

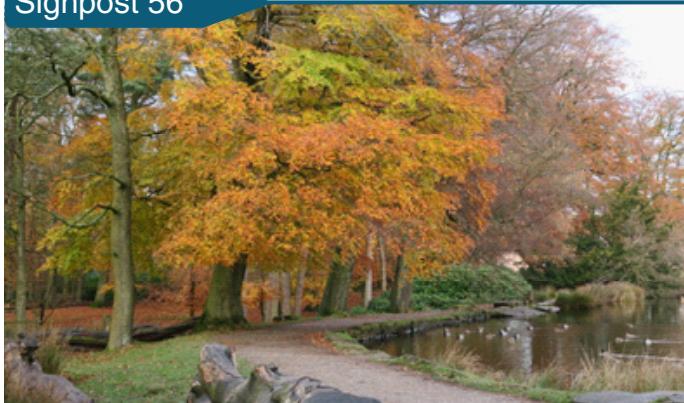
SIGNPOST

Newsletter of the
Peak and Northern Footpaths Society



John Harker, our Area Officer, was out walking in January when he found West Hallam footpath 10 (near Ilkeston in Erewash) blocked by a branch.

Nothing daunted, he cleared the way, as the 'before' and 'after' photos illustrate.



Chairman's Piece

**David Hurrell
Chairman**

Winter is upon us, so it can't be long before spring is just around the corner. But what of Autumn? In its usual mixture, there were good and bad days in about equal numbers. Some people much prefer Autumn to any other time of the year, with its wonderful colours and contrasting shades. Fortunately, I was able to be out in the countryside on some of the better days, viewing flowers of the summer that had managed to remain protected by banks and walls. We are fortunate in being able to enjoy what is left of the summer colours to help us through the long winter nights. Footpath Inspectors will be out in the heart of the countryside this winter looking at all the problems that the wet weather brings.

Footpath Inspectors in a number of areas are now using our digital mapping application to help with record keeping and fault reporting. It is so much easier for recording inspection dates and path condition, and will give us a record of paths with recurring faults every year or two. The Highway Authorities of Derbyshire, Cheshire (East & West), Stockport, Barnsley, Staffordshire and Trafford are now on the Inspections Database. Our thanks to David Gosling for his work on the project, and to Mel. Bale for installing the system on the computers.

We shall soon be having a lady editor for Signpost. Shirley Addy has agreed to work with Ian Salvage on the next few publications, before she takes over as Editor herself. She will make her own mark on the publication, I am sure.

In the Autumn, the Trustees and some members met for our Strategy Day, giving us the opportunity to air our views on a number of issues. Many good ideas were proposed, which are currently being worked on. A number of points raised concerned how information is shared amongst the volunteers at Taylor House, how records are kept, and how some of this data could best be shared with the membership. There are too many ideas to work on all of them at once, and some will need further thought before being put into use.

Those of you at the Half Year Meeting in November will know of the proposed small changes to the Constitution to make it easier for the Trustees to continue with the work of helping to maintain footpaths for the use of communities and visitors. At an unofficial vote after the presentation there was sufficient support for us to continue with the process. We are now working with the Charity Commission on the changes required to allow us to put forward the proposals for an EGM during the AGM in April 2018.

A recent announcement has been made about a new Northern Forest, extending right across our area, from Liverpool in the west, through the Manchester and Leeds conurbations to the east coast, and also skirting Sheffield and Doncaster. What should we make of 50 million new trees being planted in the next 25 years? Naturally, not too many can be planted in urban areas, so is the planting to be on farm land, or moorland? Walking through woodland can be enjoyable, but we do not want to lose the views that we have from the many high level paths stretching over the expanses of moorland surrounding some of our great cities. I think there may well be problems in finding sufficient room for 50 million trees.



A Window on One of Our Affiliates; **Denton Local History Society**

Allan Arrowsmith, Chairman of Denton Local History Society



The society was formed in June 1978, so we are looking forward to our 40th birthday next year. In 1978, the M67 motorway was being constructed, so there was much to do, in taking photographs and recording buildings which were to be demolished. Two schools, public houses, homes and shops went under the bulldozer. In the same year, we were asked to put on an exhibition at Denton Show, which we did. Denton Show folded some years ago, but we still put on an exhibition each year, on a different aspect of Denton's history: hatting, other industries, shops, churches, schools, farms and so forth. For the third time this year, our exhibition has been staged in the restored and re-ordered Church of St. Lawrence, built in 1531, so an apt setting for our purposes. The photograph below was taken at our 2016 event, "The Best Days of Your Life", which was all about children and young peoples' activities, school, sports, pantomimes, street games, and so on. Over 500 children attended, in classes, as well as some 300 adults.

Sadly, this year, none of the schools accepted our invitation as the theme was not compliant with their curriculum. It was 'Crown Point to Thornley Park' (Down Manchester Road), showing how one of the main thoroughfares through Denton has changed over the years.

We meet twice monthly, for a workshop and a meeting with a speaker, as well as social events and occasional visits to places of interest. In addition, we have produced a number of books. We are also affiliated to Tameside Local History Forum, Greater Manchester Churches Preservation Society, British Association for Local History and Lancashire Local History Federation and PNFS.

Anyone wishing to know more about us is welcome to contact me: allana94@uwclub.net

If you are an affiliate of the PNFS and would like to tell our readership about your organisation, please email ian.salvage@btinternet.com with the proposed article

The 'Inaugural Really Rustic Award'

Andy Leader, Footpath Inspector for Holme Valley in Kirklees

Andy Leader is a member of the Society and an inspector for Holme Valley in Kirklees. He is also a former Rights of Way Officer. The article below is reproduced from his blog, Pathwatch (<https://pathwatch.blog/>), which is well worth a read.

The inaugural
Really Rustic Award
goes to –

Holmfirth Footpath 8



It gives me no pleasure at all to make the very first Really Rustic Award to the work carried out on Holmfirth Footpath 8.

The lovely Holmfirth Footpath 8 across open fields from Honley to Oldfield has very recently been fenced in by hefty stock fencing which includes barbed wire. Many of the timber posts which are already treated with a preservative have been liberally “painted” with a tar like substance. The grass surface of the footpath appears to have been treated with an herbicide turning the earth to mud. It’s not exactly a joy to behold on a walk over the fields and I wondered if it might be some kind of state funded modern art “installation” until I came across a sign which seemed to have been written by a “guardian” of the countryside explaining that the fence had gone up to protect the grass from being flattened, protect the public from cows and protect cows from neospora, a bacteria that can cause abortions in cattle.

Neospora can be found in dog poo so it is imperative that dog owners always clean up after their dogs on farmland. There are no excuses for not doing so or for letting Rover run all over the place. Keep him on a lead.

Farm dogs also carry the bacteria of course along with wild animals such as foxes. Farm hygiene is essential for preventing the disease, especially at calving time when it is crucial to dispose of placental membranes or dead calves before farm dogs or foxes come into contact with them. Storing cattle food away from dogs and foxes is important too. There are several other diseases that cause cattle to abort (e.g. BVD and Leptospirosis) which are not related to dogs.

It would be all too easy to blame the public though and I can’t help but feel that’s what’s going on here.

Fencing in a path which has been open for hundreds of years and predates modern agricultural practices and land enclosures seems a churlish thing to do on the face of it. It’s clearly spoilt the public enjoyment and amenity of the path and ruined the surface already. No doubt it will lead to requests from the public for some hard surfacing as it will be a mud bath in winter.

Remember the taxpaying public support British farming to the tune of **three billion pounds** per year. And many of us when we’re not working to pay taxes like a walk in the countryside which we support. Preferably unspoilt by those we fund to farm it.

Footpath Protection Can Take Time

Anthony Brackenbury, Footpath Inspector

We featured the Peak Forest Tramway in Signpost number 53 last year. Tony Brackenbury, who is Footpath Inspector in this area continues to fight for improvements to the footpaths.

For over ten years, Tony has chased Derbyshire County Council (DCC) to fix Tramway flooding issues between Whitehough and Charlie Lane (Chapel-en-le-Frith footpaths 124 and 172).

Recently, a new DCC Officer, Thom Howe, was appointed and he has made progress in addressing the issues.

Tony joined with a local colleague (Rob Thompson, who has also been involved in many complaints relating to flooding from the Highway), to co-ordinate the actions of Thom and other DCC representatives involved.

The happy result is that work has begun to improve the state of the ditches and culverts on the A6 Chapel to Whaley Bridge by-pass. Despite waiting so long, Tony feels that a result is close, and it will prove that the Highways Dept are responsible for the water running from the by-pass to the Blackbrook River, rather than the riparian landowners.



'The Heights'

David Bratt (President) and Jim Foster (Footpath Inspector)

On the PNFS October longer walk, we were confronted with this sign, one of two either side of a property called The Heights, on the well signed Rotary Way near Harwood. The statement 'No Right of Way' is simply untrue and deliberately there to deter walkers. We ignored the sign. Jim Foster, our PNFS Inspector for the area, has now picked up the baton (or maybe cudgel?).

Jim says:

"The footpath in question is BN-BRN 63 and I know it very well having had to report faults at The Heights regularly during my time as an inspector. The main problem seems to be that the definitive line of the footpath passes through the back yards of the dwellings at The Heights, which in itself is discouraging to walkers. The current position is that Bolton Council have served notice on the one particular householder responsible for them, demanding their removal. This was done by recorded delivery, confirming to the council that the removal notice has been received. If no action is taken the council will remove the signs and bill the householder for the cost. The householder has apparently been using delaying tactics by contacting councillors and heads of departments at the council and the matter has now reached director level, where support has been given for the removal of the signs."





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Out and About with Digital Maps

Mel Bale, Membership Secretary and Webmaster

Like many PNFS members my love of maps goes back to my school days. I can remember a geography lesson where a group of us were handed the Ordnance Survey One-Inch Map of Manchester. The classroom task is long forgotten but the look and feel of the map has stayed with me to this day; it was Sheet 101 and I still have a cloth backed copy.

The advent of computers, satellites and worldwide communications has had a massive impact on mapping since then. The last 20 years has seen a mapping revolution and digital maps are now ubiquitous. We all still love our paper maps, but some of our members may be unaware of some of the potential benefits of digital mapping.

The Ordnance Survey now packages a 'free' digital copy of its maps with the paper versions of its LandRanger and Explorer maps. Each map comes with a unique 12 letter code which can be used to register your 'ownership' of the map with the OS. An OS account is required to carry out the registration, there are Free and Premium versions. Once registered the digital map can be accessed on a 'smart' phone via a free app, OS Maps, which includes basic GPS features.

The OS has a clear advantage over other competitors in the digital mapping market. However it does licence its maps to other suppliers, so there are other options to the OS products. ViewRanger provide a good alternative smart phone app. A range of free UK maps can be downloaded and OS maps can be purchased online. It's probably fair to say that the app is more comprehensive than the OS offering. Unlike the OS, ViewRanger also covers the rest of the world. Wherever you are, a digital map of where you are is only a click away.

More comprehensive GPS phone apps are also available and are inexpensive. A favourite of mine is EasyTrails. It's great for use when carrying out footpath inspections. Not only can you do the basics like recording your route, but you can also add waypoints, including photographs. Ideal for a dodgy stile or an overgrown path! The data collected can then be viewed in a variety ways. Some members will be familiar with Google Earth, but ArcGIS Earth is a good alternative and allows easy viewing of EasyTrails files.

By all means take full advantage of what digital mapping has to offer, but NEVER forget to take a paper map with you. After all it will never run out of battery and it doesn't need a GPS signal!

If anyone wants more details about any of the above or related issues please feel free to contact me at mbpnfs@gmail.com.



Brian Morrison – An Appreciation

David Morton (Signpost Officer)

David Bratt and I attended the funeral of Brian Morrison on 25 January (12.9.34 – 9.1.18) at Stockport Crematorium. Brian joined PNFS in 2004, when he called in on spec one day, plus bike, to ask what we were all about and promptly signed up and asked for a job to do. He was well-known for his warm and friendly manner and his many bikes; I think he had 15!



My favourite was a butcher's bike, which he often used between his home in Offerton and Taylor House, when he needed a fresh supply of paint. He not only attended and led PNFS walks, but also became our man in the saddle, using his bike to get to signposts which needed repainting. He favoured those signs where he could get a cup of tea afterwards from one of his three daughters, before returning home to wife Margaret.

We last worked together on a sunny day in October 2008, when we fettled the last of our Dog Posts (19), which stands on the Snake Path above Kinder Reservoir.

I always thought that cycling was his first love. In his prime he would cycle with a group to faraway places like Blackpool, but while the others returned on the train, Brian would cycle back home. Today I learned that bowls became his next sport and that he worked as a coal-miner, chimney sweep and chauffeur, but above all he was a devoted family man.

We'll miss him and of course we'll also remember him with a smile and a memorial plaque on one of our signposts.

Our condolences go to his family.

Talking about the PNFS

Shirley M Addy, Footpath Inspector and Future Signpost Editor

I have given over a hundred talks on several subjects to various local groups such as Probus, local history, U3A and Rotary. A few months ago, it occurred to me that I could start talking about the PNFS, and I then suggested at the Strategy meeting in October 2017 that a list of members willing to give presentations on the Society be published on the website.

For many years the PNFS has received many requests for speakers from local or affiliated groups. However, the Society does not have enough members who are speakers evenly distributed throughout our areas, which has meant that on occasion some have to travel some distance. Last year, PNFS chairman David Hurrell, who lives in Sheffield, gave a talk for a Ramblers group in Blackburn, only a few miles away from where I live.

If you would like to be included on the list of speakers, email me on smaddy@talktalk.net.

Speakers need to advise the PNFS of any talks they give so that they may be added to the list of organisations that the Society has visited and talked to.



Champagne, Eccles Cake and Snow at Signpost S208

David Morton, Signpost Officer

You may recall that David Bratt related a happy day spent with one of our affiliates, the Eccles Rambling and Social Club (ERSC) in Signpost number 54. I continued PNFS's close relationship with the Club on Saturday 9th December, the day dawning cold in Cheadle Hulme. Mist obscured Mellor Moor as I drove along the A6 to the assembly point above Taxal Church on Long Hill for a 10.30 start.

The layby was covered with ice and snow, but was crowded with ERSC cars. To my delight, we were all issued with complimentary Eccles Cakes fresh from the bakery for our journey. There were nineteen of us in the party which ascended the icy lane opposite. It took us past the site of Shallcross Hall, then the restored former railway incline, which rises from Horwich End and finally the stump of an old mediaeval cross at the junction of Elnor Lane with the Old Road to Buxton. We stopped there and wondered why someone had stuck a recently moulded model of a Celtic cross on top. Then up the hill past Elnor Lane farm and left along Long Lane, where we inched our way past some very deep puddles – it is an Other Route with Public Access (ORPA). Friendly chatter marked our passage.

Combs Reservoir and then Eccles Pike briefly appeared through the mist and a two-coach train rattled past far below. Soon we reached the tarmac road which drops steeply to Spire Hollins Farm and the Beehive Inn at Combs, en route to Rye Flatt Farm and our destination, Allstone Lee Farm, below Combs Edge.

Our objective was signpost 208, which points the way to White Hall on Long Hill, where the legendary Manchester climber Joe Brown was an instructor from 1960-64. He left his mark locally in "Joe Brown Numbers" - https://www.ukclimbing.com/forums/hilltalk/joe_brown%27s_numbers-667850.



White Hall was the first local authority outdoor education centre starting in Feb. 1951, thanks largely to Jack Longland, Derbyshire's then Director of Education and a regular on BBC Radio's "Any Questions", "Round Britain Quiz" and "My Word" for thirty years. Signpost 208, which was clearly a fingerpost, but designated a signpost in our records, had been paid for by ERSC in 1986 to commemorate their 40th anniversary. I went to inspect it this year and realised that 2016 had been their 70th. As its finger was getting rather tatty, I contacted their secretary Bob Pritchard and proposed that we have a nice, durable, green plate made. The post was bolted to a concrete stump and in good enough condition to re-use, so I was able to offer him a good deal. It was quickly agreed by the committee.

On arrival at the sign, speeches were made by chairman Tony Mortimer and David Bratt, sandwiches were eaten, champagne was dispensed and a toast drunk to the spirits of members past. Tony reminded us that his club had sponsored one of our signs every decade for seventy years. My hope is that we will all survive and they will sponsor another sign on their 75th anniversary in 2021.

We walked back over scrunchy, white snow, past Meveril Farm and Tunstead Farm, then S424 above Cadster. More two-coach trains rattled by. On our return to the layby, there was a third generous dispensation of excellent Eccles Cakes.

It was my first time out walking with this affiliated group and I greatly enjoyed their friendliness and companionship, not to mention the champagne and Eccles Cakes!

The combined benefits of walking

**Ushapa Fortescue,
PNFS Member**



Although I've always been a keen walker, I have only recently become a member of PNFS. I decided to join after attending a long walk from the programme and going on many walks with my mum, a footpath inspector, often accompanied by David Hurrell, who provides local knowledge and map reading. I have walked for many years in the Highlands of Scotland and find that the peaks and moors of South Yorkshire give me the same enjoyment and beauty. I am a teacher of English as a Foreign Language and a trainer for Oxford University Press, for whom I deliver training sessions all over the world. I regularly visit a Meditation resort in India where I have studied and experienced many forms of meditation and I am a qualified and experienced facilitator of meditation and mindfulness.

Nowadays everyone seems to be living a busier, more stressful life, and my generation in particular seems to be looking for new ideas to help them relax and be more present. I often extol the virtues of walking as a way of doing just that. A long walk in the country, off road and on the old paths can be a form of meditation, even if the walker is unaware of the process. Meditation is simply the state of being 'in the moment', totally aware of one's physicality, the environment and one's reactions and emotions. Time when you give your mind a break from past, current and future worries, often allowing healing and recuperation. A good long walk gives a sense of wellbeing and a chance to experience the wonder of nature. Seeing birds flying or hearing their calls, smelling the bluebells even before their colour hits you in a woodland dell, the sounds of a brook, the intense green colour of moss on a wet stone are all examples of nature's delights.

The joys and benefits of walking may have sometimes been disregarded as being old fashioned or nothing new. However along with the already stated benefits, it is also free, accessible at all times and all seasons and doesn't need an expert in charge (although a good map reader and a compass help). Perhaps we should try to share our movement with my generation, who need a break from the speed and pressures of their world?

We could promote the simple message that walking with a friend enables a special time for sharing and getting to know each other, that walking in a group is sociable and fun, that walking alone in the countryside gives all the benefits of natural exercise, fresh air, a chance to clear one's mind and face tomorrow's challenges. Who needs a gym subscription?



Signpost Report, January 2018

David Morton, Signpost Officer

Eleven or twelve years ago when I became Signpost Officer, nearly all of our signposts were concentrated in a central area comprising the Dark Peak, White Peak and West Pennine Moors, plus a few in Cheshire. We've made an effort to spread them further afield in order to gain some publicity for PNFS in areas where it was little known. We now have 60 outlying signs as follows:

North:

- 2 near High Bentham at Lowgill near the R. Hindburn
- 8 in the Forest of Bowland

East:

- 7 in Bradford, i.e. Oxenhope, Haworth, East Morton, Baildon and Ilkley Moors
- 6 in Wakefield at Anglers Country Park and Thorpe Audlin near the A1
- 1 at Sprotborough, Doncaster
- 3 on the Chesterfield Canal towpath near Shireoaks

South:

- 4 at Ashover near Chesterfield
- 8 between Matlock and Derby
- 5 south of the Leek-Ashbourne road at Ipstones, Weaver Hills and Dimmingsdale

West:

- 5 on the Wirral at Caldy Hill, Thurstanston and Clatterbridge
- 3 at Ormskirk
- 8 between Northwich and Delamere Forest

430 of our 490 signs, etc, have been re-inspected since January 2016.

New Signposts since September

S554 and **555** erected by Bradford C'side and ROW Team at East Morton; paid for by Bradford CHA.

S559 erected at Butley Town in memory of signpost re-painter Mike Hoare 1947-2017

S560 erected at The Chevin, Belper; paid for by Amber Valley Ramblers

Maintenance, etc.

- 24, 106, 107 and 118 shot-blasted and powder-coated; 107 and 118 also reposted
- 266 and 310 repainted and re-instated on concrete stumps; new MP on 310
- New plate and plaque fitted to S118 celebrating 70 years of Eccles R & S Club in 2016

After discussion with Nabil Abbas of Sheffield Wildlife Trust (SWLT), I have ordered a new plate for S276 which will be re-instated at Blacka on an 8' post together with a new, metal plaque in memory of William Blake, provided by the SWLT.

Deaths in the signpost team

Sadly Mike Hoare, who partnered Pete Ash in repainting our signs, died at the age of 70. He is greatly missed by us. He is commemorated by a plaque on S549 at Whiteley Hay Farm, Butley Town, Prestbury. Pete has vowed to continue their work.

Mike's predecessor Brian Morrison died in early January at the age of 83 and will also be commemorated in due course.



Short Walks Programme

Wednesday March 14th

Leader - Dave Rigby (01484 846 412).
 Slaithwaite to Holmfirth, 7 miles.
 Train Manchester Victoria 09:57 (book
 Huddersfield return) or Huddersfield 10:15.
 Walk starts Slaithwaite station 10:35.

Wednesday April 11th

Leader - Marie Critchley (01663 746 811, speak
 when voicemail starts).
 Edale circular - 7 miles, hilly.
 Train Manchester Piccadilly 10:49 or New Mills
 Central 11:16.
 Walk starts Edale station 11:30.



Wednesday May 9th

Leader - Ross Myddelton.
 Across the Moss, 7 miles from Irlam to Leigh.
 Train Manchester Oxford Road 09:46.
 Return by bus from Leigh.
 Walk starts from Irlam railway station 10:00.

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



Long Walks Programme

Wednesday February 28th

Leader - Bill Buckley (01457 855 639).
 Linear walk Bromley Cross to Blackrod over
 Winter Hill.
 11 miles hilly.
 Train Manchester Picc 09:46, change Bolton,
 or Manchester Vic 10:03 direct.
 Walk starts Bromley Cross Station 10:30.

Wednesday March 28th

Leader - Bill Minshall (07771 985 846).
 Wilmslow circular, 10 miles undulating.
 Train Manchester Picc 09:46.
 Walk starts Wilmslow Station 10:30.

Wednesday April 25th

Leaders - David Hurrell (0114 288 6474) &
 Dianne Fortescue (07796 954 930).
 Penistone circular, 11 miles hilly.
 Train Manchester Picc 09:26, change
 Huddersfield for 10:13.
 Walk starts Penistone Station 10:45.



Wednesday May 30th

Leader - Alan Talbot (07714 826 899).
 Linear walk Brighouse to Sowerby Bridge.
 10 miles, 1600 feet ascent.
 Train Manchester Vic 09:27.
 Walk starts Brighouse Station 10:45.

Wednesday June 27th

Leader - Martin Riley (01706 848 408).
 Greenfield circular.
 11 miles, hilly.
 Train Manchester Picc 09:41, change
 Stalybridge, or Manchester Vic 09:57 direct.
 Walk starts Greenfield Station 10:20.

Shirebrook Footpath 33 – Rescued from Oblivion?

John Harker, Area Officer



Shirebrook is a former mining town in the Bolsover District of Derbyshire, on the border with Nottinghamshire. Footpath 33 was added to the Definitive Map & Statement (DM&S) by an unopposed confirmed Order in August 2013. It had been impassable due to dense undergrowth since the mid-1990s. As I cover Bolsover District, I thought it time to check this 'new' footpath out. The first time I attempted to use the footpath was in early 2016 on a walk with a Society colleague. I thought it would provide a useful link from the local railway station, where we had alighted, to more open countryside on the outskirts of the town. At least it would have done had we found it! We could find no indication of it from either end in terms of signage. All we could see was dense undergrowth and fencing blocking the footpath.

I reported the problems in the usual way. Nothing happened. I found out that the work needed to restore the footpath had been costed up by the County Council in late 2013, but the work had never been sanctioned. It seemed to me that such a potentially useful footpath should be open and usable. I sought, and was granted, authority from the Society to initiate legal action should the County Council fail to act on my complaint.

Staff changes in the Public Rights of Way section were delaying things. However, the new officer obtained a fresh quote for the work 12 months ago. Progress at last? Not yet, the bird breeding season was now upon us. A County Council Ecology Officer vetoed any work to clear the footpath.

I could see the likelihood of restoring this footpath receding over the horizon. I served notice on the County Council under sections 56 and 130A of the Highways Act 1980 (surface out of repair and for obstructions).

Remedial works started in early November and have now been completed. 'Before' and 'After' photos show the difference. The question in my mind is will local people rediscover a footpath 'lost' to them for over two decades? Or will Footpath 33 slip back into the oblivion in which it was found by my colleague and I two years ago? The Society has done its bit. Now users must do theirs.



The Footpath Inspections Database

**David Gosling,
Footpath Inspection Co-ordinator**

In October 2014 we held an Inspectors' Conference in Manchester and are holding another on Feb 24th 2018. My notes tell me that one of the things footpath inspectors were most unhappy about in 2014 was the way the Society recorded 'faults' that were reported to Taylor House. The problem was that the Faults Log was not easily available for anyone to inspect and there was a suspicion that much of the record was out of date or inaccurate.

People wanted a way to record faults online, so that inspectors could verify the record that was being kept. Inspectors also wanted to see the faults that had been reported by other inspectors.

Another issue discussed was - how does the Society know how active an inspector is? Under the old system, it was impossible to tell whether it was because an inspector was active but had not found any faults or that the inspector had become inactive.

The Faults Team also spent huge amounts of time entering data and trying to interpret inspectors' reports that came in a variety of forms, sometimes without a clear location for the fault.

The solution to all these problems has been the introduction of the Footpaths Inspections Database designed by Roger Fielding a PNFS member. We are very grateful to Roger for all his hard work.

Now the work of inspectors is available for all inspectors and, potentially, all PNFS members to see. The database is an online, map-based record of footpath inspections showing all rights of way in each parish. It is easy to use and has an attractive format. Currently the following areas are covered - Derbyshire (including Derby City), Cheshire (East and West), Stockport, Barnsley, Trafford and most of Staffordshire. Other Highway Authorities will be added soon.

There are two major innovations in the new database. Firstly, inspectors can record their own inspections (though we can do this from Taylor House if that is preferred) and secondly, the database records the date of the inspection and the condition of the path (and not just faults). The path can be classified as clear (shown as green on the map), with a fault (yellow on the map) or impassable or with a dangerous fault (red on the map). It is also possible to view all the paths as a list. This example below shows Chapel-en-le-Frith, inspector Tony Brackenbury.



FP99	D	12 Jul 2012	Stile, Gate etc (SK060846139) - High step on wall stile SK 0608 6139
FP100	D	12 Jul 2012	Stile, Gate etc (SK060846139) - High step on wall stile SK 0608 6139
FP101	D	9 Apr 2014	Stile, Gate etc (SK060846139) - High step on wall stile SK 0608 6139
FP102	D	15 Jun 2015	Waymarking (SK05323110) - Sign posts wrong way SK 0532 3110
FP103	A	18 May 2015	Stile, Gate etc (SK0228009) - Bottom step of stile broken off.
FP104	B	11 Jul 2013	Signpost (SK07628187) - Signpost missing SK 0762 8187
FP105	A	18 Jul 2013	OK.
FP106	B	18 Jul 2013	OK.
FP107	A	9 May 2017	OK.
FP108	B	26 Dec 2017	Stile, Gate etc (SK07778025) - Following the previous inspection there has been closure notice due to a poor footbridge, this notice has been renewed until 20 07 2018.
FP109	B	26 Oct 2017	Obstruction (SK08529979) - This path is badly overgrown with prickly gorse. I have cutback the worst of the gorse so that it is at least passable, but it is still in a poor state. The stile which is at the end of the path is also in a poor state. The path is very narrow and the stile may be inclined to give up wobbly! At the Blackbrook end of the path, water is flooding onto the track. Some drainage work could avert much of this problem.
FP110	A	9 May 2017	Signpost (SK05160006) - Signpost missing
FP112	A	9 May 2017	Stile, Gate etc (SK05160006) - Signpost missing
FP113	B	26 Oct 2017	Stile, Gate etc (SK07050033) - There are two ladder stiles with missing rungs near the top which make them difficult to climb. The path is also badly overgrown and difficult to walk.
FP114	A	18 Jul 2017	OK.
FP115	A	31 Oct 2017	OK.
FP116	B	3 Jan 2014	Signpost (SK05160006) - Sign missing
FP117	B	29 Dec 2015	Obstruction (SK06380044) - Unavailable due to overgrowth
FP118	B	29 Dec 2015	Waymarking (SK06380044) - Sign obstr by overgrowth
FP119	A	26 Oct 2017	Although this path is clear it is in a poor state due to the excessive mud made worse by cattle.
FP120	A	18 Jul 2017	OK.

It is easy to mark the location of the fault by simply clicking on the map and this generates a grid reference automatically so there's no longer a need for the chore of working out grid references. Where there is a fault, the inspector provides a description (and if possible a photo).

(continues overleaf)

(cont.)

At the present time, it is necessary to make a separate fault report to the Highway Authority, but we hope eventually that it will be possible to send your entry on the database direct to the HA, making it a one step process. The database has the facility to record correspondence with the Highway Authority as an 'event'.

The database has only been available for a short time, so there are still many parishes where the records are incomplete or absent.

The success of the database will ultimately depend on whether inspectors are reasonably conscientious in entering the record of their footpath inspections in the database and then periodically updating the record. Inspectors can send their record to Taylor House and we will enter the record for them. Either way the more complete the record, the more useful it will be. For the ordinary member of PNFS who is not an inspector, you have the chance to see whether a path is clear (when last inspected) when you are planning a walk.

To gain access to the database email Mel Bale ***mbpnfs@gmail.com*** to request a username and password.



A Tale About Crich Footpath 42

Ken Brockway, PNFS Member

While trawling the web, Ken found an interesting article about the creation of Crich footpath 42, from Crich Carr to Whatstandwell station. From the meeting minutes of Crich Parish Council May 1895: 'the acceptance of Revd Acraman's offer of four feet of land across his field to provide a footpath to Whatstandwell Station and the best thanks of this Council., to be given to Mr. Acraman for his generous gift to the Parish'. The land referred to lies on the present track of the path. However, the path (sic!) to completion of this right of way did not run true. There were many twists and turns along the way, including opposition from the railway company involved, the disqualification of the Revd Acraman from the Council as he had been 'convicted either on indictment or summarily of a crime', and the recognition that the land was not the Revd Acraman's to donate.

You can read the full story at: <http://www.crichparish.co.uk/webpages/footbridge.html>.

As an ex-parish council clerk, Ken is not surprised that the project was rather protracted, but they didn't give up and today we can still use Crich footpath 42 from Crich Carr to Whatstandwell station. The picture shows the path crossing the canal bridge, looking towards Crich Carr.



Railway crossing victory

Rhoda Barnett, Courts & Inquiries Officer



Do you go walking in Derby? Almost certainly not, but there are many public rights of way within the Derby City area which are well used by local people to get to shops, work, bus stops and other facilities. The public has the right to use public paths in urban areas just as they do in the countryside, and the Society's remit to protect public rights applies equally to both areas.

Megaloughton Lane is a highway which crosses the main Derby to London railway line east of the city centre by means of a pedestrian level crossing. Vehicular rights over the crossing were removed in 1967, making the lane a cul-de-sac for vehicles. The lane links suburban housing to the north of the railway to light industrial areas to the south, and before it was closed by means of a temporary legal order, according to surveys undertaken by Network Rail, it was fairly well used by walkers and cyclists. Network Rail has a national programme to close such level crossings, so that the speed of trains can be increased, and on safety grounds. There is specific legalisation available for this purpose, but to use it, it is necessary to have evidence that the crossing is unsafe for users. In the case of Megaloughton Lane, there is good visibility along the railway in both directions and there is no record of any accidents.

Network Rail therefore chose to apply to the City Council for the normal order to stop up a highway under s118 Highways Act 1980, on the grounds that the crossing is not needed for public use, as there are suitable alternative routes. The City Council made the order as requested, and five objections to it were received, including one from the Society. The council therefore sent the order to the Secretary of State to decide whether or not it should be confirmed. At the confirmation stage, the question of the likely future use of the path if it were not closed is relevant, and other factors, such as, in this case, the socio-economic benefits of increasing the speed of trains so reducing journey times, can be taken into consideration. The Inspector appointed to determine the order agreed with the Society that the route would continue to be used by walkers and cyclists, since the alternatives were close to busy roads and involved the use of steep flights of steps or a vehicular level crossing. He was not persuaded that Network Rail's contention that closure of the crossing would contribute 6 seconds to the desired overall reduction of 8 minutes in the journey time from Sheffield to London outweighed the primary consideration of the continued use of the route if the crossing were not closed. The order was not confirmed. A victory for common sense.

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**The PNFS AGM is on Saturday 14th April 2018, starting at 11:00
At the Britannia Hotel, Dialstone Lane, Offerton, Stockport**

Buses: 383 from Stockport; 384 from Marple station;
192 runs frequently along the nearby A6

For further details, go to:

<http://www.peakandnorthern.org.uk/members/meetings.htm>

And finally...



"A couple of weeks ago I received a call at home from a member asking if there had been any progress on making good an unsafe stile that she had reported to the society some time ago.

Somewhat to my embarrassment I realised that it was still on my 'to check list', but I promised to follow it up. The next day I checked the problem stile, which was certainly dangerous, as were two others! I also had a close shave on a slippery path between two houses on the same route.

I reported all four problems to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) that day, offering photographs. I was pleasantly surprised to receive a reply next morning asking for the photos. A few days later another email arrived telling me that the ranger had made the stiles safe and that the estate owner of the two houses had agreed to fit a handrail on one of the walls alongside the slippery path. Within less than a week all four problems had been resolved.

Well done BMBC!"

**Mel Bale,
 Membership Secretary and Webmaster**

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The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the Society