

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the PEAK & Northern Footpaths Society

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HELLO AGAIN,

Here is **Signpost No 2**. Our first edition seemed to strike a chord among members with a reaction that was (mostly) favourable. Some of you thought the type size was a bit on the small side, so we've enlarged that. It's cheaper than supplying a magnifying lens with each copy.

We asked for contributions on any footpath-related topic, but without giving you a name to write to. We've put that right as well, so no excuses now. We expect to be inundated with impassioned articles in time for our next edition.

But the most rewarding result was the response to the appeal for volunteers to help out at Taylor House. Not just the numbers but the quality of the new recruits. One of them has been tapping away producing the large-sized type for this Newsletter. There are at least half-a-dozen more, several called Peter, who have turned up, buckled down and made themselves thoroughly useful. Two more are now newly-appointed Footpath Inspectors, but we still need more (see overleaf). Our situation has improved greatly in the last two months but we're not out of the wood yet.

But here's some good news

Splendid news, in fact. The considerable cost of printing and circulating this Newsletter to our 900 members over the next year will be covered by the sponsorship of the Cheshire Building Society. A most generous donation from their Community Support Programme has enabled us to continue with most of the financial hang-ups removed. So it was a very happy occasion when Robert Oliver, Manager of the Underbank, Stockport branch of the CBS called in at the Officers Meeting at Taylor House last week



to confirm his company's gift. He was curious to know just where the definitive paths near his home were and we were delighted to show him from our map collection. Here he is, below, with some of the officers



Left to right: Robert Oliver, Norman Edwards (Retiring Chairman), Keith Wykes (Treasurer), Adrian Littleton (Legal Adviser) and Leslie Meadowcroft (President)

Good bye to a Stalwart

We are still short of a General Secretary, whose duties for the past year have been handled by dividing them among other officers. Now the man who has taken on the lion's share, Norman Edwards our Chairman, feels that because of domestic and other pressures he can no longer carry on and will be standing down at the next AGM.

This Society recognises Norman's sterling work, his sage advice, his wide knowledge of rights of way problems and is deeply grateful. His retirement from the top job at Taylor House is going to be very hard to cope with but, of course, with the help of members, we must. The work of protecting footpaths must never be allowed to fall away.

He was appointed to the executive in 1983, serving as Vice-Chairman from 1985 and as Chairman for the last four years.

From Adrian Littleton (Legal Adviser):

THE ACT OF PARLIAMENT THAT ALL WALKERS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR

- THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT 2000 - IS NOW ON THE STATUTE BOOK

That doesn't mean that you can toss this newsletter aside, put on your boots and tramp that delectable 601 metres high ridge that has tantalised you for decades. In a recent news release the government has explained

1. In February 2001 provisions "enabling access land to be mapped" will come into effect - note 'enabling';
2. "from April 2002 the modernisation of the rights of way system is likely to start — with the introduction of plans for the network of footpaths, bridleways and other ways; and new powers to deal with obstructions."
3. The right of access to 'access land' does not come into force straight away. "Work needs to be done by the Countryside Agency to ensure that people know where they may walk safely and understand the needs of farmers and other land users".
4. All other provisions (including the section which grants the right of access over open countryside) will come into force on days to be fixed by ministerial orders. "The government's firm expectation is that the public will have the right to walk across mountain, moor, heath and down and registered common land by no later than the end of 2005."

The government's recent approach to abolition of fox hunting — one smart step forward followed by a quivering shuffle back - like a recruit on the parade ground trying to correct a wrong move without the RSM noticing - is a harbinger of what walkers must expect. Next spring it might be interesting for two friends — dressed respectively as a farmer and a walker — to ask the same political candidate "When shall I start getting those damned hikers rampaging on my land" — and then five minutes later "There's a lovely hill at _____ without any paths on it: when shall I be able to walk

there?" Tell this newsletter if you play that gambit; and what answers you each got.

There's plenty of time to read the rest of this newsletter before you lace your boots up for that ridge walk.

INSPECTORS WANTED

Our small army of Footpath Inspectors is the backbone and Intelligence Corps of the Society, keeping us informed of the state of rights of way in all the eight counties we cover. Each one works in his or her chosen area, combining the pleasures of walking with this essential service.

Could you take on this vital, satisfying job? Instruction on footpath law and lore is given by legal adviser Adrian Littleton with backup from our Inspectors Handbook to guide you through the intricacies. You would work at your own pace in your own time. Reasonable expenses are paid. At present we are in urgent need of Inspectors for the Buxton / Whaley Bridge area and for **Adlington, Pott Shrigley and Poynton-with-Worth**. Please contact Taylor House and ask for Adrian, Norman Edwards or Leslie Meadowcroft.

Note the dates

Sunday 8th April

That traditional occasion when the inmates of Taylor House gather for the Grand Envelope Stuffing convention when the Annual Report is prepared for the post.

Thurs 26th April

Annual General Meeting, Friends Meeting House, Manchester.

Friday 11th May

Annual Dinner, 6.30 for 7pm Freemasons Hall, Manchester. There will be a slide show and talk by **JACK BURLING**, one of our members, who is also Chairman of the Sheffield and Peak District Council for the Protection of Rural England. His subject will be the work of the CPRE and its relationship with the PNFS. Jack has wide experience of the outdoor world. He was a Footpath Inspector for many years. Council Meeting 7.30pm at Taylor House Council Meeting 7.30pm at Taylor House

Thurs 15th Feb
Thurs 15th March

and on 16th November 2001 it will be exactly 175 years ago since the founding fathers won the great footpath battle against 'Vegetable' Wright and started the whole movement.



DID YOU KNOW that the Peak & Northern cooperates with the Manchester branch of the RA to lead a walk in their Meets Programme once a month? A PNFS member leads on the last Wednesday in each month, with a start-point usually within a radius of about 25 miles from Manchester centre, accessible by public transport. The picture shows one the editor led in November, the party heading for Lyme Park on a circular tour around Disley. Walks average 8 to 10 miles and the attendance can be between 10 and 30 bodies of a wide range in ages, some energetic others more modest but all friendly. A whipper-in at the back ensures you don't get lost. We look out for obstructed footpaths and report back to Taylor House. Come and join us.

Forthcoming dates are:

Jan 31st: New Mills to Glossop, leader Janet Cuff. 9.45 train from Piccadilly (get a Day Ranger) or 362 bus from Stockport.

Feb 28th Marple Bridge Circular. leader Eric Kime 9.42 train Piccadilly to Marple Stn. Car park nearby

March 28th Ramsbottom Circular, leader John Needham, 90 bus 9.40 from Lever Street.

April 25th Darwen to Chorley, leader Geoff Daubeny, 10am train to Darwen from Victoria (Wayfarer ticket)

By the way, we need leaders for the June and October 2001 meets. Could that be you? Please contact Geoff Lewis on 0161-766 4683 if you would like to volunteer, or for more information on any of the walks.

WERE WE ENGAGED WHEN YOU RANG TAYLOR HOUSE?

It has been brought to our attention (thanks, Eileen Leonard) that some of you have been experiencing difficulty when trying to telephone PNFS Headquarters with queries, reports and so on. It seems that the phone is engaged for hours. We now find that it is possible with our two lightweight phones for the handset to be lifted off the cradle by the curly coil of flex or the proximity of papers/directories on the desk. We offer abject apologies all round and are taking immediate action to see that it doesn't happen again. Please give us a ring to check.

SNIPPETS

Derek Taylor, our General Secretary for 22 years, will be commemorated by a plaque to be fixed to the front of Taylor House, our headquarters he worked so hard to secure.

The IT (Information Technology) revolution is taking hold of the Peak & Northern. The new influx of computer-literate volunteers is already moving it forward, firstly with the Path Faults Data Base which will enable us more efficiently to chase up local authorities to do something about faults in their area. Before too long we hope to have this on a Society Web Site so that all the details will be available to members.

The National Trust and the Forestry Commission are setting up a scheme for the long-term improvement and protection of the Alport valley, off the Snake Pass in the Peak District. The sense of remoteness there is due to the total absence of motor traffic but it is marred by the uncontrolled growth of the conifers planted in the 1930s. Now the two partners want to return the valley to its natural state, so that it is 'wild by design', but gradually, over a hundred years, in fact. Conifers would be thinned and replaced by broad-leaved trees in small sections so as to disturb the wildlife as little as possible. Felled timber would not be removed (which would require heavy machinery and access roads) but would be used for fencing or allowed to lie. On consideration and consultation with an expert naturalist, we think it an excellent piece of original thinking and give it our approval.

MORE MENACING MASTS (2nd VERSION)

The Wind Turbine industry seems to have gone quiet since our last report with the emphasis turning from the wild hills to proposals to site them offshore. But coming up close behind is the new tranche (or rash) of Telecommunications Masts. These are usually 20 meters or more in height and it seems that the various competing Telecom companies are averse to sharing masts with one another. Each must have its own.

Whilst mobile phones are an undoubted boon in the case of accidents in open country, we must never forget they come with a price. We are promised 30,000 masts to complete the network over the whole country, and there have already been cases of mountain rescue teams being called out for trivial reasons simply because it's now so easy.

The erection of these masts is already causing concern around the south Manchester suburbs and the government has had to assure the public that there is absolutely no health risk. None whatsoever. There seems little harm they can do when sited in industrial areas or business parks, but the problem comes, as with the turbines, when you want to get rid of them.

Cast as a 'utility' together with gas, water and electricity supplies, they are given 'fast-track' treatment through the planning process. Landowners are enticed by tempting rental fees. Masts appear on Church towers and schools. Now two schools have discovered that, even when the contract has expired, the telecom company cannot be forced to remove its equipment. A worrying portent for masts sited in the countryside. It will be an uphill battle to keep control of them now that more than half the population has a mobile phone apiece and won't take kindly to having their reception restricted.

What do **YOU** think?

Contributions on any footpath-related topic welcomed. Please send to Derek Seddon, Editor, at Taylor House 23 Turncroft Lane, Offerton, Stockport SK1 4AB or phone me at home on 0161 428 6137.

Some facts about Rights of Way

Public Rights of Way are

- ~ **Footpaths** - the public have a right of way on foot
- ~ **Bridleways** - the public have a right of way on foot, horseback and bicycles
- ~ **Byways Open to all Traffic (BOATS)** — the public have a right of way for vehicles but the way is used mainly by the public on foot or horseback
- ~ **Roads used as Public Paths (RUPPs)** — an obsolete class of way which is being reviewed and reclassified

Rights of Way Orders are

- ~ Legal documents, made and sealed by Order Making Authorities (OMAs), who are usually the Local Authority
- ~ Orders consist of a written schedule and a map that detail the changes brought about once it has been confirmed

Opposed Orders come to us

- ~ The OMAs cannot confirm any order with outstanding objections. Only the Secretary of State or his appointed Inspector (which is usually the case) has the power to confirm an opposed order
- ~ The Inspector can confirm the order as made, refuse to confirm it at all, or modify the order