

# **SIGNPOST**

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

**Number 68 - Summer 2021**



**Middleton by Wirksworth FP23 looking over Dean Hollow  
and Dene Quarry**

*Photograph by Ken Brockway*



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Lighter evenings have been a welcome change after what has felt like a long winter and early spring of lockdowns and restrictions. I hope, like me, you are enjoying the chance to walk in the evenings and also being able to travel further to explore our wonderful network of footpaths. Our programme of inspections was interrupted due to suspension in line with guidance for much of the last year but recommenced recently and the excellent work done by all our PROW inspectors is increasing. I am sure many more faults and issues will be spotted requiring repair and actions to be taken but this is exactly in line with our purpose.

In April I was delighted to chair my first Annual General Meeting. Of course this was a virtual meeting but it was great to see so many people attending. The overall reports for the Society are very positive and we seem to be expanding all the time. Despite the restrictions the work has continued and the increase in both membership and inspectors is a testament to the importance of rights of way and the hard work undertaken by our volunteers. The AGM is a good chance to hear and read about some of the work which goes on including our signposts and the

improvements funded by the Society. One of the things we agreed at the meeting is to do more to increase the diversity of our membership. All Trustees agree that ensuring we are accessible to everyone is a key part of our work. I hope we will be able to report progress over the coming months.

One of the features of PNFS over the years has been a programme of walks, both short and long. I am very pleased to welcome the restart of the walks, more of this later in *Signpost* and on the website. I hope to be able to join some of these and I would recommend that you do when you can. Outdoors is a great place to meet fellow members and explore parts of the countryside which may be unknown. I love bird watching and whilst out and about it has been fantastic to hear the increase in bird song. Our first swallows appeared on 30 March and have been with us ever since on our local walks but now we have willow and sedge warblers, whitethroats and black caps to name just a few.

Every voluntary society has to have a leadership team, we are no different. Trustees are appointed to ensure the Society runs in accordance with the Charity Commission requirements and fulfils its aims. We currently have six Trustees, including myself as Chair, and are keen to increase that number. Please look out for our advert in this issue of *Signpost* and do ask us about the role if you think you have something to contribute. We would welcome your interest.

I hope you stay safe as lockdown eases. There is no doubt that walking has been a great source of relief and exercise for so many over the last year. Thank you for helping us maintain the vital footpaths.

*Kathy McLean, Chair*

# Trustees Wanted

**Make a difference - become a trustee. Trustees help to set the direction for the charity, ensuring that it is meeting its charitable objectives and helping its beneficiaries. They are responsible for overseeing and monitoring the charity's activities.**

## WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING?

We are looking for new trustees who can contribute knowledge and experience to the team. Whilst not exclusive we would particularly value someone with the following skills and experience:

- Digital marketing skills
- Media and PR
- A knowledge of the area of legislation which affects the Society's work

The Management meetings take place on the last Friday of each month (no meeting in December), normally at Taylor House, Offerton, Stockport but currently via video conference. Papers for the meeting, including reports from our officers who attend the meetings, are distributed ahead of the meeting.

Trustees are expected to have read the papers and noted questions which they wish to raise at the meeting, to gain a clear picture of issues or problems that may have arisen. Trustees need to have adequate information to make responsible decisions about the future of the organisation and the way it is run. They are required to plan strategically for that future. Trustees are responsible for approving the policies which govern the charity's activities, ensuring that they are reviewed regularly, and monitoring their implementation.

Trustees are expected to take advantage of any online training which is available.

The minimum time commitment for this role is 4-5 hours per month. You may be invited to join a subcommittee. The time commitment for these varies.

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

This important and rewarding role provides a unique opportunity to be part of the continual evolution and development of the Society, ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of walkers and other users and fulfil its stated aims in a positive and innovative way. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to make a real difference.

## WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We particularly welcome applicants with experience of marketing and communications (media and PR), digital and IT. Some experience of a leadership role would be useful, as would legal knowledge.

## TIME TO ACT

Interested? Please send a brief outline of your relevant experience with a covering letter to [trustees@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:trustees@pnfs.org.uk).

## Alstonefield BW12 - A Thank You

This is just a brief note to thank the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society and specifically Bill Parkes for their support for horse riders in resolving a closed bridleway.

A field gate in Narrowdale on Alstonefield BW12 was reported last summer by a rider as being padlocked. When I filed a complaint online to Staffordshire County Council, I discovered it had been locked for some time and I wasn't the only complainant, at which point I enlisted Bill's help as Alstonefield is his area. Bill took up the matter with the Principal ROW officer at Staffs CC and we were delighted recently to find the padlock has now gone, replaced with a rider-friendly handle, and the stile to the side has been replaced with a wicket gate. Win-win! I understand the work was carried out by the Peak Park for Staffs CC. We are ever grateful for the support of the PNFS; John Harker supported us at a public inquiry with a BW claim in New Mills, now finally coming to fruition. Our annual subs are worth every penny!

*Christine Harding, British Horse Society Access and Bridleways Officer - High Peak Chair - Dark Peak Bridleways Association*

## Percy Hutchinson - An Appreciation

We record with sadness the death on 27 February 2021 of Percy Hutchinson at the time most probably our oldest member having earlier that month attained the full 100 years.

On joining the Society in 1985 Percy showed his commitment to the cause with a succession of 3 Ten year joint memberships along with his wife Muriel. At the conclusion of these he was granted a well earned Honorary membership.

He worked diligently and productively in a number of roles in the Society being appointed Signpost Supervisor in 1986 and a year later was elevated to Signpost Officer.

The following words of family members Tim, Mike and Gail bear best testimony to Percy, ie "He was a lover of the local countryside and an advocate of all that PNFS stands for. The family have fond memories of walking through the Peak District with Dad with pots of paint, bags of cement and newly cast signs."

Percy signed off from these physical activities in his early seventies and moved indoors at Taylor House joining the Assessors team dealing with proposals via Highway Authorities to create, divert and extinguish footpaths. Norman Edwards the then Chairman recalls Percy as a very safe pair of hands applying meticulous detail in the research and documentation of such proposals.

Percy was a regular attendee at General meetings of the Society and just loved being a rank and file member, socializing and very much at home in the PNFS environment.

We salute his memory and mourn his passing.

*David Bratt, Past President*

# Staying Solid

**Kate Ashbrook, vice-president of the PNFS and long-time campaigner for public paths, warns that many more landowner-inspired path changes are on the way.**

I have always thought that the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society's cast-iron signposts were fine symbols of permanence and rock-hard stability, a statement that these paths are not for moving. But changes coming in the Deregulation Act 2015 could undermine this.

We are familiar with the fact that the Deregulation Act gives effect to the cut-off date for historic claims for the definitive map on 1 January 2026, and aims to streamline and speed up the process for adding paths to the map. User groups are lobbying for an extension, or ideally revocation, of the cut-off date. Not only has the pandemic severely hampered our opportunities to research routes, but also it was always government's intention that there should be a review of the effectiveness of the streamlining provisions, after they were commenced and some time before the cut-off took effect—now we have less than five years with no time to test and review.

But there is another aspect of the Act which could have a far-reaching effect on our path network, and that is the introduction of the right for landowners, lessees, and occupiers to apply for public-path diversion and extinguishment orders. First introduced in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, these provisions were not implemented because they were found to be flawed. The flaws have been addressed in the Deregulation Act.

The effect of the 'right to apply' will be that Highway Authorities must respond to landowners' applications for change. Many authorities, commendably, refuse to consider landowners' applications (or give them low priority) because diversions and extinguishments are only a power not a duty, and applications from landowners frequently have no public benefit. Authorities have more important work to do than diverting paths: dealing with obstructions and updating the definitive map for instance.

However, once the right to apply is implemented, the authority must consider an application from a landowner, lessee or occupier within four months and give the applicant notice in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. If the council fails to consider the application within that time, the applicant can appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a direction requiring the council to determine the application.

Where the council refuses to make an order for a landowner application, the applicant may appeal to the Environment Secretary who can prepare a draft order and determine whether to make it. The applicant can also appeal against the council's failure to confirm an unopposed order, and to submit an opposed order to the Secretary of State.

While the legal tests remain the same, the new right to apply will place an additional burden on hard-pressed Highway Authorities to consider and determine applications from landowners which may not be in the public interest (and four months is a very short period in which to determine an application). Increasingly it appears that people move into the countryside to be reclusive; many are paranoid about paths passing close to their properties (even though they knew the path existed when they bought the property). Fences, gates, CCTV notices and hostile signs go up, and diversion

applications on grounds of alleged ‘privacy and security’ go in. Too often such diversions shove the public off the direct path.

The right to apply will also put an additional burden on voluntary bodies like the PNFS, as our volunteers must assess the applications and oppose any which are contrary to the public interest. There will no doubt be many applications because landowners have been storing them up for the new provisions.

It is fortunate that we have the PNFS with its excellent team of inspectors to consider all such applications. I feel confident that the organisation which invented those solid signposts will rise to the challenge and resist any applications which are not in the public interest. It’s a battle worth fighting.

## South Derbyshire Stile Improvements

Here are results of fault reports submitted while out enjoying a deserted and delightful part of Derbyshire which currently has no inspector.



*Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector*

# Signpost Report

At the end of January 2021 we had 536 signposts. As of 11 May we had 537, so yet again this report is mainly concerned with maintenance and inspection work, but more new signposts will be appearing soon. Our new signpost is 615 at SE 05362 09050, just below Wessenden dam, Marsden, where the Pennine Way (footpath) parts company with the Oldham Way (bridleway). It stands on Yorkshire Water's land and was installed for us by Nick Baker of the PDNPA. It's cost was covered by a donation from the Long Distance Walkers Association's "Irregulars" Group and it celebrates their 2000th walk in 2021. It will be seen by many local walkers as well as those doing the Pennine Way.

*David Bratt and his wife Beth at bridge 14, Mobberley, which has memorial plaques commemorating his long service to PNFS.*

## Maintenance

**February:** I inspected 14, 21, 22 (at Edale), 556 (Ashover) and 347, 264 and 217 (Litton and Monksdale).

**March:** 381 (post replaced and plate repainted) was reinstated at Higher Hurdsfield by John and Ted. 326 and 327 at New Inns Farm, near Alsop en le Dale, were reinstated by John and new member of the Signpost Team, Merrick Iszatt, who handily lives in Bakewell.

I retrieved corroded plates from 116, 169 and 181 on the Bowstones to Sponds Hill ridge, then 157 from near Reeds Bridge, Kettleshulme.

On the 31st at Chew Reservoir, I replaced the plate, stolen in August from S316, with a new one.

**April:** I touched-up the green on 517 near Goyt Hall Farm at Bredbury. 518 was still perfect. Shirley repainted the logos on 418 and 419 near Langden Castle, Bowland. On the 16th I Inspected/cleaned 189, 274, 352/3, 578/9, 583 and fitted MPs to 583, 578 and 323. S354 was missing again, so I fitted Bob Proctor's MP to S353, which is nearby in the Weaver Hills and near his favourite pub. I also repainted logos on 352 and 353. I contacted the farmer who has S354 and says that he will reinstate it after lambing, etc.

Richard Honeywell finished repainting 147 at Berry Clough, Upper Goyt Valley after 4 visits. It looks as good as new! See page 13 for more on this signpost.

On the 21st, with help from footpath inspector Graham Fullarton of Belmont, I retrieved S282 and 240 from near Egerton. 282 had been snapped off and thrown over a high dry stone wall with new barbed wire fence. 240 near Whewells had a rotting post and very tatty paintwork. It will take a team of three or more to reinstate them. 240 is 1km uphill! 116, 169, 181, 240 have all been shot-blasted and powder-coated by Stockport Powder Coating.

**May:** PNFS member Jane Hodgson kindly checked 308, 357 and 358 on Marsden Moor. All had escaped serious damage, but 357, which had been close to the fire, needs the logo repainting, as the blue paint on it had run. There was no sign of damage to its post.



It had been saved by the patch of green grass surrounding it, just like 308 and 358 in the fire of April 2019.



On the 5th I collected six new plates from Leander for new signposts at Laund Farm, Chipping, then climbed up Haggside to clean S057, before inspecting/cleaning Harold Wild's memorial sign 118 at Ditch Clough, Westend Clough, Howden Res'r, then 106 at Alport Bridge on the A57.

On the 10th team member Andy McMullan and I retrieved 284, which had fallen over at Haslingden Grane and needs a new post.

On the 11th I took 615 to Wessenden and helped Nick Baker (PDNP ranger) to erect it.

A list of 37 signs available for your memorial plaques is available from me on request via [davidcmorton@ntlworld.com](mailto:davidcmorton@ntlworld.com).

Many thanks to all those members who have helped me, especially John, Ted, Shirley, Richard, Merrick, Graham, Jane and Andy for their hard labour in the field.

*David Morton, Signpost Officer*

## Inspectors wanted for Staffordshire

Are you a PNFS member who lives in **Gnosall, Cannock, Stafford, Stone, Rugeley, Cheadle, Hednesford or Eccleshall**? These are all areas in Staffordshire without footpath inspectors.

If so, would you consider devoting a little time to reporting footpath problems so that the Society can fulfil its role in protecting footpaths in these areas?

As a footpath inspector you would agree to walk the footpaths in your parish(es) every two years (if you can), record your inspections on the Footpath Inspection Database, send reports of any faults to the Staffordshire Highways Authority (SHA), and monitor any progress of these faults. If necessary, the Society will apply legal pressure on SHA to get serious problems resolved. Inspectors also respond to faults reported to us by Path Checkers and other walkers and they look at any alterations notified to us to the rights of way network (diversions, closures and creations).

We will object to changes which are not in the interest of walkers.

We would love more members to be active in Staffordshire. Can you help? If so, contact David Gosling, Footpath Inspector Co-ordinator at [inspection@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:inspection@pnfs.org.uk) or ring 07841 647275.

# Trials of a Fingerpost - Crompton FP96



Removing or tampering with public footpath finger posts or waymarks seems to be the trend with some landowners in Shaw recently. One example of taking such liberties is Crompton (Oldham) FP96. This path was marked off Buckstones Road by a metal fingerpost, the blade of which went missing in March 2020 during the first lockdown period. I reported this to Oldham Highway Authority. A few months later a T (No Through Road) sign appeared on the post. I checked this out with Oldham Highway Authority and found that it was not put in place by them, the authority then removed the T sign and fitted a new Public Footpath blade only for it to be removed next day! Someone must be starting a nice collection of council signs, maybe in a shed somewhere!



*Footpath disc in place*



*Fingerpost blade which has since disappeared*



The Highway Authority say they cannot do any more about this as there is no proof of who is doing it. The path at this point is a wide track with surface chippings leading to a dead end for vehicles within a few yards - it seems to be used to park a car - the footpath then goes left at the end of the stone wall below the gable end (*see photos*). The footpath then goes between a leylandii hedge on one side and a fence on the other. This is what I mean about taking liberties: the gap here is 11 inches wide, in summer the leylandii grows rapidly across the gap. I usually get a friend to help with cutting back the hedge with hand shears. So there we have it. A post with no sign, and a very constricted footpath. I have got a Public Footpath disc sticky label which I have stuck on the post.

*Martin Riley, Footpath Inspector for Oldham*

# Inspector Spotlight: Tom Degg

*Tom Degg is our youngest footpath inspector and a student at Lancaster University. He hails from Chester and, since last summer, has been inspecting several parishes near to the city. The Society is attempting to attract more younger members and volunteers, so it is of particular interest to get Tom's point of view of our organisation and how we can appeal to his generation. Tom was interviewed for Signpost by David Gosling (DG).*



## **DG: How did you become interested in walking?**

**Tom:** From a young age I have explored the great outdoors from mountain biking to walking. Having spent a lot of time in Snowdonia with my father and grandfather, I have come to enjoy walking the mountain and forest paths within the National Park. I enjoy camping so much that I decided to take part in the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award in my final year of school. Recently I have explored the Sandstone Trail during the winter months of last year with family members. I love walking because it is a very relaxing exercise that is accessible to all ages.

## **DG: How did you find out about PNFS and how can it improve its publicity with students?**

**Tom:** I discovered the PNFS when looking for volunteering jobs within the Chester region last summer. I found the Society on a website that listed a range of volunteering positions and due to its unique nature caught my eye. I had never heard of it before joining despite walking many of the footpaths that it surveys. It is very unlikely that many people would search online through lists of volunteering roles to find the PNFS. I think that not many students are aware of the Society's existence despite it playing a crucial role in maintaining footpaths they often walk on. We must disregard the notion that this is due to the current generation not caring about footpaths or enjoying walking or spending time in the great outdoors as this is just not true.

Using social media to raise awareness of the PNFS is key to increasing student volunteer numbers. The Society has an Instagram and Facebook account, but I suggest a better way to raise awareness using social media would be to create an open Facebook page and 'friend' students. This would be better as Facebook is generally a more formal platform and so asking students if they would like to join would be more appropriate on this app. Responses are more likely and this would ensure the Society is actively engaging with students who might be interested in joining it.

The Society has attempted to engage with students at Manchester University with some limited success, but I would say that at urban universities (such as Manchester), students are drawn to such universities due to their urban scene rather than their footpaths and rural areas. Involving universities which are in rural areas (such as Lancaster University) would be better as students at such universities would be more interested in the outdoors volunteering positions that the PNFS offers.

PNFS's poster is effective, but the details of our Instagram account in a prominent position would catch the eye of students more than a telephone number. These posters should be placed around campuses since posters are a popular form of advertisement used by university societies. I would be more than happy to do this on my campus.

## **DG: Why did you want to become a footpath inspector? Do you think the role could appeal to other students?**

**Tom:** I wanted to become a footpath inspector for various reasons. A central reason was because I would be able to combine an experience that I can put on my CV with a hobby (walking). I also wanted to help support my local community during the start of the Covid pandemic when supporting our communities was never more important. Due to the various skills that you learn as a footpath inspector I feel the role would appeal to students especially if they want to put a good volunteering example on their CV.

**DG: What do you enjoy about being a footpath inspector?**

**Tom:** I enjoy the responsibility that comes with being a footpath inspector and the feeling that you are not only supporting your local community but also the countryside. I also like using the various online systems we use to log our inspections.

**DG: How could PNFS interact with student groups more effectively?**

**Tom:** Social media is the key to engaging with student groups who would be interested.

At my university the largest society is the walking society which has over 600 active members. This shows that the society has the potential to gain large amounts of younger members if it promotes itself in a manner that appeals to them. Students want volunteering roles that require skills that they can put on their CV. The PNFS can offer such roles to such students and it must be made clear when trying to reach them.

*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*

## Satnav

I don't claim to fully understand what I'm about to comment upon. It appears that technology is moving faster as I slow down. I started using GPS navigation some time back offering the excuse that I found it easier than reading glasses and a paper map. I still did and do laboriously plot a walk route on screen then upload the track to the Garmin.

Recently while working on Slow Ways I used OS Maps Online and discovered the snapping tool. This can be annoying if you prefer, like me, to do your own thing. As the name suggests it snaps your route planning to pre-programmed paths. I've now been introduced to Komoot which claimed to be "The best planner for cycling and hiking". Well, I haven't followed it up to find out. A search also reveals Strava, both appear to be primarily for cyclists and routes on roads.

I'm delighted to discover younger members of my family enjoy getting out for a walk but do they use a map? The usual request is 'can you recommend a walk' and I upload a route to Google to be followed on the phone. So where you may ask am I going with this?

Having started walking with paper maps in the days of neglected paths, unfortunately still here in places, I perhaps know what to look for and where to look. That stile hidden in a thick overgrown hedge or the unmarked path across a huge field of wheat. The new generation of walkers want the same convenience they have in the car. Follow the on screen instructions ignore the roadside signs, even when it says 'unsuitable for motor vehicles', the satnav is always right.

Google and others already know how busy our local supermarket is and where there are jams on the road because we tell them where we are. Open Street Map is a useful source of information about where folk are walking so when the online maps start to show where we are when out in the countryside what will they show? Will the programs, apps or algorithms offer the definitive line of a path or the walked route?

*Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector*



# The Ethels



It has always seemed strange to me that the Peak District is so named. Kinder Scout and Bleaklow can be challenging areas to explore and Stanage is rightly world famous with rock climbers, but it has few genuine peaks. It does however have plenty of hills and the CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire (CPREPDYSY) has just launched an initiative to promote them. They have identified 95 hilltops over 400m and some lower but prominent hills. They have called them Ethels in memory of one their founding members, Ethel Haythornthwaite. Chris Bonnington described her as 'tireless, singleminded and selfless', but she is perhaps not as widely known as she deserves to be. So who was this woman?



Ethel was the daughter of the Sheffield Industrialist Thomas Ward. She was widowed at the age of 23 when her husband, an army captain was killed in 1917 during the First World War. His death devastated her, she became ill and only began to recover when she started walking and appreciating the countryside surrounding Sheffield. This led to a life dedicated to the environment and the protection of the countryside. She founded the Sheffield Association for the Protection of Rural Scenery in 1924 which became the local branch of the CPRE in 1927. She was instrumental in raising funds to buy both Longshaw Lodge and Blacka Moor as well as other parts of the Peak District. Later in life, she sat on the government

committee that eventually led to the founding of the National Parks. She was quite a woman!

Anyway, back to the hills or the Ethels as we should now call them. More information about them is on the CPREPDYSY's website <https://www.cprepdsy.org.uk/news/our-peak-district-hill-walking-challenge-walking-the-95-ethels/>, this includes a link to a recent feature on BBC Look North and links to the smartphone app mentioned below.

Doug Colton is a key person in the Ethels initiative. He is an experienced walker and taught himself how to design and write smartphone apps during the last lockdown. Doug has now produced the excellent Ethel Ready app which shows the location of all the tops, along with photographs and descriptions. You can record when an Ethel has been visited and maintain your own running total. The app is free, so take a look and also consider supporting the CPREPDYSY.

There is also an interactive map of the Ethels on the society's website at <http://pnfs.org.uk/ethels>. People are encouraged to send their own photographs and stories about their visits to them to me at [webmaster@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@pnfs.org.uk).

If anyone would like to know more about the history of the CPREPDYSY and the work Ethel and many other campaigners did, I can highly recommend 'Protecting the Beautiful Frame' by Melvyn Jones.

Thanks to John Harker for bringing the Ethels to my attention, to Doug Colton of CPRE for the additional information used in this article and his permission to use his apps logo and finally to the CPRE, the countryside charity, for allowing me to use their photograph of Ethel Haythornthwaite.

*Mel Bale, Trustee, Membership Secretary and Webmaster*

# S147 Berry Clough restored

Richard Honeywell, a Signpost Team member, has, after four trips, done exemplary work on S147 at Berry Clough in the upper Goyt valley. His photos show the various stages, starting from top left to the finished product on last row.



# Parish Notes ~ Macclesfield & Wildboarclough

Wedged into the triangle of roads that link Macclesfield, Congleton, Leek and Buxton in Cheshire East is the parish of Macclesfield Forest and Wildboarclough. As the name suggests it covers the area most easily identified on maps as Macclesfield Forest. Wildboarclough lies to the east of the forest. The parish is dominated by Shutlingsloe (506 m) which provides extensive views across the Cheshire Plain and beyond. Other notable landmarks bounding the area are Shining Tor to the north and Croker Hill with its distinctive telecoms tower to the south.

PNFS 'signpost baggers' are well catered for with the area being home to one toposcope, one bridge and ten signs of varying designs. The Gritstone Trail passes on the western edge of the parish carrying walkers between Lyme Park and Mow Cop. The forest itself is owned by United Utilities due to the four reservoirs situated there but managed in conjunction with the Peak District National Park. A ranger station is located in the heart of the forest. The parish is also part of the Peak District National Park and of the South West Peak Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme managed by Defra. The remaining area is a mix of farmland and moorland and wildlife thrives throughout the parish. This is a wonderful area to explore and has become increasingly popular since the first lockdown in 2020. Such popularity however brings a cost as drivers who have navigated the narrow lanes and limited car parking facilities will know. However, once you are there (and however you have arrived) there is sufficient space across the forest and surrounding open access land to feel, temporarily at least, that you have time and space to yourself.

Macclesfield Forest was once part of the larger Royal Forest of Macclesfield, an area owned by the Earl of Chester that stretched from the Pennines to the Staffordshire Moorlands and the High Peak area near Whaley Bridge. According to local tradition, a gallows once stood at the Greenway Cross in the south of the parish, where people caught poaching in the Royal Forest met their end. The nearby Hanging Gate pub may mean 'Path to the Gallows', derived from the old Norse word 'gata' meaning Gate. The origins of the name 'Wildboarclough' are unclear with alternatives ranging from denoting a rapid rise in water levels in Clough Brook after heavy rain to it deriving from a deep valley (clough) frequented by wild boar. Visitors are well catered for with pubs and a café in the area, my favourite being 'The Forest Snug' sited at the visitors' centre in the heart of the forest at weekends. In view of current coronavirus restrictions visitors are recommended to check opening times for all of these facilities.

The area has two churches, St Saviours in Wildboarclough and St Stephen at Forest Chapel. A rushbearing ceremony is held annually on the Sunday nearest to 12 August when rushes are traditionally taken from nearby streams and marshes and laid in the church. The 2011 census records the population of the parish as 189. These notes were prepared as the 2021 was being compiled and it will be interesting to know how the population has fared in the last ten years.  
*Guy Lingford, Member*

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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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# The River

I count it one of the luckiest things of my life to have been born within reach of a river: not on it, nor above it, but just so far removed from it that it never became a too familiar sight, and never ceased to be a wonder. Even as a child I marvelled at the power, the unchanging course, the might of the river.

That was the River Aire in West Yorkshire to the East of the Pennines. Now living West of the Pennines, my river has become the Goyt. The second highest pub in the country is the Cat and Fiddle. Near to this lonely place a spring of clear water oozes through the heather moorland; the river Goyt is born. Soon the trickle picks up speed and forges its way down the steep hillside. Tumbling over rocks the water turns a rusty colour as it picks up elements in the soil. Soon, within a few miles the natural course of the water is tamed, dammed and utilised by man. Firstly the Errwood reservoir and then the Fernilee collect water for the towns and provide sport for yachters.

The river carries on from the reservoirs all the time being fed by tributaries. Gaining strength it widens and deepens, becomes a force to be reckoned with, now crossable only by bridges. Slowing down as it passes through fields its banks give pleasure to walkers and picnickers. On through Taxal, Horwich End to be joined by the Todd Brook at Whaley Bridge. Further downstream, nearing New Mills, it becomes its most dramatic. Millions of years ago ice carved a way through the steep, soaring rocks known as The Torrs, now the course of the river.

In the 19th century man again harnessed the river's energy, this time to power the mills, those palace sized edifices of employment and industry. All that remains of them in New Mills are gaunt, blackened stone ruins. Near a weir on the river a picnic area is sited where once a mill stood. But here the river is being harnessed once more; 21st century style! An Archimedes screw has been installed to generate electricity. Water is diverted to power the screw, but only when the river levels are at a certain height. It mustn't go below that level because of the wild life in the river. After years of pollution, when at times the river ran blood red, or purple from the dye works further up stream at Chinley; now there is a salmon leap at the weir.

Rounding a bend after the Archimedes screw the river becomes angry, churning and frothing its way through the Torrs. In its element, untameable, unapproachable because of the soaring rock face it dashes deafeningly ever onwards. However man's ingenuity provided access. In 2000 a wonderful Millennium Walkway was erected, designed by Stan Brewster, tragically a victim of the London bus bombing, but his legacy will last forever. The Millennium Way is 125 yards long, perched at 50 feet above the river. It hugs the rock face and is supported on tall pillars with the raging river boiling and seething below. At last there is pedestrian access along the river.

After the fury of the gorge the river loses energy and reaches a calm place. It gives respite and tranquillity flowing slowly through flower strewn meadows. A heron, long neck retracted, hunches on the far bank. Without warning it takes off, not with great flapping wings but in a languorous, graceful movement, circles, riding the thermals then lands further downstream. Fisherman in waders stand mid-river casting lines in hypnotic arcs. All is peaceful.

Meandering downstream the river now reaches Strines, my village. Not visible from my cottage but in autumn, when the early mornings are chilly, I witness from my eyrie on the hillside a wonderful sight. Milky white mist rises from the river undulating like a Chinese dragon defining its course. I crane my neck from the window to watch this unterrestrial

substance stretching up and down stream. People in the valley are enveloped in the fog unable to see this phenomena. I long for someone to share this ephemeral experience.

But the river Goyt can't rest for long: it still has a long way to go. Picking up speed again it hurries on to reach what must have been its finest hour when, way back in the 18th century, it powered the water wheels for Samuel Oldknow's mills, that giant of the cotton industry. Long before the railway viaducts crossed the river a mighty weir was constructed, the water diverted to what became known as The Roman Lakes. At Marple Bridge the river Etherow joins forces with the Goyt. and lastly, when the River Tame joins it in Stockport the Goyt loses its identity and becomes the River Mersey.

What started as a tiny spring, 67 miles away high on the Pennines becomes a three mile wide estuary at Liverpool, finally ending its journey as it flows out into the Irish Sea.

*Margaret Allen, Member and ex footpath officer for New Mills Ramblers*

## Plans for Rotherham

I was interested to read Terry Norris's piece in the last issue of Signpost, in which he talks of receiving notices of those planning applications which potentially affect public rights of way. 'Without sight of these Article 15 notices it is very difficult to ascertain which planning applications might affect public rights of way', says Terry. There is a potential discrepancy here in that planning officers and footpath users might have different ideas on this. In Rotherham we have gone a step further, thanks to the good relations that exist between council officials and the Local Access Forum.

In my capacity as a member of the Rotherham LAF I receive, from the Council, their weekly lists of all planning applications (and decisions) - not just those the Council deem to be of interest - as a result of an arrangement between the Council and the LAF made seven or eight years ago, to monitor all planning applications and sift out those which may have relevance, thus helping an under-resourced council department to get its work done. These lists go to all councillors, parish councillors, relevant council officers, and representatives of various interested bodies and stakeholders, but only I routinely monitor them.

Very few of the applications have any implications for rights of way. Of those that do, I go on the link to the location map which is included with all applications, and compare what this map shows of the ROW in question with the evidence shown on my large scale OS map. Then I report my findings and concerns to a named officer in the Council's Rights of Way team, and forward my reports also to other interested parties such as the Ramblers and our own John Harker. I know that OS maps are occasionally not totally accurate or up to date, but the officer will then be able to compare with the Definitive Map if necessary. Nil returns are also sent back, which account for probably 90% of all weekly lists, a figure that seems to reflect a trend more apparent since the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. Most applications now are for house extensions or garage conversions and suchlike, but occasionally a developer will submit a plan for a housing development which impacts on an existing footpath or bridleway, or an industrial expansion or new road likewise.

The work is pleasurable and interesting, it doesn't take long (sometimes only a few minutes), it makes a difference to the future of rights of way in Rotherham, and helps to maintain good relations between rights of way users and the Council. It's a good example of partnership working, and it works well. Perhaps PNFS members in other local authorities may be able to follow suit?

*Steve Hird, Inspector, Rotherham and Wakefield*



## Stile or Obstruction?

It must be an age thing or perhaps I'm considering others, folk less able than me or young children keen to be independent but legs still too short. I refer to tall difficult stiles which I have reported to Derbyshire County Council and had the following reply: *Thank you for your reports of stiles that are too high. Although the height of the stiles from the top of the footboards to the top bars is not ideal these stiles have been in situ for a number of years. We have contacted both landowners and asked them to consider replacing the stiles with wicket gates, but because the stiles are in a safe and good condition of repair our powers are limited. If gates are requested we will provide them but if not we will not be pursuing these further.*

It appears it's not the convenience of the path user but the age of the stile that determines it's suitability as a boundary crossing. I'm not against a bit of tradition and variety but I find it unacceptable that while Health and Safety governs so much in our lives, when we go out walking we are expected to put our safety at risk climbing unsuitable structures. If a stile fails to offer a convenient means of boundary crossing, it's an obstruction. What we should do before using any stile or gate is the question. Is it fit for purpose? Unfortunately our walk would soon be curtailed if we carried out the rigorous test that would apply in the work place.

Imagine your reaction if an employer expected you to use a step ladder as decrepit as most stiles we are expected to climb. Activities have become far more safety conscious. I'm old enough to recall jumping on or off a moving bus from the open back deck or riding a motor cycle without a helmet. I did draw the line at standing on the top of a trestle to install factory lighting long before working platforms with safety rails were the norm.

Farming is third in the table of most dangerous industries which tells us a lot. It's time we complained more about that heavy gate that nearly landed on our foot, the rocking stile step, the barbed wire along the top rail which perhaps had a plastic bag around it, long ago. The fence that pretends to be a stile, the kissing gate with no room to stand and swing the gate. Or perhaps that squeeze stile so narrow that a size nine has to be lifted over. Times have changed we should not be seeing faults from our own point of view. We need to consider the man, woman or child on the Clapham omnibus. Do we want the old high step of the open platform or the low level pushchair friendly entrance of modern buses? If they can improve access to buses, let's see the same improvements on footpaths.

*Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector*



# Memorial Footbridge at the Toddbrook Weir

I am sure you will all be very glad to know that the Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) has confirmed that a footbridge will be installed at the Toddbrook Feed Weir. This will be required to allow their staff to service new flow control systems which are now recognised as essential after the recent near disaster. The CRT has said that the footbridge will normally be available for the Public to use to cross the weir.

This is excellent news and it is a culmination of all my frustrated efforts of nearly 3 years, starting in January 2015, of negotiation with the CRT to allow a footbridge to be manufactured and installed. But after 3 years of prevarication and procedural opposition I had to give up when the CRT approval costs exceeded the cost of the footbridge and the subsequent conditions imposed by the CRT would have required the Community to provide an incalculable fund (£100-200k?) to cover 60 years or more of various imagined liabilities.

The solution was always that the CRT should simply own the footbridge as it should be endorsed and underwritten by the Public Benefit ethos of the CRT Constitution and for the CRT to accept whatever liabilities the new footbridge might bring along with those of the many thousands of ancient footbridges that the CRT already owns. So there will be a footbridge at the weir. All our efforts were not in vain, in fact, after the Dam disaster I received a verbal apology in December 2019 from a very senior CRT manager who acknowledged that the “the CRT had treated us very badly”. The petition with nearly 400 signatures is a strong measure of Community support, plus all the footpath preparation work to avoid the low boggy ground, and especially the generous permission by the owners of Gap House to permit public use of a short path to reach the official PROW paths on their land. This was agreed at the outset in 2015, without it there would have been no point in the Project both then and now.

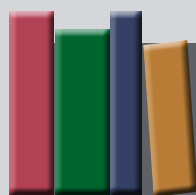
The bridge will be made of metal and will meet all the required specifications that the Trust will apply to cover the safety of their staff and any equipment needed to service the new weir controls. At last it will provide a safe and predictable weir crossing to connect the scenic Toddbrook valley into the extensive public footpath network. We have waited many years for this.

The existence of the ‘dry crossing’ can still be associated with David Frith as originally intended. However the bridge itself exists as a necessary engineering component of the new sluice works rather than a memorial specifically to David Frith, who was a PNFS footpath inspector. Perhaps there could be a simple commemorative post nearby which the CRT might allow. I rather hope it will become known affectionately as “Frith’s Bridge” as David Brown, PNFS Secretary has suggested, I think David would have liked that. The footbridge will provide the much needed predictable means of crossing the Todd at the weir. It will enable pleasant access to many existing PROW footpaths with relative ease.

The new bridge would in addition enable a potential ‘round the reservoir’ route but a new quite complicated path over a mile long would have to be devised and constructed. This route could not be flat or as benign as the existing reservoir path as some people hope it might be. From a preliminary survey it has to cross various walls, hedges and fences, it needs 1 or 2 additional footbridges and some drainage, also steps on a steep bank and certain other places. It has to climb high above the weir because it is impossible to hug the reservoir at that end. It could then reach the bridge by use of the existing PROW paths. The first half mile from the Dam (or a bit more) could run on CRT land which would simplify the problems somewhat. But further on negotiations would be required with 2 or 3 different landowners and two Authorities.

It is a Project in its own right involving approval by several authorities. There could be environmental protection issues, Woodland Trust and SSSI. It will have quite high organisational costs, plus material and transport costs but it will be enabled by the new footbridge and it is quite feasible. However I am convinced that the top water level of this 'High Risk' reservoir should be lowered permanently by at least 1.5m. in order to relieve the pressure and loading on the 180 year old dam seriously damaged both in 1970 and 2019. This will increase the safety for the school and town considerably. This should happen for fundamental safety reasons alone, but it has a secondary minor consequence. The exposed margin of the lowered reservoir could then be exploited to provide a much more simple, open and benign route for most of the 'circular' path and this would eliminate some (but not all) of the difficulties and costs mentioned previously.

*Graham Aldred, member*



## Book Review: *Wanderers: A History of Women Walking*

*By Kerri Andrews, published by Reaktion Books, 2020*

Kathleen Jamie states in her foreword to this book that "*Wanderers* discovers a history of women walkers that spans three hundred years ... Each chapter explores the life and work and walking of a woman".

This is an engrossing book. Men have dominated the literature on walking. The experiences of women who walk have been largely ignored. Kerri Andrews' purpose is to 'offer an alternative view of the literary history of walking by making visible the previously unacknowledged breadth, depth and distinctiveness of ten women writing about walking'.

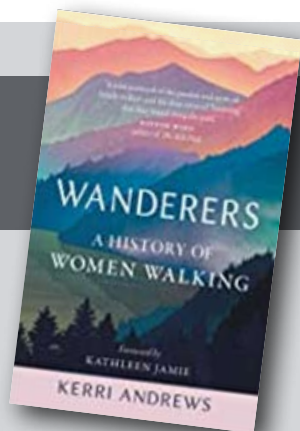
She draws our attention to these women walkers, giving each a chapter in which she explores their lives through their walking and their writing. From Dorothy Wordsworth, Ellen Weeton, and Virginia Woolf, to Nan Shepherd, Anais Nin, and Linda Cracknell, these women all found walking to be an integral part of themselves. The book provides a very interesting insight into how they observed the world around them and communicated that in their work. History has largely ignored such writing. Research into Dorothy Wordsworth's writing on walking, for example, shows how much her brother William used her notebooks for inspiration and yet her contribution was never acknowledged in his work.

It is possible to walk with these women as you read about them and that is one of the strengths of this book. There is a tangible perception of the individual, an understanding of how important walking was to them and the pleasure they took in their walking. Full of interesting facts and information this is an excellent read, opening up the largely hidden world of women who walk.

The appendix offers suggestions for further reading as the author has focused this book on those women for whom walking had to intersect with other areas of their lives.

If you would like to find out more the issues covered in this book take a look at these two websites, <https://kerriandrews.co.uk/> and <https://womeninthehills.co.uk/>.

*Pauline Williams, Member*



# PNFS Launches its Online Talks

Following on the success of the online training programme, we are launching a new initiative:

## The PNFS Online Talks Programme

Each month a speaker will be giving an illustrated talk about a topic which is relevant to the work and objectives of the Society. We aim to include a wide variety of topics some of which will be led by one of PNFS's own members and others will be drawn from other organisations which have interests close to our own. The format will be similar and you will be able to log in using a Zoom link. You will attend and have the opportunity to participate in the talk or discussion from your own home. They will start at 7.00 pm and last for approximately one hour. They will be held on a Tuesday or Thursday evening. A link to join the talks will be circulated to all PNFS members.

<b>Dan Raven-Ellison</b>	<i>Slow Ways - How PNFS can help</i>	24 June
<b>David Morton</b>	<i>Life and times of PNFS signposts</i>	20 July
<b>Ken Brockway</b>	<i>Claiming unrecorded rights of way (Lost Ways)</i>	24 August
<b>Nicola Swinnerton</b>	<i>Challenges of a Rights of Way Officer</i>	21 September
<b>Andy Leader</b>	<i>Photographing Landscapes</i>	21 October

Our first speaker, on **Thursday, 24 June** is **Daniel Raven-Ellison** who describes himself as a guerrilla geographer. He is National Geographic Emerging Explorer and is leading the campaign to create Slow Ways - walking routes between every town and village across the country. Dan will be talking to us about Slow Ways and how PNFS members can help by reviewing routes.

On Tuesday, **20 July** **David Morton** will be talking about PNFS famous signposts - how they get there and the challenges of keeping them looking great.

On Tuesday, **24 August** **Ken Brockway** will be telling us how to research so-called 'Lost Ways' - unrecorded rights of way - and submitting applications for a DMMO. With the 2026 deadline only five years away we need to learn and act now!

On Tuesday, **21 September** **Nicola Swinnerton**, Rights of Way officer for Cheshire East will talk about the trials and triumphs of rights of way enforcement. She will give us an insight into challenges that officers face.

On Thursday, **21 October** **Andy Leader**, PNFS Courts and Inquiries Officer for Kirklees and a professional photographer, will be giving us an insight into how to take successful photographs of landscapes and taking us to some of the places where he has taken his wonderful photos.

*David Gosling, Inspection Co-ordinator*

# Sheffield FP209 Tinsley Park Golf Club



The photos show the “before” (*above*) and “after” (*below*) of this footpath in the Darnall area of Sheffield. The car park visible in the photos is the Tinsley Park golf club car park on Infield Lane. Footpath 209 connects to it here after running along the edge of the parking area. However, this junction has always been obstructed by fencing. I have been aware of this for many years, but since there is the car park entrance about 20 yards away (*see last photo*), this seemed to be a minor inconvenience which I never pressed with the Highway Authority.



However, current circumstances changed the situation. Lockdown has led to closure of this municipal golf course and its car park. The entrance is blocked by a padlocked metal vehicle barrier without any facility for walkers. This changed my views about the obstruction. Without informal access through the car park entrance to get onto the footpath, a detour of some inconvenience was needed to reach the same point. I contacted Sheffield Council Public Rights of Way Unit. They agreed that under these circumstances, the obstruction needed addressing. Within a few weeks, a step over metal stile was inserted in the fence, plus a new “Public Footpath” signpost.

The law of unintended consequences has led to a longstanding, albeit minor problem, being resolved to everyone’s satisfaction. Without the consequences of the lockdown, it might never had been resolved, although its trivial in such awful circumstances.

*John Harker, Area Officer Sheffield*



# A Broken Stile

It's February 2021 and, in accordance with Covid-19 regulations, I'm only doing local walks starting from my home, which fortunately for me is in Hayfield in the High Peak. My plan is to walk up to Matley Moor and then Cown Edge returning via Rowarth; one of my favourite walks. (A website describes a nice shorter walk from Hayfield car park up to Blackshaw Farm using part of this route.) I usually take Hayfield FP20 up to the Five Lane Ends junction above Blackshaw Farm. But, for a change, and hopefully less mud, I leave this near Hallot Hey Farm to take FP30 to Lane Head Road where I turn left to go up to, and around Blackshaw Farm. Below the farm I find the DCC signed footpath diversion around the farm which will take me up to the Five Finger post (see cover photo of Signpost no. 66).

But there's a problem: the bottom plank of the stile is detached from it, lying on the ground. It's going to be difficult to get over. I consider the options: one is to retrace my steps back to the last junction, adding a kilometre to the length of the walk; another is to try to walk through Blackshaw Farm; and the other is to somehow clamber over the top rail of the stile. Having had a very unpleasant experience last year during the first lockdown, I dismiss the farmyard option. (An altercation with a farmer who had put up an unauthorised footpath closed sign, which we had ignored, led to my reporting the incident to the police.)

Getting over the stile is going to be tricky. In my favour is my inner leg length of 34 inches. Against is the fact of my age of 75 with somewhat reduced agility. But is this going to be enough to clear the rail (higher than it appears in the photo) without damage to a delicate part of my anatomy? Now, I pride myself on being well equipped for emergencies when walking in winter: first aid kit, survival bag, head torch etc. What I don't have with me is a tape measure to check the height of the stile rail. Anyway, I decide to tackle it by placing my leading foot over the rail onto the wire netting. It's clear from the state of the netting that I'm not the first person to do this.

Now that I'm over it, I take a photo of the stile for reporting purposes. While I'm doing this, I hear the sound of a car on the lane. The driver of the Range Rover stops and asks me what I'm doing. He is the owner of the property. I point out to him the deficiencies of the stile. He might have apologised about this and said he would remedy the problem. But his response is to complain about the invasion of his land by 4WD vehicles, off-road trail motor bikes, and mountain bikers during the lock-downs. I agree with him that this is reprehensible behaviour, which I do not condone, but I am exercising my legal right to walk the short distance over his field, and in doing so I am not creating a nuisance. All that he would grudgingly concede was that I had not walked through his yard. Doubtless he will have been driving along this road ignoring the state of the stile for quite some time.

Incidentally, Blackshaw Farm is not actually a farm. It is now a substantial country house. A Google search finds an advert for it in *Country Life* in 2011 with an advertised price of £1.5 million. The same search finds a planning application for a swimming pool and orangery. Clearly the owner is a man of considerable means. Sadly, those means have not enabled him to repair his stile.

Same old story; landowners versus walkers. Of course, we'll continue to fight for access to, and maintenance of, rights of way. Onward and upward, as the saying goes.

*David Jones, member*



# Walks for PNFS Members

**All walks are on Wednesdays -**

***IT IS VITAL that attendees check all train times and [pnfs.org.uk](http://pnfs.org.uk) for any updates***

## Short Walks - John Fisher, Walks Co-ordinator

*Any comments or suggestions for future walks to John Fisher, [johnfisher560@btinternet.com](mailto:johnfisher560@btinternet.com), 01625 439298 or mob 07432 825624*

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**14 July** - Leader Ken Smith (07918 154959). Greenfield circular (clockwise), 8 miles, ascent 1,320 ft; Manchester Piccadilly 09:58 to Greenfield OR Manchester Victoria and change at Stalybridge OR Huddersfield. Walk starts Greenfield station 10:25

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**11 August** - Leader: John Fisher (01625 439298, mob 07432 825624). Linear walk, Edale to Hope, over Lose Hill, 6 miles, hilly; Manchester Piccadilly 9:42 or Sheffield 9:14. Walk starts Edale station 10:25

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**8 September** - Leader: Brian Lomas (0161 688 5237). Linear walk, Hale to Knutsford, 7 miles, level; Manchester Piccadilly 10:40. Walk starts Hale station 11:15

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**13 October** - Leader: Ross Myddelton (07941 547378). Walsden circular, 7 miles, along Reddyshore Scout and Chelburn Moor; train times not yet available – see website or ask leader; train from Manchester Victoria. Walk starts Walsden station

## Longer Walks - David Bratt, Walks Co-ordinator

**30 June** - Leader: David Bratt (01925 762472 and 07401 789400). Circular walk Disley, 9 miles/1,500ft ascent, visiting Lyme Park and the Bowstones; Manchester Piccadilly 10:08; walk starts Disley railway station 10:35

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**28 July** - Leaders: Dianne Fortescue (07796 954930) and Andrew Hurrell (07770 511859). Walk to commemorate our late chairman, David Hurrell. For details please see website

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**25 August** - Leader: Ken Smith (07918 154961). Circular walk Greenfield, 10 miles/1,700 ft ascent; Manchester Piccadilly 09:58. Walk starts Greenfield railway station 10:25

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**29 September** - Leader: Gavin Miller (07951 746323). Linear walk Altrincham to Wilmslow, 10 miles/600 ft ascent by Bollin Valley Way; Manchester Piccadilly 09:41, Stockport 09:52; walk starts 10:15 Altrincham Interchange platform 4 (adjacent to car park); return by train to Manchester Piccadilly or Stockport service 88 bus to Altrincham Interchange

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**27 October** - Leader: Phil Gadsby (0161 748575). Linear walk Flowery Field to Romiley, 10 miles and around 1,000 ft ascent; Manchester Piccadilly 10:03. Walk starts Flowery Field railway station 10:15

# The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Taylor House, 23 Turncroft Lane, Offerton, Stockport, SK1 4AB

Registered Charity No 212219

0161 480 3565

mail@pnfs.org.uk

## Wilpshire FP11



In January 2021, I noted that a stile at Wilpshire Golf Club had its step resting on a pile of large stones. Although it was easy and safe to climb, the stile clearly needed some attention. In the following month, a wooden kissing gate was erected through the efforts of Wilpshire Parish Council in part as a gesture to the golf course who have been good to residents in allowing them to wander about the golf club course during the lockdown. I have already written about the PC's own initiative for maintaining and improving our public rights of way network (see *Signpost* 67). Thanks go to Councillor Tony Gaffney and also contractor Paul Mollart for his excellent handiwork.

*Shirley M Addy, Footpath Inspector for Ribble Valley and Editor*

***Signpost* is edited and published for the Society by**

**Shirley M Addy**

**Contact via [editor@pnfs.org.uk](mailto:editor@pnfs.org.uk) or by post via Taylor House**

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