

# SIGNPOST

Magazine of the  
Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Number 65 - Autumn 2020



Cumberland Valley, Wildboarclough

*Photograph by Les Gradwell*



It is encouraging that an initiative by Trustee, Jenny Allen to advertise volunteering opportunities for PNFS on the website [do.it.org](http://do.it.org) proved to be remarkably successful. In August we appointed eleven new inspectors, nine of which had volunteered via this website. This approach has enabled the Society to connect with younger walkers and recruit volunteers in areas where we have been under-represented.

One of our new footpath inspectors is an 18 year old student and scout from Chester, and he has already made a good start monitoring paths in some parishes south of this city. Cheshire West is one area where we now have much greater coverage by inspectors (see the article about Linda Smith in this issue). Another area where we are now better represented is Rossendale with three new inspectors. This an authority with an enormous number of footpaths. Rawtenstall has 380 rights of way, Haslingden 373, and Bacup 662! Our new inspectors will not be able to walk all these paths, but they will make a good start.

However, we know that Highway Authorities are struggling to cope after the Covid-19 shutdown. One of our Lancashire inspectors received the following email from the PROW team at Lancashire County Council after submitting a report: *Thank you for your email. The information provided is greatly appreciated. The reports you submitted that were not previously recorded have been added to the PROW Database, but please be aware we have a backlog of over 350 acknowledgements to send out to customers, so please be patient*

*and we rest assured these issues will be dealt with, but we are unable give a timescale as to when. Could you please just carry on as normal at this moment in time.* The message we are getting from all authorities is that budgets are tight, staffing has been cut and the backlogs are lengthening.

PNFS has a mission to preserve and protect rights of way across our region. Our rights to walk in the countryside are narrowly prescribed and limited. Robert MacFarlane describes the footpath network as a 'labyrinth of liberty' but that liberty is restricted to a narrow strip of land no more than a metre or two wide. A right to roam only exists in about 8% of the countryside in England. Scotland has more generous Right to Roam legislation. All of us at one time will have strayed away from where we have a right to be, but the consequences are normally not serious.

These limited rights are under threat by the government's proposal to criminalise trespass. Although intended to enable landowners to take action against raves and squatters, there is a real risk that all of us could find ourselves subject to criminal action by landowners who want to deter walkers from their land.

Covid-19 has touched us all in a way that no one could have imagined a year ago. Our lives and daily routines have been turned upside down. Someone asked me today if there were any positives to be taken from the crisis. When the Lockdown was announced two young families on our lane immediately contacted all their neighbours and offered help with shopping and whatever else they might need. Their kindness showed that we did after all live in a community.

The fact that many people have been confined at home has encouraged them to walk more and has even led to a boom in cycling. PNFS has seen a surge in new members. Most people we meet whilst out walking are still reassuringly maintaining social distancing. Strangers stop and share their thoughts. Let's hope that out of the darkness of the pandemic this renewed sense of community will be maintained and help us all through the uncertain times that lie ahead.  
*Mel Bale and David Gosling, Trustees*

## Editorial

I was so delighted when the lockdown eased that I was able to complete my 31st parish in the Ribble Valley and also get straight with my list of signposts to check. Judging from the contributions in this issue, it is clear that many members have been busy doing their bit to protect our vital public rights of way during this difficult time.

Happy reading.

*Shirley M Addy, BA, Editor and Footpath Inspector*

## AGM and Walks Programme

The Trustees have decided that the AGM planned for Saturday, 17 October 2020 will be held online. Further details will be posted on the website and emailed to members as soon as they become available.

The walks programme remains suspended until further notice.

For any updates see website.

## Now it is burned out vehicles



Lockdown has seen my partner and I exploring more local paths and green spaces. Council owned Buck Wood on the slopes of the Gleadless Valley in Sheffield is classed as ancient woodland by ecologists. However, it is close to a large housing estate and even before the pandemic had problems of antisocial behaviour and flytipping. Now it is burned out vehicles. An email to the Head of Parks and Countryside brought forth a promise of removal. South Yorkshire Police are also involved trying to combat illegal off road



activity. The burned out car in the photo appeared on BBC Look North 6 o'clock news recently in a piece about the Police Off Road Motorbike Unit.

*John Harker, Area Officer Sheffield*

## Reflections Magazine

In the August 2020 issue of *Reflections*, which is a Derbyshire lifestyle magazine, there was a three page article about the PNFS. Written by Steve Brown, it describes the Society's origins, work in protecting our public rights of way, and its green footpath signs. It can be viewed on <http://pnfs.org.uk/non-pnfs-documents/ReflectionsPNFSArticle.pdf>. Thanks go to Rhoda Barnett for drawing our attention to this article.

# The Society as a Statutory Consultee

On our website we state that “Local Authorities in the region are required by law to inform us about proposals diverting or closing rights of way”. We are listed in the appropriate regulations governing public path orders in the counties of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire.

The period of notice of the order is a minimum of 28 days. The vast majority of proposals to divert or extinguish paths arise from either applications under the Highways Act 1980 or the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The former category includes applications made by local residents, farmers or businesses or by the council itself. Reasons for seeking a change are many and varied and may include seeking to increase privacy, to make agricultural operations more efficient or to resolve an intractable enforcement issue, eg where a path has been built over several years ago or to avoid a difficult and expensive maintenance problem.

Most councils operate a system of preliminary consultation in accordance with the practice guidance note 4 published by the Rights of Way Review Committee (a body including representatives of national walking and riding organisations and public rights of way officers and politicians). This means that the Society is sent a draft of the proposals including a statement of the reasons for the order being sought, a map and description of the revised route setting out widths, surfaces and path furniture. The proposal will then be considered by the assessors in Taylor House or an Area Officer. It is often very helpful for there to be a site inspection by a local inspector or other volunteer. In most cases amendments will be made to alleviate any concerns, eg improvements to avoid a drainage problem or change of route to reduce a gradient. If no compromise can be reached the case is referred to a Courts and Inquiries Officer to consider if there are legal grounds for an objection. We can then, if necessary, object within the 28 day period when we receive the path order as a statutory consultee. The Council will then refer the order to the Planning Inspectorate who will resolve the matter after written representations, a hearing or a public inquiry. In my experience these procedures are operated in a fair and impartial manner and we have a reasonable opportunity to raise matters of concern.

The position with regard to proposed diversions and extinguishments under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to allow development is much less satisfactory. By the time we are formally consulted and sent a copy of the order the layout of the development will have been agreed by the developer and the planning officer so it will be difficult to secure changes to provide a more satisfactory route for walkers. In addition we have lost an opportunity to make suggestions for improvement of paths in the vicinity of the development and for the creation of links to other paths and safe routes to local amenities such as village centres. There is no statement of the reasons for the order. The order is couched in dense legalese and difficult to follow. That would not matter so much if there had been an earlier step in the consultation process conducted in non-technical language but there is often no such stage.

DEFRA Rights of Way Circular 1/09 Guidance for Local Authorities puts it well. It is likely to be to the benefit of the planning authority, highway authority and the developer to be aware of the impact on a development scheme on the local rights of way network as early as possible in the process (this might be at the pre-application stage). Any potential disadvantages to the public arising from alternative arrangements proposed for an affected right of way can be minimised by means of early liaison between the developer, planning and highway authorities, local amenity groups and prescribed organisations (that's us!).

All planning applications which affect a public right of way have to be advertised on site and in a local newspaper under Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) Procedure order 2015. A good way forward would be for every planning authority to send us a copy of the notices which will appear in the press so we can look at the planning application and the associate documents on line. The application form will tell us whether a diversion is anticipated. The site plan will show us the layout of the development. Unfortunately there is no longer a requirement to show the line of any public right of way within or adjacent the proposed development, an unhelpful change in the law. Whilst the Society can object to the final order in the 28 day consultation period the legal criteria for the order is narrow, ie that the order is “necessary to enable the development” giving us a limited area for argument as by this time the planning permission will have been granted. However our objection will hold up the development so we can use this as a weapon to negotiate a solution which better protects the interests of walkers.

The Council may be resistant to sending out copies of Article 15 notices, eg Cheshire and Tameside. Not Kirklees and Derbyshire however! A viable alternative may be to look on line at the public notices in the local press, eg Tameside Council use the Tameside Reporter and the Stockport Express. All councils publish a complete list of planning applications online but that is of no help to us as it does not indicate which are subject to an Article 15 notice. Trying to work out which applications are in this category would be a herculean task. Hopefully a public rights of way officer will look at these applications and raise concerns with the planning officer. The main fear is the path being built over or used for vehicular access or that the possibility for improvement of the paths at the expense of the developer is being missed. However I fear this is a counsel of perfection in the present climate of continuing austerity. At this point I want to cheer Bolton who provide a good model. Proposals for path orders are discussed at PROW liaison meetings and representative of users groups given an opportunity to inspect the site and comment of the proposals before it enters the formal procedure.

I would very much like to see the Society monitoring planning applications and playing an active role to safeguard walkers interests. This would be despite not because of the government’s approach to consultation. We also need to develop some policies setting out what we regard as good practice in the area of consultation.

*Terry Norris, Consultations Manager at Taylor House*

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor, A couple of comments on *Signpost* No 64. Firstly, regarding Parish Notes, as well as the booklets by Professor Brian Robinson, he also originally produced an excellent hardback book *Walls Across the Valley - The Building of the Howden and Derwent Dams*, 1993, Scarthin Books, Cromford. Secondly, in *Signpost Synergy*, the writer suggests taking up the challenge of walking routes visiting multiple signposts in a day. I marked up my Dark and White Peak Maps some years ago and sometimes use them as a theme for the day. As examples of two of the higher counts, in October 2015 in the New Mills/Mellor area were 25 signs. (I even had one chap take a photo of my map that day.) In July 2017 in the Hayfield/Rowarth area, for a bit of variety, I counted 10 signs, 3 plaques, 2 bridges and 1 fingerpost. It certainly gets you to different areas and keeps the micronavigation up to par!

*Gordon Richards, Nottingham Rock & Heather Club*

# Quiz Part 2

by Ken Brockway

Do you know the parish of these public rights of way? To help you, the names of the relevant Highways Authorities are: FP14: Lancashire, FP37, 38 and 41: West Lancashire, FP66: Cheshire East, noticeboard: Merseyside, FP42: Derbyshire, FP58: Bradford. Answers in next issue.



## Answers to Quiz Part 1 in issue 64

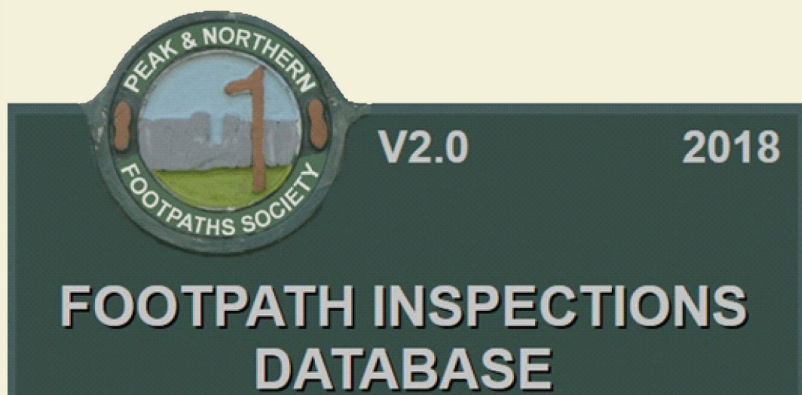
FP211: Sheffield, Tinsley locks; FP130: Lancashire, Rossendale, Irwell Vale Ramsbottom; FP3: Cheshire West, Bridge 26 Llangollen canal Tushingham cum Grindley; BW64: Staffordshire, Essex Bridge Great Haywood Colwich; FP169: Kirklees, Castle Hill Almonbury Huddersfield FP169

# Membership and FID Update

*Dear Member,*

I would like to thank the many members and organisations who have already responded to the membership renewal reminders that were sent out with the Summer issue of *Signpost*. It is really heart-warming to know how much people value and want to support the society especially during what continues to be a very difficult time for all of us.

It has never been easier to renew your membership. This can now be done online via PayPal or Credit/Debit card, just go to [www.pnfs.org.uk/membership](http://www.pnfs.org.uk/membership) and follow the instructions. You can also pay by Bank Transfer; the society's bank account number is 65821800 and the sort code is 08-92-99. There are new editable PDFs that can be downloaded from the link above. These can be filled in on your computer without the need to print them and you just email them back to me at [membership@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:membership@pnfs.org.uk) if you want to pay by Direct Debit. Of course you can still pay by cheque, just post your cheque to me at the address on the website along with your name, post code and membership number if you know it. If you have yet to renew your membership, please consider doing so as soon as possible. Any problems, just email me at [membership@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:membership@pnfs.org.uk).



Finally, I would just like to remind members about the society's Footpath Inspection Database (FID). This is a website that shows the PROW network across the Highway Authorities that PNFS covers and details of inspections carried out and problems encountered. Special thanks to Liverpool Council who have recently shared their digital PROW data with us. This means that we now have coverage of ALL 'our' Highway Authorities. If anyone would like access to the FID, please just email me and I will arrange it.

*Mel Bale, Membership Secretary, Webmaster and Trustee*



## Cross-Country Water

*How some water heading for the Mersey and the Irish Sea used to end up in the Trent and the North Sea - and all by gravity.*

PNFS members - by virtue of where most of us live and enjoy our walking - are only too familiar with the concept of a watershed. Sometimes the point of inflection is clear - maybe high in the Pennines when you suddenly realise

that everything to your left drains to the Irish Sea, everything to your right to the North Sea. Sometimes though, it's far from clear that you're at such a point. For example, Black Moss Reservoir on the Pennine Way above Marsden lies in relatively flat, featureless terrain, and it's only when you note it has dams at both its western and eastern end that you realise it straddles the watershed. Well to the south of these examples, in 'my' parish of Heaton, and the adjoining parish of Rushton, is a piece of industrial archaeology that's gradually being reclaimed by nature. It's worth a visit if you're nearby.

The reservoir at Rudyard Lake was created in the late eighteenth century to provide water for the Caldon Canal - a branch of the Trent and Mersey Canal. The two canals join at Etruria, part of the Stoke-on-Trent conurbation. Canal operators were always anxious about securing sufficient volumes of water. At some stage, not content with the natural flows into Rudyard, thoughts turned to the considerable volumes flowing in the River Dane just to the north. There was just one problem - the Dane flows north-westwards, to meet the Weaver at Northwich. For the scheme to work, water had to be got across the watershed between the Dane (and ultimately the Mersey) and the Churnet (and ultimately the Trent) - a point in the village of Rushton Spencer.

An elegant solution was devised. In the hilly ground behind Rushton Spencer, about one kilometre downstream from Danebridge, an intake was constructed at a weir on the Dane near Gig Hall (SJ955642). Water abstracted at that point then flowed along a man-made conduit, approximately five kilometres long, passing to the east of, and slightly above Rushton Spencer, and eventually reaching Rudyard Lake. The elevation of the intake (~ 165 m OD) on the upper part of the Dane, and the very modest fall along the length of the conduit, allowed the water to be taken over the watershed (~ 159 m OD) without resorting to tunnels or lengthy culverts. The conduit is now disused, and only part is in water. Nature is gradually taking over, but the alignment is clear and much of the route can be walked along the 'towpath' - but note that sections can be very muddy in winter. The Dane Valley Way and the Gritstone Trail both take advantage of the route in places - but it's rare for the path to be busy.



Of course, conduits intercepting headwaters to take water to another valley aren't that unusual in the Pennines. For example, there are extensive networks above both Littleborough and Ripponden, but typically these are within a single river basin. What appeals to me about the Rushton Spencer conduit is that as you walk in attractive countryside alongside a modest waterway, it gradually dawns on you that in theory at least, its impact was far more than might be appreciated - taking water from the west and sending it to the east. Come and see for yourself next time you're in the area!

*David Gartside, Footpath Inspector*

# Willington Ferry Road

Two villages in South Derbyshire standing on opposite banks of the River Trent have their own claim to fame. Willington on the north bank had two power stations, both demolished by 2000 but retains the landmark of five cooling towers. Repton on the south bank, the former capital of Mercia is now a small pleasant village dominated by the independent co-educational boarding school of that name.

Since 7 August 1839 a bridge has linked the two settlements, but travellers were able to cross the Trent here well before that. The Repton Enclosure Award of 1769 laid out *“ONE other Publick Cart Carriage and Drift Road called Willington Ferry Road”*. The first edition Ordnance Survey map sheet 71 of 1836 shows this ferry road and a second road downstream which led to a separate ford, the roads are now recorded as Repton BW 42 which would continue in Willington as BW11 to meet Ford Lane.

Ferry Lane at Repton is not recorded but in 2012 the Parish Council submitted a DMMO application to have it added to the definitive map as a footpath. The application was solely on the basis of user evidence which was disputed by a landowner and when investigated by DCC found to be lacking as many claimed users had climbed a locked gate. At a committee meeting in 2015 application 03858 was rejected “due to insufficient evidence”.

Royal Assent for the bridge was given on 21st August 1835, this empowered the Bridge Trustees to stop up the ford and the roads leading to it but as the Definitive Map now shows the route still exists as a bridleway. On the day of the bridge opening the Trustees held a meeting at the Mitre Inn in Repton. In the morning they *“Resolved - That an order be signed to the present (illegible) of the Ferry to assist in removing the Ferry and Boat now (illegible) in the river near to the Ferry House in order that the same money be secured for the benefit of the Trustees and to prevent the same being used in fraud of the tolls of the bridge”*.

The meeting was then adjourned for the bridge opening ceremony and perhaps lunch being reconvened at 2.30. The Trustees followed the wording of the Act to stop up the ford, *“the banks of the said River Trent sloped and proper Fences fixed against the same for the purpose of preventing the said Ford being used”*.

In 2020 Peak and Northern Footpaths Society submitted a DMMO application reference 04444 to have Ferry Lane added as a footpath. This time historical evidence was used as summarised above. The decision may hinge on the following requirement of the Act for which no evidence of compliance has been found.

*Provided nevertheless, That no such road shall be discontinued, stopped up, diverted, turned or altered, without the concurrence and order of two justices of the peace for the said county of Derby not interested in the premises, such order to be made upon and after such notice, and subject to such appeal as is required and directed in and by an Act passed in the fifty-fifth year of the reign of His late Majesty King George the third, intituled “An Act to amend an Act of the thirteenth year of his present Majesty for the amendment and preservation of the public highway in so far as the same relates to notice of appeal against turning or diverting a public highway, and to extend the provisions of the same Act to the stopping up of unnecessary roads.”*

Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector

# Inspector Spotlight: Linda Smith

In this new series we will be focusing on some of the 125 hard working volunteers who are Footpath Inspectors. These are the unsung heroes of PNFS's work who deserve to be better known and appreciated, and in these articles we will have the chance to meet a few of them.

Linda Smith is one of a new generation of footpath inspectors monitoring paths in areas where previously PNFS was under-represented, such as Cheshire West and Chester. She was appointed last November to inspect paths in three parishes in the beautiful Cheshire countryside, **Kingsley** (near Frodsham), **Delamere** (a very popular walking area) and **Utkinton**, a small rural parish. In nine months, Linda has done extremely well, despite a very wet winter, to inspect almost all of the 76 rights of way in these parishes and is ready to take on another.

Linda had always been a keen walker all over this country and abroad. As she says, 'Walking is a hobby that satisfies my keen interest in the natural environment, keeps me fit, provides mental relaxation and has brought me many friends (and a husband!)'. She is a confident map reader and happy to walk in a group or on her own. Like a lot of inspectors, it was one of our signposts that brought PNFS to her attention. In her case it was a new signpost (No 596) which was installed on the Sandstone Trail at Abraham's Leap, Dunsdale Hollow, near Frodsham in Cheshire. She did some research on our website and 'was impressed with the breadth of PNFS activities.'

The role of the Footpath Inspector appealed to her, as she explains: "The UK has an amazing network of public footpaths, from which I have gained enormous benefit over the years. Although I have been frustrated by footpath faults in the past, I've never really given much thought to how these could be rectified. When I retired last year (I was an Environmental Manager with a large construction company) I was keen to take on voluntary work in an environmental context and the work of PNFS appeared to be a good fit."

Linda found that her three parishes had 18 faults that needed to be reported to Cheshire West and Chester Council: 10 were problems with 'footpath furniture', 6 were paths that were obstructed, 1 as a path in poor condition and 1 needed waymarking. All her reports can be found on the Footpath Inspections Database. Fortunately, she has found that the Public Rights of Way Officer in Chester has been very receptive to the issues raised. So far five have been resolved and the PROW Officer keeps her updated with the plan for dealing with the remaining items, which are either non-urgent or need complex management. She says, "It gives me a great sense of achievement when I see a new stile that appeared as a direct result of my PNFS work!" When necessary she is not afraid to do some 'serious gardening' to cut back overgrowing vegetation.

Linda attended a PNFS training session which has given her confidence to recognise and report faults, while she has also appreciated support from Jenny Allen, Area Officer for



Cheshire West. An informal get-together for a few local Cheshire inspectors which Jenny organised was, as Linda says, 'a good way to share experiences and get advice'. Linda also helped at a Volunteers Fair at Manchester University where we would have recruited some student Path Checkers, if the Covid-19 lockdown had not closed everything down. She is convinced that there is more PNFS can do to recruit student volunteers in the future through the student societies in the fifteen universities (and many colleges) in the PNFS region.

Linda has demonstrated that with a background in walking, plenty of enthusiasm and commitment, footpath inspection can be a rewarding hobby - and one that gets results which benefit all walkers.

If you would like to become a Footpath Inspector for PNFS contact me at [inspection@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:inspection@pnfs.org.uk) or ring 07841647275.

David Gosling, Footpath Inspection Co-ordinator



## Chapel-en-le-Frith FP108

I took on Chapel-en-le-Frith parish in 2009. Its bridge was in a poor condition on my first inspection in 2010. This was duly reported to Derbyshire Council County and has been several times since. In spring of 2017 I reported to DCC that the bridge was now getting dangerous when the timbers were wet. As anyone will vouch, soles on boots in these conditions are a hazard as such. The results of this was that DCC inspected the bridge and closed the footpath for thirty metres either side of the footbridge for a period of two years. I did make the occasional visit to the footbridge in the meantime. Keith Seddon who has over the years spoken to me with regards of the condition of this footbridge reported back to PNFS that the footbridge had been replaced. It had been on my schedule to revisit the footbridge this spring but due to the Covid 19 issue and restricted exercise time I had to put it off. That said, I got to the footbridge and was pleased with the results. Such is the bridge it looks as though it will last many years.

It is thanks to people like Keith that they can help the inspectors with their work. In my case I have over 360 rights of way to inspect over three parishes. This is only one of four footbridges and one long boardwalk that I have help to get replaced over the years and it makes the work that goes into the end results all the more worthwhile.

I am sure other inspectors feel the same way.

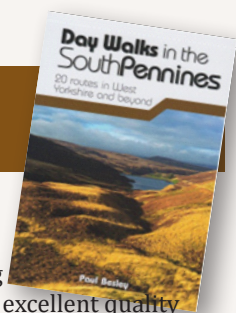
*Tony Brackenbury, Footpath Inspector for Chapel-en-le-Frith, Chinley and Buxworth, and Peak Forest*





# Book Review: Day Walks in the South Pennines

*Day Walks in the South Pennines: 20 routes in West Yorkshire and beyond*  
by Paul Besley, published by Vertebrate Publishing



Paul Besley's latest book is a very welcome addition to the ever-growing range of walking titles on our bookshelves. In part, this is because of its excellent quality but also that it covers areas that are relatively new to us as walkers and probably to many of our readers as well. The author has drawn on his love of landscape and the interaction of humans with it to create a series of walks that will appeal to a broad group of walkers. Alison, his wife, and his Mountain Rescue Search Dog Scout accompanied him on many of the walks. It's also great to see that PNFS also gets a mention in the acknowledgements.

The distances covered range from 4.8 to 17.8 miles, over half of which are under 10 miles. All but one of the walks has a common start and endpoint. The exception is the final walk, from Hebden Bridge to Marsden. They certainly take you to places that are well off the beaten track! A standard format is used throughout. There is a route description that provides an historic and cultural background to the area. This is particularly useful, pointing out places of particular interest to look out for. This is followed by one of the author's photographs and an OS map of the area. The paths to be followed are highlighted with a transparent band of green which ensures that any underlying detail is not obscured. Finally, there are the directions. These are clear and easy to follow and is linked to red route markers shown on the map.



*Scout caving in Pule Hill*

One word of caution though, many of the routes are across open moorland which can be hard work at the best of times and very challenging when the cloud comes down or in bad weather. Don't just rely on the book, always take a compass!

The publishers, Vertebrate Publishing are based in Sheffield. They are well known for their series of Day Walk books as well as a growing catalogue of other outdoor-related titles. Copies of the book can be ordered from their website [www.v-publishing.co.uk](http://www.v-publishing.co.uk) and also should be available from most good outdoor shops. Small businesses always need our support but never more so than during the present crisis. I can't recommend this book highly enough. It is worth the cover price alone for the maps. These are a delight, showing not just the detail of these intriguing and demanding landscapes but also the wonderful richness the names of the places and features within them. The author's notes and directions really bring the routes to life and just make you want to get out there and explore them. What more could you want from a walking guide?

Paul graduated from Sheffield Hallam University in July with a 1st Class Honours BA degree in Creative Writing and has already been commissioned to write a couple of novels. He also a regular contributor to Trail magazine and looks to have a flourishing future as a writer ahead of him. You can find examples of his more personal style of writing at <https://paulbesley.blog/>.

*Mel Bale, Membership Secretary, Webmaster and Trustee*

# Fault Reports Path Checkers and Other PNFS Members

Peak and Northern is a charity which aims to protect and improve public access on rights of way. A key part of what we do is to monitor rights of way and lobby highway authorities to remove obstructions, ensure stiles and gates are in good condition, maintain signposts and so on. Currently, we have appointed 125 footpath inspectors to carry out this job in their areas across the PNFS region.

At the beginning of this year we launched the Path Checkers scheme. The idea was to appeal to people who are keen to help Peak and Northern monitor rights of way, but who do not want to commit to being an inspector for a particular area. So how is this scheme going? Up to August 2020, 33 people have registered to be a Path Checker, which is an excellent start. Of these volunteers, 16 have sent in a total of 22 fault reports. In this period, we have recorded a total of 83 reports since 1 January 2020. By way of comparison, in the previous six months 47 fault reports were received from the society members and from other walkers. We can see that there has been an increase and the Path Checkers scheme has contributed to this increase. However, there may be other reasons why there has been an increase. At the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown there was a sudden upsurge in the numbers of people using rights of way many of whom were people who were not normally walkers but individuals and families using paths for the first time in their locality. Walking from home became a new national past-time. The importance of the Society's mission for public health, mental and physical, was underlined as never before.



*Example of an illegal footpath closure sign at the start of the COVID-19 lockdown (Glossop 4).*

There was a downside to this influx of new users of rights of way. Many were unaware of the exact line of the path or were deliberately straying from it. Some landowners with a right of way on their land, especially those who had one or more people classed as 'vulnerable' living close to a right of way, panicked. There were numerous examples of landowners attempting to illegally close paths and bridleways and this contributed in part to the increase in reported problems.

PNFS were sympathetic to the plight of vulnerable people, and we did not contest agreed diversions where this was feasible, but we did object to illegal closures. Highway Authority PROW officers were kept busy advising landowners that could not simply close a public right of way. During this period, most authorities posted advisory notices suggesting alternative routes. The Society is monitoring these notices carefully to make sure they do not become permanent features.

There have been some notable successes in this period. We had two separate reports of a footbridge that had become a hazard in the delightfully named Sunnydale near East Morton. We do not have an inspector in Keighley, so reports from the public are an important source of information about the path network. In this case the Authority, Bradford, reacted very quickly to do some temporary repairs to the bridge, which is now on their list to be renewed. In another case a report from a walker alerted the Society to a new fence that had been erected across footpath 98 in Longendale, Tameside. Our inspector,

Paul Easthope had inspected this path just a year ago in May 2019, so the report of the new fence was very useful. After some continued pressure on Tameside, the PROW Officer is now promising to take action against the landowner.

We received three reports from the public relating to the footpath that passes in front of Jenny Brown's cottages, which was finally opened last year after the Society had fought a twenty year battle. The reports all referred to notices deterring walkers from using the path due to a resident being classed as vulnerable to COVID-19. Naturally, we were suspicious of the motivation behind posting these notices. We reported the matter to David Goode, Senior Rights of Way Officer at Lancashire County Council, and he advised us that indeed a resident was self-isolating and that advisory notices were justified. However, we will be making sure that the notices are removed as soon as possible.

These examples show the important contribution that reports from Path Checkers, PNFS members and other walkers make to achieving our charitable aims. All reports are recorded and sent to the relevant inspector or Officer. Thank you to John Fisher who is now the volunteer undertaking this task. I plan to maintain regular contact with Path Checkers, and also to recruit more from students, scouts, and running and walking groups over the next year.

*David Gosling, Footpath Inspection Co-ordinator*



*Illegal COVID-19 sign at Jenny Brown's cottages*



## Tallest Ladder Stile Ever?

During a recent inspection of the PROWs in West Bradford, Ribble Valley, I came across what may be the tallest ladder stile ever made. In Drakehouse Wood at SD73956 45379, it is at least 11 feet high and obstructs the path. Evidently it was built over a high wire fence - a ludicrous solution if the fence already existed when the stile was fitted and could have been removed as an obstruction. The path is narrow with a steep slope on one side and a high slope on the other. However, the fence has been snipped at one side of the ladder so walkers can walk through the fence and round the ladder without the unpleasant and dangerous prospect of climbing such a lofty ladder.

*Shirley M Addy,  
Editor and Footpath Inspector*

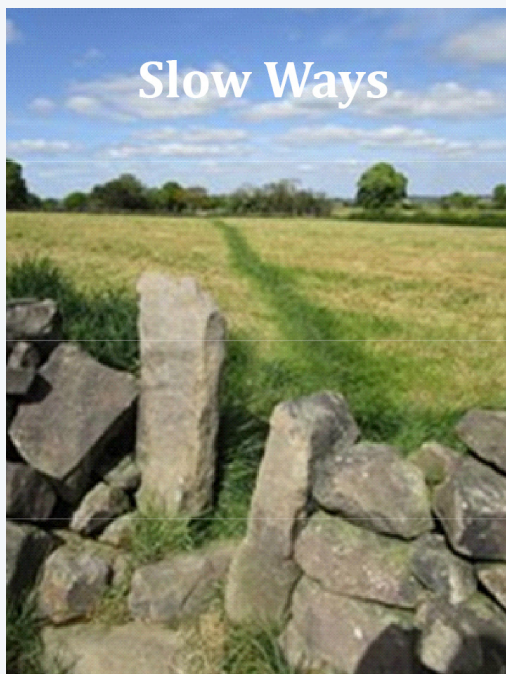


**Slow Ways** - a project to create a national network of footpaths linking places of interest and where we live. Well, that's my definition and you may quickly reply that we already have such a network, but do we? Choose two points, say Stockport station and New Mills Torr Top then plan a walking route between the two. Make it as off road and pleasant as possible but also direct. First stop Ordnance Survey maps and the rights of way network. Now we all know this is not a stand alone network, it relies at times on roads so are the roads safe to walk along? Google Street View can help here, is there a footway or pavement?

In urban areas our definitive paths let us down. Many cut-throughs are not recorded but are adopted highways so how do we find these? Are there any permissive paths we could use? How do we find these without a site visit? One source can sometimes help. Google fails to record most walking routes on its maps. OpenStreetmaps (OSM) is an international, crowd-sourced project to create a free map of the world – since 2004, thousands of volunteers have input data about roads, railways, rivers and yes, footpaths. They have mapped 35,000-plus paths, official or informal paths worldwide, including around 1,500 in the UK. Anyone can add a path at any time. Some of the footpaths shown on OSM replicate OS and the definitive map but they also show what I discovered are called 'desire paths'. Paths created by users for a purpose, be it a short cut, a dog walking route or in recent times a parallel path to accommodate social distancing. With regular use these desire paths can quickly become established then we may see action by the powers that be. Steps may be taken to either prevent use with barriers or accept the path and provide an improved surface.

OSM maps the world as it is and how it's used by various other companies, meaning that keen gamers have noticed that paths which aren't visible on Google Maps show up in the augmented reality app Pokémon Go. Report a fault on the Derbyshire website and a map allows you to pin point the fault location, of the base maps options, one is OpenStreetMap. Photograph is on the map but just shows how quickly a path can be established with use. For more information go to the following websites: <https://ravenellison.com/portfolio/slow-ways/> and <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/lifestyle/other/paths-of-desire/ar-BB15swwo?ocid=spartan-dhp-feeds>.

I have been helping to create slow ways. The routes planned in lockdown will soon need testing so I asked the man behind the project, Daniel Raven-Ellison, for more information.



### **What are Slow Ways?**

Slow ways are a network of 7,000 walking routes that connect about 2,500 towns, cities and principal destinations across Great Britain. The principle behind the slow ways is that we should be able to walk enjoyably and safely between neighbouring settlements. While lots of people might use them for short journeys, I'm most inspired by the opportunity to combine



multiple slow ways for long distance journeys. By linking populated places the slow ways not only go between the places where most people are, but also the places that most people want to get to and the places where there's a greater diversity of places to eat and sleep - I think they will help to make long distance walking more inviting and inclusive.

**You posted a request inviting people to volunteer to help. How many people have been involved so far?** The slow ways were mostly drafted during lockdown by a team of 700 volunteers across the country. Everyone signed up for some training on Zoom and then used OS maps and Google Sheets to create them all. In all the slow ways currently stretch for over 100,000 km which is roughly 2.5 laps of the equator.

**Can you estimate how many volunteer hours have gone into the project so far?** 10,000 would be a reasonable estimate. That's over a year of continuous volunteering.

**You now have routes that link to meeting points. What is the next step?** We've drafted a network of routes and we've got a team developing a website to host them all.

**When the website is launched will it be like using a TomTom or Google directions?** There will not be step by step instructions like TomTom provides when you are driving. We are working towards people being able to search how to get between places. The plan is that you'll be able to search for the best way to get between any town and city using the slow ways. The mapping will show you the routes created by the volunteers and you'll be able to download the routes to explore them. That way, say you wanted to get from Swansea to Huddersfield, the slow ways will give you a route and a route card, but not tell you to turn left after the next stile.

**When do you get to route testing and how can people volunteer?** This autumn we want to recruit 10,000 volunteers to walk and test all of the slow ways. We want to verify they work, rate them, tag them with information and make them better. We need all the help we can get and it will be lots of fun to collaborate on such a big mission. Anyone wanting to help should sign-up for updates on my website via [www.slowways.uk](http://www.slowways.uk). I can't wait!

Daniel says thank you so much to everyone who contributed to the last sprint of activity to make sure all the routes were connected to all the "meeting points". There were about 15,000 ends of routes to review. A relatively small group of people did an incredible amount of detailed work. Thank you. This effort created a snagging list of about 300 problems to deal with, some of them are quite complex. A small team is working through these issues at the moment. We are still working towards the website being ready for this autumn. We'll then be able to use it to browse, search, download, share and rate routes.

*Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector*

# Signpost Report

Up to May we had only managed to install one new signpost in 2020, ie 605 at Brown's Houses on Silverdale footpath 14. Covid 19, heatwaves, reimposed lockdowns, thunderstorms, etc haven't helped since, but we've certainly worked quite hard and made some progress as follows.



## New signposts since May:

**total now 534 (see [pnfs.org.uk/signposts](https://pnfs.org.uk/signposts) gallery for photos and grid refs.)**

June: 606 at Butterley Top Farm on Ashover FPs 133/134; our 13th in Ashover, starting in Sept.2017; 608 at Peak Forest Canal towpath on Disley FPs 45/66, donated by Disley Footpaths Society.

July: 609 at Longstone Edge on Great Longstone FPs 30/31 in memory of Colin Henson; 610 at Shutts Farm, Bakewell on Bakewell FPs 4/7 in memory of Geoff Errington; 611 at Bakestonedale on Pott Shrigley FP1 and BW 19 for John Goodman's 80th birthday

August: 594\* at Stydd Manor Farm, Ribchester on Dutton FPs 20/23/35; 598\* at Ashes Farm on Wilshire FPs 1-4 - see photo; 601\* and 602\* at Pain Hill Farm, Slaidburn are ready and will I hope be installed in August. \*suggested by Shirley Addy

## Maintenance

In periods of fine weather I've been busy inspecting, cleaning, wedging posts and plates and painting the polychrome badge/logo/crest on our older signs. I even managed in July to get to Baildon, Ilkley, East Morton, Oxenhope and Trawden near Colne after a three year gap.

It's also been a busy time for me retrieving fallen signs and checking on stolen or missing ones. Signs which have rotted and fallen are: S080, which has been repainted and remounted on a concrete stump on Whaley Lane; 429 (near Peak View Tearoom); 354 (Weaver Hills, SE of Waterhouses) which will also go concrete stumps; 222 at Dam Farm, Peak Forest will go on a wood stump; 142 NNW of Shutlingsloe is ready and 286 at Turton Heights just needs re-posting. S299 in Tom Wood has already been reposted by John and Jeremy (see below). The farmer kindly reinstated S270 on Taxal Edge.

In late April S273, a simple post without a plate, was reported missing from Prestbury Lane. I phoned Cheshire East PROW then searched in early May. It has been replaced by the HA with a new fingerpost so with their consent I have attached a new memorial plaque and JUP to it to save money and clutter.

On next page are before and after photos of S014 to highlight the value of my signpost inspection. It bears the date 1905. It is in excellent condition, following refurbishment in 2003. You can still see the 4 pin-heads used to hold each moveable letter in place on the pattern and the stops look like asterisks. I think it is very high quality cast iron, which has subsequently been shot-blasted and powder-coated. It's now lost its shine, but considering its next to a road that is salted most winters, it looks remarkable.

I also repaired S021 at Edale, which had fallen over and was reported by Jim Bosworth. I made a temporary repair with some timber I took, but the landowner, Tony Favell, a former MP for Stockport (1983-1992), says he will fix it properly with his son next week, along with the stile and drystone wall. I'm glad I invited Tony to the unveiling of S500 in late 2015, at Highfield Farm near Upper Booth, Edale. He was chair of both the Edale PC and PDNPA.

S417 was stolen from Taxal Moor Road in June. The farmer thinks probably by "off-roaders". A new plate is on order and the MP to New Mills RR will be reordered.

Most recently I checked on S316 erected in March 2008 at Chew Reservoir, Greenfield, and decided to remove it from its post and get it shot-blasted. I returned with a car three days later, only to find the plate had been stolen. It will be replaced. Finally, 258 at Jumbles, Bolton, was reported missing by Shirley last week, but the UU Catchment Controller leads me to hope that he has it and the plate will be reusable, if not the post and plaques.



## Really Good News

Soon after I wrote the last report, two more volunteer signpost painters/helpers contacted me. We now have, in addition to **Shirley Addy**, **Ted Wolfe** and **Peter Ash**, not to mention **John Hodgson** our contractor and myself: **Steven Brown** of Disley, **Richard Honeywell** of Macclesfield, **Jeremy Jones** of Hyde and **Andrew McMullan** of Ramsbottom.

Ordering supplies of paint, thinner, etching primer, etc has now become my main concern. Jeremy has already helped John with S299 in Tom Wood. Ted has already helped John with S080, 606 and 611 and I am hoping in the next fortnight to deliver supplies to Andrew, then jointly repaint 279 and 260 west of Belmont and 201, 319 and 320 on Holcombe Moor above Ramsbottom, then collect 258 from Jumbles.

*David Morton, Signpost Officer*

# Parish Notes ~ Holme Valley

The Holme Valley lies on the edge of the Peak District National park in Kirklees, West Yorkshire. A network of some 229 public rights of way, many “white roads” and a good chunk of access land on the moors mean there are plenty of opportunities for some varied walking.



The valley runs roughly South to North. The River Holme’s tributaries pour off the peaty moors of Wessenden Head Moor and Holme Moss towards a network of steep stone walled fields, villages and the small market town of Holmfirth.

Most of the modern day parish is part of the historic Graveship of Holme which dates back over a thousand years. The Constable of the Graveship of Holme is a job dating back to these times and still in existence today. These days the constable oversees commoners’ rights at the last active community peat digging grounds at the head of the valley. It’s hard to escape the sense of history when walking many of Holmfirth’s paths and why would you want to? To walk in the footsteps of mill workers along cobbled paths, climb stone stiles built 200 years ago or wander lonely occupation roads gives a glimpse into past lives to inspire and set the imagination running.

One of the places to walk if visiting the area is Ramsden Clough, a spectacular steep sided moorland valley largely hidden from view. Locally it is known as “Monkey Nick” because of an old story of an escaped circus ape living up there in the 1850’s. It was

reported in the local paper in May 1852 that the ape was captured by a Mr Charles Crossley of Ramsden with the help of his dog! This is a great place to hear Cuckoos in spring and see Curlew and Golden Plover too. Walking the rights of way network in the valley unlocks a world of intimate landscape scenes which evolve with passing light and seasons. As a photographer I’ve found the simple act of walking to be the most important and inspiring photography tool. Regularly revisiting the same paths and walks has led to a deeper appreciation of their value and place in the wider landscape.



A real flavour of the Holme Valley can be tasted by walking a circuit of the River Ribble, a tributary of the Holme. Starting and finishing in Holmfirth the “Ribble Ramble” takes in a high loop of Cartworth Moor, Scholes Moor and Cliff, an extensive viewpoint above Holmfirth. The walk could be described as “Peak Yorkshire” and fittingly the River Ribble passes behind “The Nook” in Holmfirth where at the end of the ramble a pint or two of locally brewed Nook Ale can be enjoyed.

Although many paths in the valley have suffered some degree of neglect since 2010 and austerity the work of Peak & Northern in the area is having an impact with many new path signs, obstructions removed and improvement works undertaken recently. One walk benefiting from our work is the Hepworth Bluebell Walk. Here four timber

bridges previously funded by Peak & Northern are due to be replaced at public expense. This is a beautiful walk at any time of year but particularly so in May when drifts of bluebells carpet the woodland.

Holmfirth now has an active Walkers are Welcome group and we run a monthly Sunday walk from Holmfirth library and a walking festival in late summer. The library on Woodhead Road in Holmfirth even has a dedicated walker's room full of maps and detailed information on local walks. It is well worth visiting! We'd like to encourage more walkers to the area and help improve the path network. I've included links to walks mentioned and several others in the area. For anyone not on Viewranger I'd be happy to email route descriptions.

Monkey Nick Walk <https://my.viewranger.com/route/details/NjA1Njk=>

Ribble Ramble <https://my.viewranger.com/route/details/NjgwNTU=>

Blackpool Bridge Walk <https://my.viewranger.com/route/details/NjA1N-jU=>

Hepworth Bluebell Walk <https://my.viewranger.com/route/details/NjA4MzQ=>

Wolfstones Walk <https://my.viewranger.com/route/details/Nj11MjQ=>

*Andy Leader, Footpath Inspector,  
Holme Valley*

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*This article is part of a series of Parish Notes which will be published both on the website and in future editions of the magazine. Readers who would like to contribute are encouraged to contact Mel Bale at [webmaster@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@pnfs.org.uk)*

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## Blocked Path in Sheffield

The attached before and after photos show a footpath that leads from a housing estate close to where I live.

During lockdown I could only take a local walk and came across the fallen tree a few weeks ago. Emails flew back and forth between myself and Sheffield Council officers to find which department was responsible for clearance. It is not on the definitive map, so I knew it was not the PROW unit who I deal with normally.

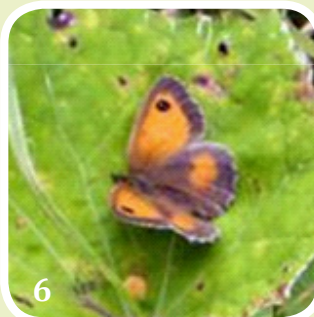
Eventually, I found the right man who quickly got it cut up and removed. The path leads into green space, with ponds and ancient woodland beyond.

*John Harker, Area Officer Sheffield*



# Lockdown Revelations

My wife, Beth and I have been fortunate to have had an enjoyable lockdown. The key to this has been the ability to embrace the joys of walking and all that nature had to offer from spring through to summer. Not just nature, but the unfolding of agriculture from sowing to harvesting. We walked our local Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft field path flatlands day after day, amassing 40-50 miles a week, in fear that walking would be prohibited in the cause of stopping the virus.



Months later came the freedom to travel by car so it became 3-4 days a week walking in the Delamere Forest area with gentle hills plus a trip to Pendle territory and another to Great Orme. Throughout the whole period, now 20 weeks, we saw so much interesting plant and wildlife. Wild cherries were discovered and cherry gin is on the go. It has proved an amazing year for butterflies ranging from early on Brimstones to Gatekeepers latterly.

Were there negatives? Yes, two. The first was an illegally closed path - both obstructed by a gate that was quite tricky to climb and posted with false notices - which we came upon by chance and two days later Warrington BC had it reopened. The other matter was some cyclists: tell them gently it aint a bridleway and what do you get? Verbal abuse but of late the problem has considerably abated. Here then are a few piccies of some of our lockdown revelations including a few quirksies!

### *Photograph captions*

1. Early purple orchids on Pestfurlong Hill, Birchwood
2. Alder leaf beetle. A striking dark metallic blue. Once thought rare, even extinct, now thriving in the North West
3. Bent farm gates. We must have seen at least ten such. All with top metal bar severely depressed. Cause?
4. Dog vomit fungus. Yes, its real name. Seen in Tatton Park.
5. Croft zebra. With global warming exotic species are moving north.
6. Gatekeeper butterfly.
7. The top joy of lockdown. Our new cat Fizz adopted us and found jigsaws a challenge to ignore.

David Bratt, past President

## Signposts available for commemoration



Have you enjoyed reading David Morton's *Signpost Update* in this issue? Do you know that there are still some signposts available for individual walkers or walking groups who would like him to make and fix a commemorative plaque to one in return for a donation of £375? As can be seen from his article, all signposts receive periodic inspections and maintenance as required.

Please have a look at the summer 2020 issue of *Signpost* to see which signs are available for commemoration and also *Signpost Update*, 599 and 606 shown below. Then take a closer look at their photographs, GR and OS map on option 2 of the signposts gallery of our website <http://pnfs.org.uk/signposts/where-they-are>. If interested, contact David on 0161 283 7824 or email him on [davidcmorton@ntlworld.com](mailto:davidcmorton@ntlworld.com).



# Book Review: Walking in the Peak District - White Peak East

By Paul Besley, published by Cicerone

First published in 2004, this is the third edition of Paul Besley's guide of over forty walks covered by the eastern sheet of Ordnance Survey White Peak map OL24. This means no

folding, unfolding, flapping or tearing of the map to locate the routes.

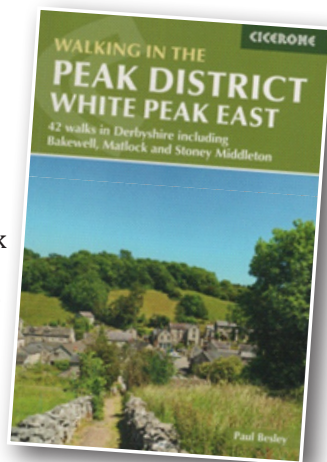
The book starts with an eloquent introduction of the area's geology, flora, history and customs, supported by a bibliography. The walks are grouped into northern and southern sections, four long walks and trails, and the three White Peak trails. Lastly there is a route summary table for quick reference.

I get a frisson of excitement whenever I spot one of the Society's signposts in a walking book. Paul Besley is clearly appreciative of PNFS's efforts in keeping a "watchful eye on the footpaths" and its signposts, and one of his routes takes the walker past S456.

About the walks, they are 5-12 miles long with most being 7-8 miles. Each route is headed by essential details such as start/finish location, distance, terrain, and parking, and a brief description of the area to be covered. The route directions are very clearly written with each location or feature to be passed highlighted in bold text. Excellent colour photographs enhance them and items of interest are described but do not impede the flow of the directions. A very useful feature is that each walk is accompanied by an extract of an OS 1:50000 map with the route clearly outlined. I would have preferred this to be 1:25000 but the book's pocket size precludes this. The four long walks range between 22 and 42 miles consequently they are accompanied by two or three 1:100000 map extracts. The three White Peak trails which are on disused railway tracks are given similar treatment as they are 10-15 miles long. GPX tracks for the routes are available to download from Cicerone's website.

For many years my husband and I have had holidays in the Peak District, accompanied by a 1993 edition Pathfinder Guide which use 1:25000 map extracts. As many of its pages are now becoming loose and its routes getting predictable with much custom, it was with great interest that I opened *Walking in the Peak District - White Peak East*. I was delighted with it, especially with the very well-presented route descriptions being accompanied by an OS map. It has everything I want out of a walking guide. I know that it will serve us very well for many more trips and I heartily recommend it to all walkers who love the Peak District. It will be followed by another by the same author covering the western sheet of the White Peak map next year and I look forward to getting a copy of it.

*Shirley Addy, Editor and Footpath Inspector*



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## **Lockdown Wildflower Meadow**



This photograph is of a wildflower meadow adjacent to the allotment that my partner and I have, not far from home in Sheffield. It shows a view across the city centre to distant hills on the edge of the Peak District NP. The site is part of what was, until the 1920s, Manor Oaks Farm when most of its land was taken to build “homes fit for heroes”. Further back than that it was part of the Lord of the Manor’s deer park. Mary Queen of Scots was kept at Manor Lodge about 5 minutes walk up the road from the site.

During the lockdown, we have spent much time here toiling and watching the swifts flying overhead. It’s thought that the wildflower meadow has never been ploughed or fertilised chemically. A permissive trail around the meadow is planned, a bit like a maze. Nearby, one of the ex farm buildings is an award winning cafe, “The Rhubarb Shed”. It was voted number one cafe in Sheffield on TripAdvisor where its current opening hours can be found. A great place to retire to after a morning shift on the allotment.

*John Harker, Area Officer Sheffield*

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