

SIGNPOST

**Newsletter of the
Peak and Northern Footpaths Society**



Number 48

February 2015



Chairman's Piece.

This is my first contribution to Signpost as Chairman of Peak & Northern Footpaths Society, having been elected, along with a new President and Secretary, at the Half-Year General Meeting in November. A new Vice-Chairman was also appointed.

I would like first of all to thank my predecessor Alistair Taylor for his stewardship during his tenure of office. Alistair stepped into the breach at short notice and at a difficult time for the Society and he has steered it through some choppy waters. I am grateful to him for his support and for all his work for the Society.

Great thanks are due, too, to the retiring President, Clarke Rogerson, who has had to step down for family reasons. Clarke has devoted many years of service to the Society, as Vice Chairman, Chairman, President and in other roles. In his years as Chairman he single-handedly produced the Annual Report and strove, with considerable success, to improve the Society's financial position. As President during the recent difficult times he gave invaluable hands-on support to the Chairman and Trustees. We are pleased that he has agreed to retain his links with the Society as a Vice President.

I welcome the new appointments of David Hurrell as Vice-Chairman and David Brown as Secretary. Both bring many years of service and experience to the Society and will, I am sure, be valuable additions to the Board of Trustees. And I am pleased that David Bratt has returned for a second spell as President

However, these changes in the officers of the Society do not directly affect the day-to-day work which it carries out in the field and behind the scenes, some of which is highlighted in the following pages of this issue of Signpost. We are hugely indebted to a large number of knowledgeable and dedicated people, who give freely of their time and expertise, in their various ways, often unseen, to help protect the footpaths and rights of way which we value so much.

But, you will not be surprised to learn, we can always do more! Whatever your area of expertise we would welcome any help you feel able to offer, whether as a footpath inspector or helping with the support team at Taylor House. We have several ongoing projects which are aimed at improving the quality of our support systems for the volunteer teams, and anyone with IT expertise will be particularly welcomed.

The Society itself will, I believe, have to face new challenges as cuts to local authority budgets continue to bite and affect the ways in which they deal with footpath and rights of way issues. Your support will be vital in meeting these challenges.

Even if you cannot volunteer, please mark the date of our Annual General Meeting at Stockport on 18 April in your diaries and come along and let us have your views.

Gavin Miller

The New Team Members

PEAK & NORTHERN
FOOTPATHS SOCIETY



DAVID BRATT
PRESIDENT

PEAK & NORTHERN
FOOTPATHS SOCIETY



GAVIN MILLER
CHAIRMAN

PEAK & NORTHERN
FOOTPATHS SOCIETY



DAVID HURRELL
VICE CHAIR

PEAK & NORTHERN
FOOTPATHS SOCIETY



DAVID BROWN
SECRETARY

IN MEMORIAM - JACK OGDEN

We record with sadness the passing, at the age of 89, of Jack Ogden (1925-2014), an honorary member and for many years a most enthusiastic renovator of our signs.

David Bratt, President, represented the Society at his funeral on November 21st. David Morton, Signpost Officer, went to see Jack at his home in Gorton in February 2013. Jack told him about his work with the now defunct Manchester and District Rambling Club for the Blind, who donated our signposts 120 and 239 in 1956.

He also described his annual trip by bus to Little Hayfield to repaint Fingerpost 8, calling at Bullshaw Farm to borrow a ladder.

Jack's sister Sylvia will in due course be presenting the Society with various archive documents illustrating his work on F008 and his deep love of the great outdoors.

We intend to attach a memorial plaque to one of our signposts in his honour.

Direct Debits

If you find a direct debit marked Charity Payment on your bank statement, don't panic. This is probably your PNFS subscription. But, for some reason, our bank is not able to label it as such. This has led to a number of members inadvertently cancelling their membership and then having to renew it. Which is a nuisance all round. So, if in doubt, check with us first.



Replacing Stiles with Kissing Gates...



Terry Norris

The Chiltern Society shares with Peak and Northern the distinction of being a prescribed organisation who must be consulted about any proposal to divert or extinguish a public right of way in their area, this being in their case the counties of Bedfordshire, Bucks, Herts and Oxfordshire. Like ourselves, the Chiltern Society engages in a variety of activities to improve rights of way in their area. In particular they have set up a very successful 'Donate-a-Gate' scheme, which has led to the installation of over 400 gates by path maintenance volunteers to replace stiles. This scheme relies on co-operation with Bucks County Council rights of way staff, who identify particular locations for the gates and contact landowners to obtain their consent. Donated gates can be fitted with a plaque to include the name of the donor and date of installation. Short memorial or special event inscriptions can also be included.

... a good idea?

Some volunteers at Taylor House have suggested the Society should also become involved in converting stiles to gates, either by using our own funds or seeking donations. As a walker in my late 60's who finds increasing difficulties in climbing over stiles, I immediately felt sympathetic to this suggestion.

I was therefore very surprised to see the following letter in the current edition of the Chiltern Society magazine:

Dear Chiltern Society

Is there anything I can do to stop the Society replacing any more stiles with kissing gates? It is of course a good thing that some routes should be made easy for disabled walkers, but by what brief is the Society ruining the pleasure of a country walk for the rest of us? I love stiles, in all their variety of design/difficulty/uncertainty. And if/when I am disabled (as could happen any day now) and I can no longer get over them, I will rejoice in the fact that they exist for others to enjoy - unless the Chiltern Society has by then destroyed the lot of them.

Regards

Hedda aged 66.5 (not her real name)

The facilitator of the scheme, Mr Fell, remains unrepentant. He states that, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, highway authorities were required to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan which had to take account of the accessibility of local public rights of way to blind and partially sighted people and others with disability problems. So, following this Government initiative, the Chiltern Councils are committed to making paths as accessible as possible whilst balancing the needs of land and stock management. They look towards the 'least restrictive option for path users as authorised in the British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles (BS 5709:2006), where a gap is the most accessible, followed by a simple gate, a kissing gate, with a stile being the least accessible. Mr Dell points out there are many people with slight disabilities who can walk perfectly well on the flat but for whom a stile might as well be a wall. Kent County Council have even gone so far as to issue a statement: 'No new stiles will be authorised by the County Council.'

This defence elicited the following response from Hedda:

Thank you but I am appalled. The acknowledged existence of some dodgy stiles is no reason to condemn the whole lot. Your kissing gate drive would appear to be a mission, bordering on the totalitarian, to sanitise the whole of the countryside, turning it into some vast municipal park.

Despairingly,

Hedda.

From the Editor:

Since Terry has invited replies I don't think that I will be abusing editorial privilege by starting the debate.

I have a great deal of sympathy with Hedda's views. It is not that I relish clambering over precipitous and slippery stiles - the brooks of Kinder and Bleaklow offer me plenty of scope in that line - but rather that stiles, in all their eccentricity of forms, are a quintessential part of the character of the English countryside. I would as soon see them replaced by gates as see those equally quintessential village inns replaced by neon and chrome roadhouses.

But if the law in its asinine glory demands the change, let me at least make a plea that it be done as tastefully as possible and in appropriate materials. Many of the kissing gates installed in the last few years are made of galvanised steel, a material which blends well with a grove of silver birch but elsewhere is an eyesore. If we must have kissing gates let them be constructed from stout English oak or, at least, from sustainable tropical hardwood.

Chapel Gate – the controversy rumbles on.

John Harker

The Byway Open To All Traffic (BOAT) known to all as “Chapel Gate” has been a source of contention for a decade and longer. Originally put on the Definitive Map & Statement as a public bridleway, it was considered by many vehicle enthusiasts to be of higher status as an old road connecting the Edale valley with Chapel-en-le-Frith, as its name implied. An application to upgrade it to BOAT status in the early 2000s went to public inquiry and the inspector appointed by the Secretary of State agreed with the vehicle users that the bridleway did carry vehicular rights. As a route used predominantly by walkers and other non-motorised users, it fitted the legal definition of a BOAT and was thus upgraded.

The poor state of the route was felt by many people to render Chapel Gate unfit to carry vehicles. The National Park Authority came under pressure to use new legislation passed in 2006 to impose a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) prohibiting vehicles from using the route. The tortuous story of how a permanent TRO was finally imposed after first being overturned in the High Court is too long to be told here, but anyone who thought that this was the end of the story has been proven wrong.

Derbyshire County Council as Highway Authority decided that long-overdue repair work was needed to make the route more ‘fit for purpose’. However, what seemed to be a routine decision has brought down a storm of complaint from mountain bike user groups who felt that their needs had not been considered. The route is seen as a classic challenge for off-tarmac cyclists because of the topography, scenery and also because of the lack of maintenance over many decades. Repairs and resurfacing threatens, in their view, to endanger that sense of adventure which using the route engenders. The County Council has suspended further repair work until it has consulted on whether to proceed or amend or even scrap the work planned.

This Society has been approached by both the mountain bike lobby and the County Council seeking its opinions and support. I have responded on behalf of the Society that we are firmly on the side of the County Council in its efforts to repair and maintain the route as its statutory duty compels it to do. In our view, whatever the shortcomings may have been in terms of pre-work consultation, the public highway network, including public rights of way, is not intended to provide a challenge for a class of legitimate user over and above the interests and rights of other users such as horse riders. A public highway is for travel from A to B and beyond. The gradients and prevailing weather may be challenging, but leaving a highway in poor repair to provide a challenge is not what this Society believes is either morally or legally correct. We hope the County Council gets this message loud and clear and completes the repairs it had commenced before all this controversy erupted.

For further information on the Chapel Gate TRO and to see a map of the route go to:

<http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/looking-after/vehicles/restrictions>

<http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/country-side/access/latest-work/chapel-gate/default>



Threatened path in Sandbach saved by Society and local Ramblers Group

Terry Norris

Footpath Sandbach 29 is a short link between a housing estate and the junction of Sandy Lane and Moston Road, on the outskirts of Sandbach. It passes between several houses on the estate and then over industrial land used for the storage of vehicles. The path is currently obstructed by fences. Sandbach Ramblers served a notice on Cheshire East Council seeking to have the obstructions removed. In response the Council proposed to divert the route of the path. This proposal was abandoned following objections by landowners and from the Ramblers, who considered the diverted path's width of 1 metre to be too narrow. The owners of the industrial estate then applied to the Council for an order to extinguish the path. The Council supported this order.

The Society then joined with Sandbach Ramblers, a group affiliated to the Society, in opposing the order for extinguishment. We considered that the path could provide a convenient route to the local shop and other locations. We did not accept the Council's contention that using estate roads was a satisfactory alternative. Path 29 potentially provided a shorter, traffic-free route, which also linked with other paths providing access to the wider countryside.

The matter was determined at a hearing held before an independent Planning Inspector. The legal criterion under section 118 of the Highways Act 1980 is whether it is expedient that the path be stopped up, having regard to the extent to which it appears that the path would, apart from the order, be likely to be used by the public. For the above purposes any temporary circumstances preventing the use of a path, e.g. fences across the path, shall be disregarded.

The Inspector found in favour of the objectors on the basis that the footpath was likely to be well used in the future if the obstructions were removed. The industrial site crossed by the path has been sold and the Council are in negotiation with the new owners to try and find a satisfactory route for a diversion of the path. The Council's statement of case made at the hearing stated that 'the only use of the path is at a very local level to get from the estate to Moston Road'. That is just why the Society objected to its extinguishment. Traffic-free pedestrian routes matter to local people.



More Stiles Tackled

The case of two footpaths at Far Cown Edge farm north of Rowarth.

The photograph of the stile on New Mills 6 (SK015906) with the people getting over it was taken by me whilst leading a Sheffield CHA Club walk last summer (they are an affiliate of ours). One of the Society's signposts can be seen behind the woman on the left.



This has a happy ending as the DCC officer has persuaded the landowner to remove the fence blocking off the stone stile behind the wooden 'stile' the woman is climbing over.

The other stile is on New Mills 7 coming down off Cown Edge Rocks (SK014906) about 100 yards away from New Mills 6.

The first photo is mine of a fence 'stile' put in front of a perfectly functional stone step stile.

The second one is the DCC officer's photo of the aftermath of him talking to the landowner (a different one to FP6 I think).

Not quite what I had hoped, but at least an improvement on what was there before.



John Harker

Praise from Kate Ashbrook

Kate Ashbrook, General Secretary of the Open Spaces Society, was lavish in her praise when she spoke at our recent Half Year Meeting. Describing the Society as the hammer of the North, she said: "We are indebted to the PNFS and its 94 path inspectors for defending the public-path network across Northern England.

"The inspectors report problems and the society is prepared to get tough with councils which do not carry out their statutory duties on public paths, and to threaten legal action if necessary.

"But green spaces too are under threat," she said, and urged members of the Society to consider applying to register land as a town or village green where they have suitable evidence. "Where land has been used by local people for informal recreation for 20 years, without being challenged or interrupted, those people can apply to register the land as a green," explained Ms Ashbrook. "Once the land is registered, local people have rights of recreation there and the land is protected from development.

"However, if the land is already threatened with development, it is now too late to apply to register it. The Growth and Infrastructure Act, a developers charter which was passed last year, put paid to that. The trick is to get in ahead of the developers, and I strongly urge you to consider now what land in your area might be capable of being registered and to waste no time in applying for registration."



Signpost Report January 2015

David Morton



Since my last report in Signpost 46, we've been installing new signposts and repainting older ones at an exceptional rate. Thirty-one new signposts and eighteen repainted in the last nine months. The new ones are:

May	456 and 457 north of Abney and south of Stoke Ford; 459 at Huncoat.
July	462 at Ernocroft Farm, Chisworth; 463 at Holmesfield, 464 at Damstead, Mellor; 460 north of Throwley Hall, Ilam.
August	461 at Linnet Clough; 465 Longhurst Lane; 466 at Lr.Birchenough,Mellor.
October	471 N of Walkers Clough, Derwent Edge to replace F14 .
November	453 at Dunsop Head; 454 Whitendale; 467/8/9 at Hollywood End, Mellor.
December	472/3/4 at Ormskirk Station; 482 at Primrose Lane, Mellor Moor. 475/6/7/8/9//80/85 at Limb Valley, Whirlow, which are due to be installed by Sheffield's Woodlands Officers.
January	470 at Thurstaston; 483 at Hr. Birchenough, 481 & 484 at Hr. Crompton.

Between May and December Peter Ash and Mike Hoar repainted eighteen signs in situ. These are **005, 008, 105, 107, 108, 118, 119, 147, 158, 160, 220, 225, 228, 237, 239, 241, 252, 254**. They've revolutionised the process by using small paint pads rather than brushes.

Finally, we have reposted six signs: **F10/12, S019/154/295/343**; shot-blasted then repainted **F10/12** and **S8/28**; moved **S294** 25yards south; and added memorial plaques to **S400** at Rocher Wood and **S118** at Westend Clough to honour Bert Ward and Harold Wild respectively in the Society's 120th year. Their memorial plaques can be seen on the Signpost Gallery section of the website www.peakandnorthern.org.uk, together with the photos and locations of all the signposts mentioned above.

Thanks for help are due to many members, but in particular to Ted Wolfe; John Hodgson; Paul Wetton of PDNP, Fairholmes; John Gilpin, Woodlands Officer of Sheffield City Council; Leander Architectural for the plates; and Paul Spencer Signs for the plaques.

As always, if you want to finance a commemorative signpost, phone me on 0161 283 7824.



*Before
and
After
the Peter
and Mike
treatment*



Short Walks Programme

Wednesday March 11th

Leader: Dave Rigby (01484 846412)
Slaithwaite / Marsden circular approx 6 miles
Some quite steep sections climbing out of the Colne valley
Manchester Victoria 09:57 arrives Slaithwaite 10:33, or Huddersfield 10:15 arrives Slaithwaite 10:22.
Walk starts Slaithwaite station 10:35

Wednesday April 8th

Leader: Peter Burns (01744 893432)
Bury Circular inc. Irwell Sculpture Trail
7 miles, easy climbs
Tram from Market St, approx 10:15
Walk starts Bury Metro station 10:50

Wednesday May 13

Leader Ian Mackenzie (01663 742920)
Chinley to New Mills, 6.5 miles,
Manchester Piccadilly 10:49.
Walk starts Chinley station 11:25

Wednesday June 10

Leader John Fisher (01625 439298)
Congleton to Kids Grove via Mow Cop. 8 miles, gradual ascent
Manchester Piccadilly at 09:46
Walk starts Congleton station 10:30

Long Walks Programme

Wednesday February 25th

Leader: David Hurrell (0114 288 6474)
Hope Circular
10 miles 1500 ft ascent
Man Piccadilly 08:49
Walk starts Hope station 09:45

Wednesday March 25th

Leader: Martin Riley (01706 848408)
Littleborough circular
10 miles 1500 ft ascent
Manchester Victoria 09:56
Walk starts Littleborough station 10:30

Wednesday April 29th

Leader: Dave Rigby (01484 846412)
Greenfield circular and Chew reservoir
10 miles 2000 ft ascent
Manchester Victoria 09:57 (or Manchester Piccadilly 09:41 change Stalybridge)
Walk starts Greenfield station 10:30

Wednesday May 27th

Leader: Ken Brockway (01949 843572)
Matlock circular
10 miles 2000 ft ascent
Manchester Piccadilly 08:49 to Buxton, Transpeak 10:37 to Matlock
Walk starts 11:35, Stand B Bakewell Road

Wednesday June 24th

Leader: Judith Halman (01477 534398)
Hebden Bridge circular
11 miles 1700 ft ascent
Manchester Victoria 09:48
Walk starts Hebden Bridge station 10:30



Any suggestions for the future short walk programme, please contact johnfisher560@btinternet.com

The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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