting I set out my vision for the future and the intention to split the role of Vice Chairman between Field and Admin. With less than 3 months to the AGM the race is on to find suitable applicants to fill these vital positions. The final responsibilities of both posts will be negotiated with the successful applicant along the following lines:

The VC Admin role will be to assist the Chairman with particular responsibility for the running and staffing of Taylor House. The post will be office based and require regular attendance- preferably on a Monday.

The VC Field will be a flexible role requiring only occasional attendance at Taylor House. The main responsibilities will be providing support to Area Officers & Inspectors ensuring consistent standards and quality.

I would like to stress that the roles are open to all members even our most recent recruits. The main criteria for the posts are commitment to the aims of the Society and a passion for protecting our footpath heritage.

In addition I am looking for replacements for **Derek Seddon** and **Peter Rhodes**, in their roles as Editor and Publisher of *Signpost* and **June Mabon** Press & Media Coordinator who are standing down at the AGM.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to fill these posts if the momentum that David has generated is to be maintained. Anyone interested should contact me either at Taylor House or at home on 0161 749 8412 to discuss the requirements of the role.



Mike Taylor from Cheshire County Council addressing the Forum.

Enforcement Policy Forum.

Tuesday 4th December saw a new initiative led by PNFS when 30 Rights of Way Officers from across our region were invited to share Best Practice relating to Public Rights of Way Enforcement Policy.

David Bratt welcomed the delegates, who are collectively responsible for over 28,000 km (17,500 miles) of Public Rights of Way. David presented a brief history of the Society and told the delegates that the main purpose of the Society is to:

Defeat those who would deny us, the public, the right to walk in peace, in safety, and in enjoyment whilst responsibly using our precious footpath heritage.

Mike Taylor presented Cheshire County Council's view on enforcement, graphically illustrated with scenes of JCBs removing obstructions ranging from garden walls to farm outbuildings built on the line of Public Footpaths. He stressed the role of the Authority to *Assert & Protect* walkers' rights, the need for *Protocols & Policies* setting out how the authority would respond to a variety of situations. He went on to detail the need for *Debt Recovery* and when appropriate *Prosecution* as part of the Enforcement Officers tool kit.

Clare McRoy, Rotherham MBC, expressed the view that *when enforcement action is taken, that is the choice made by the landowner in acting as they have in a particular situation. The Authority has no choice, it is duty-bound to act!*

Terry Norris provided a “User Perspective” in a lively and amusing presentation covering a range of subjects including *Effective Enforcement, Abuse & Threats and Legal Duties*.

Paul Green, Natural England, presented the organisations role and strategic objectives which was followed by a lively question and answer session from the delegates.

During the Open Forum delegates agreed it was desirable to have a sound enforcement protocol in place but whether it was attainable would depend on the degree to which the political elements in the various Authorities would be prepared to accept it. Cheshire had achieved such an agreed protocol and the delegates would take that away for further consideration.

Overall the delegates rated the event as “Very Good” with several suggesting that PNFS should host similar events in the future, an option that the Officers and Trustees will be considering.

Changes to Inspectors: Following the resignations of Ken Stringfellow, John Carter and Christopher Green, who go on their way with the Society's grateful thanks for their service, we are pleased to welcome the following new Inspectors: Dee Hadfield (Edlaston and Rylaston, Derby), Jim Cowley (Derby Dales), Steve Clarke(Rochdale), Eric Davis (Bunbury, Cheshire), and, jointly covering the High Peak , Alistair Taylor, Ralph Dickin and David Sissons.

Bridges

A footbridge (B18) at Stilesmeadow Farm, Bosley, Cheshire was completed with a donation of £752.00 from the Society. We are awaiting completion of a new small footbridge at Hey Wood, Slaithwaite where an overgrown footpath has been cleared and brought back into use by Kirklees Borough Council. Future footbridge prospects being considered are with Derbyshire County Council at Brampton near Chesterfield, with the Bollin Valley Partnership, with Bradford City Council at Keighley and also in Calderdale Borough.

Neil Collie

Signposts

Since 1.11.07 we (the signpost team) have

1. Inspected, cleaned and done minor repairs to 45 signs
2. Reposted S198 (Hollingworth)
3. Replaced S102 (Disley) and 189 (Lamaload)
4. Repainted S57 (Ladybower) and 120 (Gun Farm)
5. Erected six new signs, ie. 318 (Glossop for Edwin Holmes), 321 (Whiteley Green for Bill Shercliff), 330 (Bollin Valley for John Shaw), 332 (Chanderhill), 333 (Gun), 334 (New Mills for Miriam Miller)
6. Used a recycled-plastic post (S321) in a boggy field
7. Brought S57 out of retirement (story in next "Signpost")
8. Reverted to concealing our nuts, with fluted dowelling.

Further offers of help with cleaning and minor maintenance in far-flung areas would be very much appreciated (tel. 0161 283 7824).

David Morton

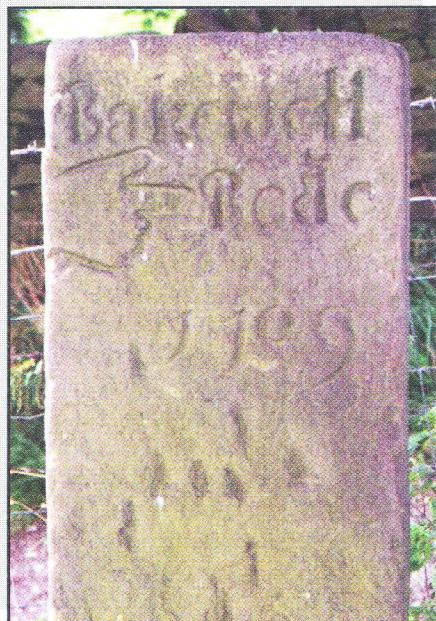
PNFS People

Here is a new twist - a signpost as a birthday present!

Ray Jones (left of post) and his family with his 80th birthday present memento. SP328 at Musden Grange, Ilam- a perfect gift solution for a dedicated walker. Ray was delighted.



Signs of the Time



left: Standing stone on the Chatsworth Estate. It reads "Bakewell Rode" and is dated 1709. Is this the oldest signpost in our area?

right: Health and safety notice!

Walk Reports

31 Oct 2007, Marsden Circular, Leader **Brian Lawrence**

15 ventured into Yorkshire to find the locals unexpectedly friendly. An overcast but fine and exceptionally windy day. At the start of the moorland walk we stopped to admire the new PNFS signpost and replace the 'Join us' plaque which had gone. We managed 12 miles via Millstone Edge, Black Moss Reservoir and Wessenden Valley to reach the Railway Inn at Marsden.

28th November Littleborough Leader **Clarke Rogerson**. 7 members out in mixed weather. Following the Rochdale Canal to Summit we started a gentle ascent on the old turnpike road now part of the Pennine Brideway taking us into Yorkshire. Dropping back down to the canal we were soon back in Lancashire for the climb up to Warland reservoir and our return route along the Pennine Way and the Roman Road back to Littleborough.

The Half-year Meeting Saturday November 24th 07 at The Britannia Hotel .

The meeting was attended by some 51 members and Affiliates of the Society. Before opening the meeting the Chairman asked all to stand in silence for one minute to honour **Jim Wild**, a Taylor House volunteer who had recently died.

Chairman's report.

David Bratt referred to the good progress by the new operating structure put in place after the resignation of **Roy Spooers** with **Clarke Rogerson** now in post as Acting Vice-Chairman and **John Harker, Terry Norris** and **Harry Scott** as Courts and Inquiries Officers. Membership numbers were over 1400 arising from various ongoing initiatives and the new venture with stands at two shows which had proved very productive. We will repeat the exercise in 2008. Members were invited to inspect the stand material on display.

Some 20 new and replacement signposts had been erected year to date, five new bridges had been funded with a similar number in the pipeline.

June Mabon wished to encourage those present to take a supply of the Publicity leaflets for libraries, visitor centres etc.

The review of the New Ways of Working concluded that the pilot scheme involving four Area Officers had met the performance criteria and the scheme would in due course be extended possibly next to Agents.

Hilda Bowler expressed interest in representing the Society in a poetry/walking trail set in some of our local industrial heritage.

Finally the view was expressed that the Society continued in good shape and all volunteers were thanked for their contributions and the members for their ongoing support.

Comments by Clarke Rogerson

CR first gave a personal resume and went on to say the prime remit of PNFS was to defend our footpaths against those who would seek to prevent their use and quoted **Frank Head** as saying in 1976 that *There is a place for common sense in solving footpath disputes and where there are good grounds for diversions the Society is ready to agree reasonable alternatives, but we do not favour concessions to people who have defied the law* or as it could also be put “we will not have people defying the law- we will use the law to defy them”. **John Harker** commented on the low utilisation of Taylor House which CR agreed was an opportunity to look into.

Treasurer's report.

Alan Postill stated that the financial position remained strong with the added impact of the GHB Ward legacy of £36,900. Donations had increased by £2,000 following the request for voluntary donations of £5 in April 2007. At end October there was a surplus of £21,000 on Income over Expenditure. An investment

opportunity had been taken to transfer £50,000 to a special Birmingham Midshires a/c.

AP said our accounts for the current year would be ‘Statement of Recommended practice’ (SORP) compliant this being an accountancy requirement for Charities. We were in the Non-company charity sector with income in the £10,000 to £100,000 range.

He went on to detail certain Trustees decisions within SORP viz

- a. Our accounts would be Receipts and Payments based
- b. In consequence of a. 5 and 10 year suspense accounts would be fully incorporated into subscription income
- c. Within the Annual report there would be simplified accounts and a Trustees report on our charitable activities
- d. Any member can request a full set of accounts, also we would consider their publication on our website
- e. A Reserves policy had been agreed at a mid level of £200,000 within a range that could fluctuate from £175,000 to £225,000 without the need for corrective intervention. The justification for the Reserve was to protect the Society against the costs of Legal representation and unforeseen costs/damages awarded against us.

Keith Wykes asked if the Reserves were represented by prudent investments which AP said was very much what the Trustees strove to achieve. **David Woolf** commented that there could be more albeit smaller spends on our charitable aims, also that Reserves have a deterrent value to restrain those who would seek to take on the Society—ie we would not be seen as likely to back down on a key issue. Could such matters be revisited at the AGM— DB said of course.

Alley Gating Legislation

John Harker gave a resume on the subject noting whilst closing paths in high crime areas where a path is said to be of assistance to criminals might have some merit, there were inherent dangers

- a. Legislation, not just alley directed could be used on rural paths eg through farmyards—not to divert but to close and without going through the current legal process but short circuiting it.
- b. We have obtained the right to receive case documentation and formally comment on any new legislation proposal to close paths.
- c. Our policy is to seek to change this legislation and we have joined a coalition of other FP Societies led by the RA for this purpose.

Comments from the floor in debate included the status of such paths and the need wherever possible to get them on the definitive map, support for the coalition approach, ensuring proposals to close used unambiguous wording such as “closure of path for security reasons” and using our presence on Local Access Forums to state our opposition.

Subscriptions

DB said this was an opportunity to revisit the subject of a subs increase in 2008 given the principle was accepted at the AGM but not the proposed increase. It had to be stated that the Constitution did not allow a binding decision to be taken at this current meeting.

CR then presented the Trustees views on matters with some not covered at the AGM- -Subs had last been increased in 2001, concessionary rates could be incorporated but if so who should benefit, and he gave best estimate of the membership reduction (10%) and income impacts given a basic annual subs level of £8 to £10. It would be safest to assume no legacy income.

There was then exhaustive debate with almost all present expressing their opinions and finally DB said he would like an indicative vote to assist the Trustees. Three member proposed levels of basic annual subs and they were in the order they were proposed

£10 31 in favour ; £8 7 in favour ; £12 12 in favour

DB said the Trustees would consider the above results though there was a strong indication regarding the £10 level.

Use of recycled plastics for signposts (ie replace wood)

David Morton led the debate after the comments from **Andrew Bennett** were read. We are experimenting with two trial recycled plastic posts. Andrew thought such recycling does not help deter plastic bag use and issues with poor weathering of the material surface were read out in full.

DB said a consideration also should be the energy used in melting the plastic to form the posts. DM said he saw the use of plastic posts as limited to very wet ground areas where wood rotted faster and he anticipated ongoing use of European oak and possibly an order for ten or so posts of hardwood from a local tree surgeon. There was general approval of this balanced overall approach.

Our Agent for Derbyshire reports:

The photo of the new kissing gate on Eckington FP120 at Bramley , NE Derbyshire. This replaces a mature hedge and barbed wire fencing which blocked this path at its junction with FP121 as long as anyone can remember.

Local Inspector **Barrie Clark** and his wife **Janet** were verbally abused by the farmer as they walked past when he was erecting the new gate. Barrie identified himself as the P&N

Inspector for the area and was roundly abused for his pains. Accused of going around the countryside stirring up trouble for the farmers, when it was me all along who was the culprit! If only I could get away with it as easily as that all the time.

John Harker



Walk reports

14 November , New Mills Circular. Short walk (6 miles) Leader **Wally Smith**. With a good day ahead 21 of us set out from New Mills Central after a briefing on the station's history from the leader and headed for the Goyt Way , following the river to Hague Bar, over the River Bridge to join a footpath and on to the tow path of the Peak Forest Canal . Crossing the A6 and up a track to Seven Springs Camp we turned along a beautiful route to Furness Vale, back across the A6 and canal to the historic Torrs area. Among our guests we were pleased to see Percy Hutchinson, a well-known stalwart of the PNFS and for many years our Signpost Officer. He made a brave effort to keep up with the rest of the party but unfortunately had to cut the walk short after lunch.

19 December, Cheadle Hulme, Leader **Jeff Lewis**. Three of us out on a sunny day with a hard frost – very welcome in view of the mud. No obstructions to report but some erosion of the Ladybrook path. We got back to Poynton Station as the sun was setting after a quick drink in the Bulls Head.

9th January Littleborough (Short) Leader **Clark Rogerson**. 16 out on a fine but chilly day. We headed south along the Rochdale Canal to visit the recently restored Jacobean Clegg Hall. Then onto Hollingworth Lake where the picnic area provided an ideal lunch stop before our return to the station.

PNFS Short Walk Programme 2008

Wednesday 13th February 2008

Leader: **David Morton** 0161 283 7824

Marple Circular taking in new bridge and replacement signpost.

6.2miles 905ft ascent

Man Piccadilly 10.46hrs walk starts 11.06 Marple bring lunch.

Wednesday 12th March 2008

Leader: **Neil Collie** 0161 440 9424

Higher Poynton Circular

6 miles, negligible ascent

Man Piccadilly 10.30hrs, walk starts Poynton Station 11.00hrs bring lunch.

Wednesday 9th April 2008

Leader: **Dave Brown** 01663 733236

Whaley Bridge to Furness Vale with the option to make circular by agreement on the day. The last leg is via canal towpath.

5 miles or 8 miles.

Man Piccadilly 10.37hrs, walk starts Whaley Bridge Station 11.15hrs bring lunch.

Short Walks Programme (cont)

Wednesday 7th May 2008

Leader: **Clarke Rogerson** 0161 749 8412.

Mills Hill to Newhey via Tandle Hill. Walk 17 in Leaders book.

6.9miles, 980ft gentle ascent.

Manchester Victoria 10.33hrs walk starts Mills Hill 10.50hrs bring lunch.

Note: Return to Mills Hill possible by train for those travelling by car.

Longer Walks Programme February- May 2008

Wednesday 20th February

(Note NOT the last Wednesday in the Month)

Start from Diggle Bus Terminus 10.30 for a 9 mile hilly walk including a further walking of Saddleworth 55 through Upper Castleshaw Farm to again assert walkers' rights. Please bring lunch. **Leader Martin Riley 01706 848408**

Wednesday 26th March

Start from Norfolk Arms, Marple Bridge at 10.30. Nr 383 from Stockport Bus Station every 15 mins. Train at 10.03 from Manchester Piccadilly. Walk is 10 miles undulating. Please bring lunch. **Leader is Brian Morrison 0161 483 8957.**

Wednesday April 30th

Start from Chapel en le Frith Station at 10.30. Train at 09.37 from Manchester Piccadilly. 11 miles hilly. Linear walk ending at Whalley Bridge Station. Please bring lunch. **Leader David Brown 01663 733236**

Wednesday May 21st

(Note NOT the last Wednesday in the Month)

Start from Delamere Station at 11.30 per train from Manchester Piccadilly at 10.24 Note Delamere is a request stop. 10 mile undulating walk in forest and on Sandstone Trail. Visit to western most PNFS sign. Please bring lunch.

Leader is David Bratt 01926 762472.

The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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