

SIGNPOST

Newsletter of the Peak and Northern
Footpaths Society



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Winter 2012

NEWS ROUNDUP

Attacks by animals - on walkers on public rights of way

We have recently received two reports of attacks by animals on walkers on rights of way. One being by a dog on the leader of one of our short walks, the other by a horse on members of Altrincham & District Rambling Club an affiliate of ours.

Our advice, if you suffer a similar attack is to report the incident to a) the Police and b) the Health and Safety Executive. Unfortunately the society cannot directly get involved as the report must come from the injured party.

Short Walk Leaders

Thanks to new walk leaders Mary Cohen, John Fisher & Ian MacKenzie. Mary & Ian led walks from New Mills & John led a walk on the North Cheshire Way. We need more new leaders to fill our programme from May 2013. If you can offer a walk please email: clarke.rogerson@gmail.com or phone: 0161 749 8412.

Wirral Circular Trail

Fancy a change? Why not try the 35 mile signposted trail around the Wirral. You can start the trail at any point and the route descriptions enable you to walk it anti-clockwise or clockwise.

Or try their walking festival next May.

Details available from:

www.visitwirral.com/wirralcirculartrail

or phone Tourist Information:

0151 666 3188



eNewsletter

If you are reading a paper copy and have access to the Internet the new version can be found at:

<http://peakandnorthern.org.uk/newsletter/1208-signpost42.htm>.

In the near future we hope to offer a quick way to sign up for the electronic newsletter, in the mean time if you would like to save the Society money please send an email to mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk requesting the eNewsletter rather than the paper version.

Dates for your diary.

Saturday 27 April 2013 is the date for next year's AGM.

Saturday 23 November 2013 is the date for next year's HYM.

Cover Picture: October short walk crew take a breather in Lyme Park

EGM Report

Saturday 24th November 76 members attended the EGM at the Britannia Hotel to debate and vote on adoption of a revised Constitution. No one can deny that the subject was well debated, with members putting over their points of view or debating the finer legal points for over an hour. At the end of the debate a vote was taken and the revised constitution was rejected.

The thing that struck me was the high level of abstention, almost a third choosing not to vote for or against the motion. Talking to people afterwards it became clear that many were confused by the debate. They were still asking why change the constitution when it has worked okay for years. Suggestions of a 'compromise option' with a two tier management structure appeared attractive to some.

So what is the problem with our constitution and why must we change it?

In simple terms our current constitution attempts to distinguish between 'officers' and 'trustees' (two tiers of management) and then goes on to give power to manage the society to the officers. This, unfortunately, goes against the very basic principle of charity law i.e. 'trustees must be responsible for the running and management of the society'.

Now if that isn't confusing enough clause 3a of our constitution states 'Each Officer and each Trustee (who must also be an Officer)' which means 'all our trustees are officers but not all our officers are trustees' no wonder people were confused.

This confusion entered our constitution in 2001 when changes were made, prior to that time this confused distinction between officers and trustees did not exist. Yes things worked okay after 2001, but only until 2011 when events highlighted this flaw and all but brought the real work of the society to a halt.

Clearly we must put this matter right and not to put too fine a point on it John Broadbent made it clear that it must be fixed before he will stand for election as Chairman next year. The question is how can we achieve the change in time for the AGM? And how can we be sure that the membership will accept any new proposal?

John and I will, once again, carefully consider the problems that exist with our current constitution, we will be taking account of all the concerns that were raised at the EGM and we will be consulting with our existing officers and trustees. We are both very clear that the Charity Commission (CC) is the ultimate authority, they offer a model constitution saying '*The model is intended to be sufficiently flexible to deal with most eventualities*'. We believe it is in the best long term interests of the Society to use that model as the basis for our constitution. The question now exercising our minds is what is best in the short term - go for the Charity Commission model now (which provides a "permanent" solution) or just correct the flaw in the present constitution and look at more extensive change later?

Subject to the approval of the officers and trustees our aim will be to hold an EGM, on the same day and immediately before the AGM on 27 April 2013, to consider the adoption of a new constitution. At the AGM all officers who wish to stand for election as trustees will have our full support.

Clarke Rogerson

Path problems solved

Culcheth and Glazebury 262.

In September whilst walking all the paths in some local 2 km OS map squares for the North and Mid Ches Ramblers I came across one serious obstruction. The issue was maize which had been sown with no regard for the path and across rather than down its line. Much of it was 6ft high and the 100yd cross field path was impassable. I immediately reported the issue with accompanying photo by e mail to Warrington BC who straight away advised the farmer he had 7 days to reinstate the path line in default of which Warrington would carry out the work and bill him. Within 2 days the farmer cleared a wide strip and all was well again. Once again good work by a good Authority and in particular its Senior ROW Officer John Thorpe.

David Bratt.



Barnsley 159

This footpath was severed in the "Great South Yorkshire Flood" of June 2007 when the foot-bridge across the river Dearne in Barnsley near Monk Bretton Priory collapsed into the river.

After years of nagging Barnsley MBC to do something and the threat of legal action, the money was found. A minor legal diversion was required to allowed BMBC to build the replacement bridge about 50 metres upstream of the original which we were happy to support.



Story: John Harker

Photo: Chris Davison

Continued

Bredbury & Romiley FP 15

This case goes back over 20 years when a proposed diversion at Lower Watermeetings Farm near the Cherry Tree estate at Romiley was discussed but never proceeded with. The landowner jumped the gun & blocked the path at the junction with FP 16 at Watermeetings Lane (SJ955.905) by padlocking the field gate (there is no stile). There it rested until 18 months ago when I found the obstruction by chance on a walk and checked the file which revealed the history. Realizing this was unfinished business I contacted Ernest Nama (Stockport MBC) who gave the owner a deadline to remove the padlock or apply for a diversion. The padlock has gone and we can all walk the path once more.

John Harker

Photo: Frank Hollingworth



Other issues

Gating orders – a cause for concern?

A gating order has the effect of stopping walkers' access to a public right of way by allowing the highway authority to erect gates across the path. The vast majority of these orders relate to the blocking off of public access across the rear of terrace properties in urban areas and are of no concern to the Society. However some gating orders have been made which affect definitive footpaths and have caused considerable hardship and inconvenience to walkers.

Before making an order the Council must be satisfied that premises next to the highway are affected by crime or anti-social behaviour (ASB) and the existence of the path facilitates the persistent commission of offences or ASB. It must be expedient to make the order taking account of the effect on the occupiers and other persons in the locality and, where the path is a through route, the availability of a convenient alternative. Though there is power to limit the hours the gating order is in operation, the general practice is for the gates to be in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The path does not lose its status as a public right of way as a result of the gating order and the order may be varied or revoked at a future time. However, this power is very rarely used.

Whilst Councils do consult the Society and other walking organisations, if requested,

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before making a gating order, the subsequent procedure is unsatisfactory and undemocratic, in that if the Council decides that the order is justified, there is no provision for independent adjudication, the Council acting as Judge and Jury. This is in contrast to powers available to a highway authority to extinguish a public footpath on the basis that it is not needed for public use, where the Council cannot confirm the order if there is opposition, the final decision being made by an independent inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

There are dangers that pressure will be put on councillors by local residents to close a well used path by a gating order, where these persons suffer some adverse effects from its use and that there will not be a proper investigation giving due account to the public interest in maintaining the public right of way. It is essential that the Council has a written policy for dealing with requests for gating orders. This should require a detailed analysis of the incidents of crime and ASB being relied upon and how they relate to the use of the path. Counts of people using the path should be taken over several days and the convenience of any alternative route critically assessed. Consultation should take place amongst the wider community, not just those living next to the path. Rights of way staff should be consulted and the matter not solely dealt with by Community Crime staff, who often have no knowledge or experience of dealing with definitive paths. There should also be consultation

with the Local Access Forum and any PROW Users Forum.

A proposed gating order of Dukinfield 27 by Tameside Council is causing the Society considerable concern. This 60m length of path joins Cheetham Hill Road and Kenyon Avenue. The shortest alternative route runs for a distance of 495 m. The path is used extensively by children and adults walking to school, the local health centre and a playing field. 398 people were observed to use the path over a 4 hour period. There is a bus stop opposite one end of the path and the path connects with Dukinfield 28 at the other end. The gating order will sever a valuable and well used link contrary to the Council's policies to promote walking and protect PROWs. However, the Council under pressure from the four householders living next to the path and the local ward councillor, are pressing ahead with the closure. Whilst there is a significant litter problem, aggravated by the complete absence of bins, the closure of this path appears to be a disproportionate response which would not withstand detailed investigation before an independent arbiter.

Terry Norris

Benny Rothman honoured

This year was the 80th anniversary of the Kinder Trespass so it was fitting that on 24th October a Blue Plaque was unveiled at 86 Crofton Road Timperly, the former home of the late Benny Rothman in honour of his years of campaigning.

Professor Harry Rothman spoke of fond memories of life at Crofton Avenue before he and his sister Thilo unveiled the plaque.

On his death at the age of 90 in 2002 the Guardian described Benny as - *Jewish by descent, tiny in stature and fiery in rhetoric.*



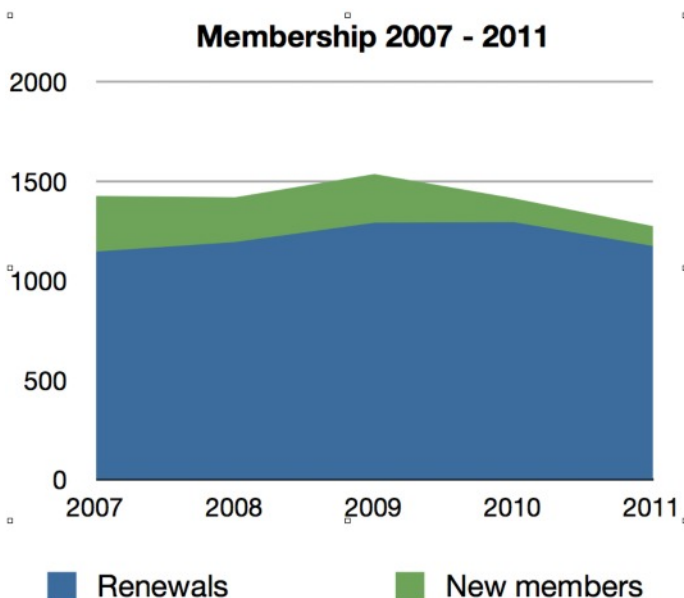
Benny was member of the Society in the 1970's when his sense of achievement was shattered by Mrs Thatcher's policy on the environment and access to it. I'm sure Benny would be appalled at the savage cuts that Rights of Way departments are suffering today.



Photos: This page Clarke Rogerson, back cover Robert Fysh

Membership Development

Recruiting and retaining members is crucial for the long term success of any organisation. Unfortunately, due to other priorities, we have seen a falling off in new members joining since 2009, however there are signs that the trend may be reversed this year.



To ensure we build on the first buds of growth I plan to lead a concerted membership drive in 2013.

As part of this initiative we have identified a number of possible activities many of which have proven very successful in the past and one or two others which we are hopeful will produce good results:-

- Representation at Agricultural and Country Shows/Fetes/Galas etc. with our display stand and enthusiastic volunteers to talk to and sign up new members. Twenty Shows have been identified as possibilities for 2013 and we now need to prune this list to a manageable size based on cost, geographical priorities, dates, potential (will there be many walkers at the show?) etc.
- Presentations to interested groups have been a success and we shall be doing more of these focussing on groups from whom we might expect to recruit members and perhaps inspectors.
- Membership leaflets to be placed in venues walkers frequent eg Pubs, cafes, libraries, Countryside information centres etc.

Continued

All of the above activities have proven to be a good source of new members in the past and will be energetically implemented in 2013 providing we can gather together sufficient volunteers to help.

The following idea of "NEW MEMBERSHIP VOLUNTEERS" is new in that I don't think it has been tried in this format before. I believe that we have a membership recruitment resource that could produce a substantial increase in member numbers. This resource is our existing membership base. The idea is that any members who are happy to register with us as New Membership Volunteers would receive a small supply of membership application leaflets. They would then take a few leaflets with them when they are out walking, and if an opportunity arose to talk to other walkers, show them a leaflet, ask them if know of us. Have a chat about PNFS, the good we do, our signposts and bridges etc. and if they show interest , leave a leaflet with them.

No pressure, no sales talk, just a chat about PNFS and the good that we do.

When leaflets run out , let us know and we will send some more.

If you would like to register as a New Membership Volunteer , please email us at :-

mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk

This is an opportunity for existing members to make a great contribution to PNFS. If just 10% - 15% of members volunteered I feel certain we would obtain some excellent results.

Retaining existing members is an equally, if not more important part of Membership Development and we are anxious to examine how we can keep members on board. Direct Debit really helps in this area, I would encourage everyone to read the benefits overleaf and consider signing up to Direct Debit

Finally, we would very much welcome any further ideas members might have as to how we can improve our membership development activities in the future.

All ideas will be gratefully received and given full consideration

John Broadbent
Vice Chairman

Helping us save time and money

We are trying to put more of our effort into footpath work by:

- Reducing administration.
- Cutting postage costs.
- Increasing our rebates from the tax man.

Please help us if you can by using –

Direct Debit – if you are already using direct debit, a big Thank You. The advantages of this are:

- No more annual cheque writing for you.
- No more membership renewal forms for you to complete.
- You save the postage every year.
- You don't get reminder letters asking you to renew your subscriptions.
- There is only the one form for you to fill out once.
- We also save postage and printing and membership record administration.

Gift Aid – Already 50% of members are helping us by gift aiding their payments.

- This boosts subscriptions and donations by 20%.
- You only need to fill a simple form in once.
- We then make an annual claim to HMG for the extra income.
- The only requirement is that you do have to be a tax payer.

E-mail – postal costs eat up a big chunk of your subscription and every letter we can save is a help. Using e-mail for invitations and general communications has advantages in that:

- You can easily respond to invitations.
- It's a no-cost solution to contacting us.
- We can contact you at no cost.
- You can access the online version of Signpost from your e-mail.

We have included a form to allow you to take any or all of these options, please give serious consideration to filling it in and returning it to us today.

WALKS PROGRAMME

For all walks, check train or bus times near the date and bring lunch. All walkers joining a PNFS led walk should be appropriately dressed and are responsible for their own safety. Walk leaders reserve the right to exclude people from the walk without giving any reason for that decision. If the advertised transport is delayed, the leader must not start the walk until it arrives. Walk leaders should be conversant with the Society's Walk Leaders Policy, which can be viewed on our website.

SHORT WALKS

Wednesday Jan 9th

Leader Clarke Rogerson (0161 749 8412)
 Littleborough circular, flat, expect some mud.
 Man Vic 10.21 Walk starts Littleborough stn 10.45

Wednesday Feb 13th
 Leader Gilly Gostick (01663 742397)
 New Mills (Central) circular, gentle climbs.
 Man Picc 10.45 Walk starts New Mills **Bus stn** 11.11.

Wednesday Mar 13th

Leader John Broadbent (0161 449 7251)
 Marple circular, gentle climbs, good paths.
 Man Picc, 10.45 Walk starts Marple Bridge stn 11.10

Wednesday Apr 10th

Leader Peter Burns (01744 893432)
 Hindley circular, gentle climbs
 Man Vic, 10.10. Walk starts Hindley stn 10.45

LONGER WALKS

Wednesday Jan 30th

Leader David Brown (01663 733236)
 Whaley Bridge circular (3 Peaks of Blackbrook)
 11.5m/2400ft ascent.
 Man Picc 09.52. Walk starts Whaley Bridge stn 10.35
 (Car option—9m/2150ft ascent walk—please call leader)

Wednesday Feb 27th

Leader Colin Williams (0161 748 2147)
 Marple (not Rose Hill) stn to Chinley stn linear.
 11.5m/2200ft ascent
 Man Picc 10.45 Walk starts Marple stn 11.10.

Wednesday Mar 27th

Leaders Paul Easthope (01457 855015) and
 Nev McGraw (01457 854483)
 Hadfield stn to Glossop stn linear 12m/2000ft ascent
 Man Picc 09.48. Walk starts Hadfield stn 10.30

Wednesday Apr 24th

Leader Alan Talbot (07714826899)
 Todmorden circular 10m/2000ft ascent
 Man Vic 09.48. Walk starts Todmorden stn 10.15

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Councillor Jonathan Coupe, Benny's daughter Marian Thilo
and son Professor Harry Rothman

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