

SIGNPOST

Newsletter of the Peak and Northern
Footpaths Society

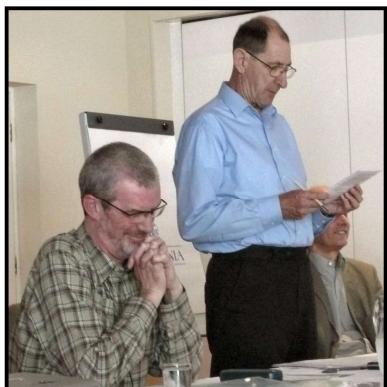


Fingerpost 008 at Bagshaw Farm near Lantern Pike

Number 28

Spring 2008

RAMBLINGS FROM THE CHAIR(MAN)



Chairmen - elect and retiring.

On Saturday 26th April our AGM at the Britannia Hotel Offerton was the best attended ever, with 107 members present. It was especially heartening to see so many new members, thanks to our recruitment efforts over the last year.

David stepped down as Chairman and was duly elected President. He gave an amusing description of his recruitment to the Society and an account of a typical Monday in Taylor House; he paid tribute to Derek Seddon who was elected into the honoured ranks of our Vice Presidents; and he thanked all our volunteers for their hard work.

The highlight of the day was the resounding support to the increase in subscriptions, which was carried with an almost unanimous vote in favour (2 against). You will find details of the new rates and how to renew your subscription elsewhere in this newsletter. Membership is at an all-time high (1,467 members) and numbers really do count, so please show your continued support and renew your subscription promptly.

All officers standing for election were given solid support and I would like to welcome Adrian Littleton, Hilda Bowler and Rhoda Barnett to the management team. These appointments confirm our commitment to being an "equal opportunities society" in line with our constitution.

The motion to vest Taylor House in the name of the "Official Custodian for Charities" was also carried with only 1 vote against. This will avoid the expense and trouble of re-registering with the Land Registry every time there is a change of trustees

In my inaugural speech I set out my plans for the year ahead, stating that whilst we are in good health in all key areas we must build on our strengths, stay true to our heritage, remember our charitable aims and ensure the bulk of our income is directed at meeting those aims.

Whilst these are my first jottings as Chairman it will be the last time you will hear me use the expression "New Ways of Working". The methodology was agreed in 2006 and a pilot was carried out to iron out the detail. During 2007 the pilot scheme was reviewed and pronounced a success. Now in 2008 we must consider it business as usual, the way we work.

I look forward to the challenges ahead, working with our volunteers both in the field and the office. But it must also be said there are still "too many tasks falling on too few volunteers", to quote from our Centennial Publication of 1994. I hope to redress that balance and you will find details of some of the essential tasks that we need to tackle later in the newsletter.

Rounding off my ramblings from the chair (the furniture variety), which affords me a great view of Urmston Meadows, I have to say it is an honour to be your Chairman.

It is a great team we have working to preserve our footpath heritage for future generations. It is not all work; we do have fun – so why not join the team. Even if you can only spare a few hours, helping to complete one small job; you will be making valuable contribution to the work of the Society.

YOUR TIME CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Whilst we still need more Inspectors and AOs, especially in the far-flung corners of our patch, I appreciate that not everyone can afford the time commitment necessary to carry out these roles. But you can still make a difference and help the Society meet its charitable aims by giving a few hours to complete one of the many small jobs that are always cropping up. I have listed a few examples of the things that need urgent attention. These opportunities will appear on our website and we will update them regularly.

- 1) Review our current insurance arrangements – the aim being to rationalise the number of policies and brokers we deal with.
- 2) Building maintenance. Taylor House, like any building, needs regular maintenance. The project involves identifying essential repairs, obtaining quotations and recommending to the officers the best options.
- 3) We have recently had a Fire Risk Assessment, and the report indicates a number of key issues that require addressing. These range from arranging for an electrical installation check to the supply and maintenance of fire extinguishers. Again this involves obtaining quotations and recommending the best options.
- 4) Review of our IT requirements. Our current IT equipment is reaching the end of its useful life. The project will assess our current and future needs, and produce a detailed plan and budgets for recommendation to the Officers.
- 5) Publicity material placement. There are two elements to this project. The first and simplest is to take a number of our membership forms and ask that they be displayed in public libraries, Tourist Information Centres, cafes frequented by walkers etc. and then keep them replenished as required. The second element is to arrange for suitable locations to put up our display stands whilst they are not in use at shows.

If you are interested in volunteering for any of the above, please use the 'contact us' form on the website or telephone Taylor House. You can expect a prompt response from the Chairman to any offers of help.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS

If you received a letter with your copy of the Annual Report your subs are now due for renewal. As you will have read already, new rates apply and a renewal form is included on the back page of this newsletter. Please complete and return the form as soon as possible.

THIS MAGAZINE

You will probably have noticed some differences between this issue of Signpost and the previous one. That is because it has a new editor and publisher. both posts now being vested in my good self. Although I have only been a member of the Society for a little over a year I go on most of the organized walks and have formed an amiable association with, amongst many others, the present Chairman and President.

I apologize if this issue is not of the quality achieved by my predecessors, but Derek Seddon and Peter Rhodes have set a standard that is not easy to emulate. I am having to learn fast, not helped by needing to get the magazine out very quickly so that you can use the form on the back page to pay your subscriptions (big hint).

I would welcome constructive criticism about the presentation and content of Signpost. My contact details are on the back page. And do remember that Signpost is not the preserve of the officials of the Society. Any member can submit articles, photographs or letters which, subject to limitations of space, decency and the laws of libel, I will include in the magazine.

And finally: a thank you to my wife Judy. A professional editor for the Plain English Commission she has carefully proofread and checked the content for me. But, of course, any remaining errors are entirely my responsibility

Dave Brown

COURTS & INQUIRIES TEAM - CLEARING PERSISTENT FAULTS

I'm pleased to welcome a new member to the team, with the appointment of Rhoda



Barnett (pictured left) as C&IO for Derbyshire. Rhoda is a former President of IPROW (Institute of Public Rights of Way Management) and Principal Rights of Way Officer at Berkshire County Council, and brings a wealth of experience to the team.

The team, brought together by David Bratt some 10 months ago, has had a fair degree of success. With 10 paths cleared of obstruction and several more in the offing, it appears that our commitment to seek legal remedy is having the desired effect.

In addition to clearing faults, John has submitted "written representation" for "Hathersage 12" and I am preparing the case for the "Cuddington 16" Inquiry.

In brief, there are two types of path fault where legal remedies are readily available to the Society. Firstly, where the path is 'out of repair' because, for example, the surface of the path is overgrown or very muddy all the time. Putting this right is the responsibility of the Council as Highway Authority – lack of resources is no defence.

Secondly, where the path is obstructed, for example by a fence or wall across the path or a blocked stile, the landowner is in breach of the law and the Highway

Authority is under a legal duty to protect and assert the rights of the public to use the path by getting the landowner to remove the obstruction

Before taking action in either type of fault, the matter will be reviewed at the Legal Events Review Meeting. We need to be satisfied that the Council concerned has been given a reasonable opportunity to resolve the problem and that the case is one worthy of the Society's support in that, if successful, an important path will be restored for use by walkers.

The Courts and Inquiries Officers would be happy to look into any cases of paths that are obstructed or out of repair, where the Council concerned has failed to resolve matters after they have been given a reasonable time to do so.

Further information on Section 56 and Section 63 Notices can be found on our website under "Inspectors News".

Terry Norris

SADDLEWORTH 55 REVISITED

Footpath Saddleworth 55 has for several years been a bone of contention, the tenant of Upper Castleshaw farm doing all she can to deter walkers. Although our visit in February (see Walk Reports) was impeded by nothing worse than a frightened ewe, it was obvious from the state of the path that her attitude has not softened, prompting the then Chairman to send this missive to the Oldham Evening Chronicle

"Dear Sir,

Once again (now for the 3^d year running) a walking group from the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society has made its annual February pilgrimage to assert the right to walk Footpath Saddleworth 55 at Upper Castleshaw Farm. Oldham MBC have now put in a stubby ground post waymarker to assist walkers find their route but as per the picture you will see it has acquired a considerable surrounding mantle which is doubtless to protect it against inclement weather and certainly not be there to act as a means of anyone covering up the waymarker from public view. We suffered no harassment on this visit but sad to relate our volunteer Inspector when carrying out his reccy a few days earlier was subjected to sustained verbal abuse by a "lady". We had hoped the saga of Saddleworth 55 was coming to a close but this is not the case. It is a public right of way that anyone has the right to walk in peace and safety and I hope your readers who walk will not be deterred by one individual in seeking to deny them their rights. We will be back for as long as it takes for reason to prevail.

David Bratt Chairman PNFS"



SIGNPOST 29 FINDS ITS WAY HOME.

It started with an email from one of our Inspectors, Brian Gerrard, asking if we knew anything about a sign found in the garden of Rabin's Opticians of Urmston. I knew that Dave Morton had recently refurbished sign 2 and had been in search of the missing cross plate, sign 29. The cross plate, a very heavy cast iron one made by R Mower of New Mills (see separate story), had somehow found its way from a hillside near Hayfield to Urmston, 15 miles away as the crow flies. Quite how it got there we shall never know.

Thanks to our excellent signpost records Dave was able to confirm that the signpost was one of ours. A few emails and a trip to Lostock, Bolton, where Brian lives, and the sign was returned to Taylor House for refurbishment. On Friday 11th April, just 6 weeks after Brian's email, sign 29 was replaced to again guide walkers the 1½ miles to Hayfield.

Clarke Rogerson



Do you know the way to Hayfield?

PNFS SHORT WALK PROGRAMME 2008

For all walks:-Please check all rail/bus times near the date! New train timetables are in force from the end of May

Wednesday 7th May

Leader: Clarke Rogerson (0161 749 8412).

Mills Hill to Newhey via Tandle Hill. Walk 17 in leader's book.

6.9miles; 980ft gentle ascent.

Manchester Victoria 1033. Walk starts at Mills Hill Station 1050. Bring lunch.

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

Wednesday 4th June

Leader: Martin Riley (01706 848408).

Around Chat Moss. Linear walk from Glazebrook Station to Irlam Station

7 miles; flat.

Manchester Oxford Road 1013. Walk starts at Glazebrook Station 1033. Bring lunch.

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

Wednesday 9th July

Leader: Wally Smith.

Chinley Circular. West of Chinley Churn to Gowhole returning via Brierley Green.

5 miles; 350ft ascent

Manchester Piccadilly 10.46. Walk starts at Chinley Station 1119. Bring lunch.

Wednesday 13th August

Leader: Brian Summerscales

Wilmslow Circular. Along the Bollin to Quarry Bank Mill.

6 miles; negligible ascent

Manchester Piccadilly 10.33. Walk starts Wilmslow Station 11.06. Bring lunch.

PNFS LONGER WALKS PROGRAMME 2008

Wednesday 21st May NOT the last Wed in the Month!

Leader: David Bratt (01925 762472)

10 mile undulating walk in forest and on the Sandstone Trail, including a visit to the westernmost PNFS sign.

Manchester. Piccadilly 1024 Walk starts from Delamere Station at 1130

Note Delamere is a request stop! Bring lunch.

Wednesday 25th June

Leader :Clarke Rogerson (0161 749 8412)

Marple to Broadbottom via Cown Edge (Walk 19 in Clarke's book "Walk! The South Pennines") 9.5 hilly miles.

Manchester Piccadilly 1003 . Walk starts from Marple station at 1030. Bring lunch.

Wednesday 30th July

Leader: Vince Joyce (01942 603626)

Ramsbottom to Bury followed by optional visit to Trackside bar ELR

12 miles; hilly.

Travel to Bury Metro for 1030 then bus to Ramsbottom for 1100 start. Bring lunch.

Wednesday 27th August

Leader: Judith Halman (01477 534398)

Whaley Bridge circular.

10 miles; hilly .

Manchester Piccadilly 0937. Walk starts at Whaley Bridge station at 1015. Bring lunch.

Wednesday 24th September

Leader: Brian Lawrence (01484 866396)

Marsden Circular.

12miles; hilly.

Manchester Victoria 0927 (or Manchester Piccadilly 0912, change at Stalybridge). Walk starts from Marsden station at 1000. Bring lunch.

Wednesday 29th October

Leader: George Leigh (0161 928 4449)

Chinley circular.

10miles; hilly.

Manchester Piccadilly 1046 Walk starts from Chinley station at 1130. Bring lunch.

IN SEARCH OF ROLAND MOWER

Our signposts are interesting things. In the course of inspecting and maintaining them, I became interested in the identity of "R. Mower, New Mills", whose name appears on the back of our 10 best-looking cast-iron plates and one or two cross-plates from the period 1906-1912. A further 10 from that period are no longer with us.

I'd also come across the name Thomas Mower in our earliest minutes of the Society's meetings at The Athenaeum, M/cr in 1894-5, where he was listed as our one-and-only "Footpaths Inspector". Bill Johnson had also been curious and had obtained the 1901 Census data on the Mowers and one of Thomas's letters from 1908, which he kindly passed on to me.

Yesterday, after a wet morning above Hayfield replacing cross-plate 29 (one of Roland's) with the help of Clarke, I beat a retreat to the local history section of New Mills Carnegie Library to look at Kelly's Directories of Derbyshire, etc, which gave Thomas's occupation in 1895 and described him as "of Newtown, Cheshire". I then called in at 45, Market Street, the Mow-ers' home in 1901 but rebuilt as a shop in 1913, en route to the Local Heritage Centre whose Dr. Derek Brumhead I spoke to in the evening. Today I phoned the library again and was able to speak to Margaret, who together with Katherine is their acknowledged local history expert.

So far I've discovered that Thomas was born at Chapel-en-le-Frith in 1840 and that by 1901 he was the Relieving and Vaccinations Officer of the Hayfield Union (which covered New Mills and the workhouse at Low Leighton). So he was one of the "new middle class". He had a wife Emily, born in Huddersfield, and just two daughters and two sons. By the 1870s England's "new middle class" were in the vanguard of birth control so that they could afford to pass on their advantages to their children through the costly process of educating them. The younger son was Roland, our "R. Mower", who in 1901 was 20 and a "Mechanical Engineer's Clerk". Roland later became his father's assistant at PNFS, as shown in our year books. From 1906 he was designing our signpost plates and putting his name on them.

By 30 December 1908, Thomas had moved and was writing a letter from Torr Street to M. Moon at King St., Manchester, about that year's four new signposts (numbers 33-36), vandalism to number 21 in the Edale Valley (currently vandalised but no longer ours), severe erosion on the Snake Path (approx. 300 hikers had used it on the Bank Holiday and the PNFS hired men to repair it), a school display of seven maps showing the Walshaw Dene footpath (Hebden to Haworth), etc. Thomas died in 1915 age 75, but what of Roland?

Roland remains elusive. There were 4 foundries in New Mills according to Derek and Margaret. Longsons made grids and manhole covers; Higginbothams made lampposts; Hawthorns, where my great uncle John Lowe worked in the early 1900s, made a range of engineering products; and we think that the fourth was called Armfields. Roland presumably designed the plates then got them made at one of these or a smaller foundry. He had dropped out of our year books by 1913. He is not listed among the New Mills War Dead, nor is there any record of his marrying in England and Wales in the period up to 1920. Most of the boys and men who survived The Great War and the Influenza Epidemic would have been married soon after. The lack of a marriage or death record for Roland may be due to some transcriber misreading and misrecording his name. We may never know, but Margaret is on the case and so am I, so watch this space...

David Morton

THE SIGNPOST CHALLENGE

The Chairman was asked at the AGM if anyone had completed the signpost challenge he set last year. The simple answer was no. However, he does know some people have been out there hunting down our signposts. So he is extending the deadline such that the first person to complete the challenge will receive the prize.

Details of the challenge rules are on the website, but in summary the challenge is to visit all 243 locations listed and provide convincing proof of the fact. Acceptable proofs are date-stamped photographs, unedited digital images, or a paper log with convincing collaborative evidence (such as details of the commemorative plate).

True enthusiasts, of course, will not be satisfied with these 243 and will go on to visit every new sign as it is erected.

FROM THE PAST

This Society is venerable, having its roots in the early 19th century, but the problems it faces have not changed in any fundamental way since its formation. This extract is from a report by Thomas Boulger, then Secretary to the Peak District and Northern Counties Footpaths Preservation Society (as we were then called) for the 1930 Ramblers' Federation Handbook. It demonstrates the important part that signposting has played in the fight for access and, across the years, emphasises the importance of our membership drive.

"In addition to the preservation of footpaths the Society has also during the year done much useful work in erecting several new sign posts while many of the old signposts have been repaired and repainted. The society is only too anxious to extend this side of its work provided the necessary increased funds are forthcoming. It cannot be too strongly emphasised what an important part signposts take in the preservation of public rights as, in addition to enabling the public to find their way, they advertise to the world at large that the paths thus posted are public. It is significant that on no path where signposts are erected has there been any attempt to close or obstruct such path. Recently the Society's officials took part in the very interesting ceremony of taking over the signpost kindly given by the Stockport Rambling club, which was erected on "the street" in the Goyt Valley

This is an excellent example for other Rambling Clubs – a collection on a ramble or two, and the cost of a new signpost (roughly £2 10s. 0d.) is easily subscribed.

A perusal of this summary of the of the Society's work should convince Ramblers that the Society is a necessity! A moment's reflection on the part of those readers who are not members as to what would be the fate of the many footpaths referred to above if the Society ceased to function will cause them to realise how selfish they have been in the past in with-holding their subscriptions and leaving to others the burden of the necessary financial support to enable the Society to continue its useful work – which is done for the benefit of all!"

The Society's Defence Fund shows a slight increase but the cost of the Benfield Action will be payable out of such fund. It is obvious that the income of the Society is not sufficient to cover other than ordinary expenditure and this Fund is very necessary if the if the Society is to be in a position to defend, through the courts (as it should be able to) the rights of the public. Donations to such Fund are therefore urgently required"

WALK REPORTS

13th February, Marple Circular, 6 miles.

David Morton leading a group of 20. The old iron bridge over the Goyt in Brabyn's Park being closed for major repairs, we headed south from the Railway Station in fine sunny weather. We paused at the former Railway Manager's House on Lakes Road, before descending to check S212 at Bottoms Bridge and the nearby sites of Samuel Oldknow's grand house (vandalised and demolished in 1949) and Mellor Mill (burned down 1892). Passing Oldknow's former Apprentice House (Bottoms Hall), we continued by his mill pond ("Roman Lake"), S242 (repainted by Brian Morrison), the "Roman Bridge" (17th cent.), alongside the Goyt past Windybottom Farm, then up the hill to Lower Cliffe, High Cliff and Shaw Farm, site of the new S166 and S334. Here we ate our sandwiches in the sunshine, with a good view of Lyme Cage, before returning via Capstone, The Banks, Mellor Golf Course and S241 and 228 to Marple Bridge. The northerly walk remains to be done. The old bridge is due to reopen on May 30th.

20th February Diggle Circular 10 miles



Martin Riley leading a group of 11, but only after some frantic telephoning had Bratty rounding up the stragglers abandoned at Diggle Bus Terminus, the official start point... Thereafter we climbed Ridge Lane to the notorious Upper Castleshaw Farm (see article above), continuing to the reservoir picnic area for lunch. Then down Hull Brook to Delph before crossing Lark Hill and following the canal back to Diggle.

12th March Higher Poynton. 7 miles

Neil Collie, leading a group of 15. The following day the *Guardian* newspaper reported '*85 mph winds, swathes of Cheshire cut off by road closures, homes battered, the M6 closed.*' But still fifteen walkers had turned out for a walk along some of the many historic routes through Poynton. We followed the evidence of former industrial tramways between Poynton Station and the Macclesfield Canal learning about Poynton's coalmining past.



Nelson Pit Visitor Centre

The last mine closed in 1935 and the slag heaps have now blended into the landscape. After lunch at the Nelson Pit Visitor Centre, we briefly walked along the Middlewood Way – part of the abandoned Macclesfield, Bollington and Marple railway, before returning to Poynton station via Lady's Incline. Seven miles in total and despite the weather looking threatening at the start it remained dry all day.

9th April Whaley Bridge to Furness Vale. 5 miles

Dave Brown leading a group of 15. On a dull but dry day we enjoyed a short but hilly walk over Whaley Moor where we discussed the provenance of the Dipping Stone. Continuing past the three Society signposts near the Moorside Hotel we climbed to Black Rocks for lunch before walking the edge and descending to Furness Vale. Having just missed a train and there being no hostelry open, some of the party returned to Stockport by bus whilst the rest enjoyed a sunny canal-side walk back to Whaley Bridge.



*The Dipping Stone –
Plague Stone or Saxon Cross?*

30th April Chapel-en-le-Frith to Whaley Bridge. 10 miles

Dave Brown leading a group of 11. Starting from the station, where we admired the plaque commemorating the bravery of driver John Axon in 1958, we climbed steeply to Castle Naze, site of an Iron Age hill fort. We then enjoyed the magnificent high-level walk along the edge of Combs Moss with fine views, before descending behind Whitehall. The splendid Ladder Hill ridge being denied us, we crossed farmland and descended to the A6 at Tunstead Milton, where stands a fine example, S028, of the above mentioned R. Mower's work.



*Castle Naze - a cradle of
British rock climbing*

Climbing through Woodside Farm, with its collection of three signposts, towards Eccles Pike the previous fine weather changed into torrential rain which quickened our pace down to Bugsworth. The canal basin was inspected with interest before we completed the walk on the towpath via Bridgemont. Having over half an hour to wait for the train, a substantial part of the group were able to enjoy the hospitality of the Shepherds Arms.

Keep up to date with the Society's news and walks programme at
<http://www.peakandnorthern.org.uk/>

Membership Renewal Form

Registered Charity No 212219

I/We wish to join the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society

Names _____

Address _____

Post Code _____ Tel No _____

Email address _____

Date _____

Signature _____

Type of Membership	Minimum Subscription*	Amount Enclosed
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Individual subscriptions

Annual	£ 10	£
Annual Joint	£ 17	£
Junior under 11's	£ FREE	£
Five Year	£ 45	£
Five Year Joint	£ 75	£
Ten Year	£ 80	£
Ten Year Joint	£ 130	£
Annual Concession †	£ 5	£

† Concessionary rates are only available to people under 21 who are in full time education or people claiming benefit.

Affiliation fees for clubs and groups

Annual	£ 15	£

Other items

Rucksac Badge	£2	£
Donations		£

Total enclosed

I/We do not require a receipt

Please send this form with your cheque made payable to:

**Peak & Northern Footpaths Society, to the Membership
Secretary, Taylor House, 23 Turncroft Lane, Offerton,
Stockport SK1 4AB**



The membership form is also available online at <http://www.peakandnorthern.org.uk/pnfs-publications/membership-leaflet.pdf>

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