

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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From the Chairman

May I commend for your careful consideration the detailed report by Adrian Littleton printed below? I appeal to all members to read it, think about its implications and let us know at Taylor House exactly what you feel our next actions should be.

A faction in the Society, misunderstanding both our motives and our methods, sought to stop the Officers from consulting the membership on this topic, which we felt was the concern of every member. We were accused of wasting valuable time on the very idea of 'Downsizing' when, in fact, the only member who has devoted any time to it is Adrian, at his own suggestion. He, and only he, has done the research, collated the figures and put forward the alternatives. A promise was made last September that members would be consulted and given the opportunity to comment. This we have done.

Eventually, whether the vote goes for or against Downsizing, Adrian's work will not be wasted. We now know exactly where our membership strengths and weaknesses lie and we are in his debt for carrying the task through under personal difficulties. NOW we have to decide whether

- 1) to continue as before and ignore the evidence, or
- 2) to curtail our area of operations and concentrate on improving the services in our core area, or
- 3) to ask every member to support a recruiting campaign to boost membership, particularly active membership in the outlying areas.

The issue will be debated at the next Council Meeting on Thursday 20th February 2003 at the Friends' Meeting House, Mount St, Manchester, commencing at 6.45pm. Travel expenses of those attending will be paid if an account is submitted. If you are unable to attend,

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please write or telephone Taylor House. Your opinion on whether we should submit to the Annual General Meeting in April a proposal that the Society should reduce its area of operations will be recorded and taken into consideration.

A further discussion may take place at the Council Meeting at Taylor House in March if necessary.

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WHERE ARE BRADFORD'S FOOTPATH ZEALOTS?

For many years membership of the Society has been thin in tracts of Merseyside, West and South Yorkshire, Lancashire, west Cheshire and much of Staffordshire. To identify the seriousness of this problem, I have recently put on to a database all our members' names and post-codes, plus the locations of our inspectors and affiliated societies. This reveals that 29% of members (256) live in Stockport Metropolitan Borough; 12% in Trafford; 11% in Macclesfield Borough; 7% in High Peak Borough; and 7% in Manchester City.

The following Boroughs have only 11 members between them:

Barnsley, Blackburn & Darwen, Blackpool, Bradford, Doncaster, Halton, Knowsley, Leeds, Liverpool, Rotherham, St Helens, Sefton, Stoke-on-Trent, Wakefield, Wirral.

Four of our major tasks require local knowledge and leg work- Responses to proposals and Orders to divert, close, create and upgrade public rights of way.

Reporting of faults - obstructions, dangerous stiles, missing signs etc.

Participation in all the tasks deriving from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and footpath improvement projects.

Creation of rights of way where evidence exists - but must be amplified and used - within the 21 years' limit established by this Act.

We must not be beguiled by map evidence into 'no commenting' on Orders which are seriously detrimental to walkers' interests. Moreover, our right to receive copies of footpath Orders carries with it the duty to comment on those Orders responsibly; and not waste other people's time by making inept objections on imperfect map evidence without any idea what the proposals look like on the ground.

Ideally, dear reader, what we should like you to do is to recruit twenty enthusiasts for these tasks in each of Bradford, Chester, Doncaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Preston, Rotherham, Stoke on Trent and Wakefield. If you boggle at that labour of Hercules, please tell Derek Seddon any constructive ideas which you have on this topic.

CALLING ALL INSPECTORS AND AGENTS

Please help if you can to update the Footpath Inspectors' Handbook.

The last version we know of is dated 1993 and many changes have taken place since then with the laws surrounding footpaths and the common sense interpretation of them by the walkers.

If you can help by reviewing our current issue of the Handbook and letting me have your comments on what revisions you consider are necessary I would be very grateful. Already I have asked Officers to comment and some Inspectors and Agents who have already expressed an interest in helping. I would like to have a revised Handbook available by the end of April 2003. So please get in touch soon.

Please contact me at Taylor House and I will send a photocopy of the current handbook to you. You can then either mark it up with your comments or detail them on a separate piece of paper and send them to me. The Taylor House address, 'phone and fax number and e-mail address are on the front of this Newsletter.

June Mabon

POACHERS' POCKETS

Cliff Law, one of our dedicated assessors at Taylor House, was with a party attempting to walk Wardlow Footpath 2 from its junction with

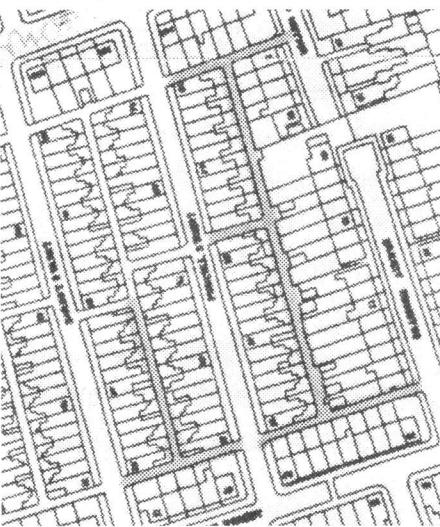
Castlegate Lane near the Bulls Head. Blocked by a long, broad stretch of lethal-looking mud, the party retired in confusion and made a considerable detour.

Cliff decided to take matters further and wrote to Derbyshire County Council, asking for stones to be laid along the line of the path. Can't be done, came the reply. Adding stones would be classed as improvement and our budget only covers maintenance. The quagmire is due to *poaching* (from the French *poche*, a pocket - hoofmarks left by cattle - amazing what you learn on this job). If the farmer reduced the number of his stock that might help but we haven't the authority to demand it.

Cliff didn't leave it there. Waiting for it to dry out could take months. "Couldn't you arrange for a diversion on to the nearby green lane," he asked. We called our Inspector, Sally Cave, of farming stock herself, to investigate. She reported that her wellies sank in 8 inches and the gateway was flooded. Cliff arranged to meet Paul Hopkins, Peak Park RoW officer and Sam Beaton, his Derby CC opposite number on site to prove his point. On a damp November day Sam was nearly lost at sea and Paul admitted the condition were the worst he had seen. Cliff's persistence paid off with a phone call from Paul to say that the farmer had agreed to his suggested diversion. Full marks all round for co-operation and an excellent outcome.

ALLEYGATING

Another new word in the planner's lexicon, but one we're likely to see much more as the drive for urban renewal proceeds.



The odd grid pattern above is a small section of the street map of Longsight, Manchester, representing part of an area of Victorian terrace housing whose fronts are separated by parallel streets and their backyards by alleys. Manchester Housing Dept seeks to insert gates in several of the alleys to stop them being used as through routes by thieves, vandals and muggers. Local residents agree with this installation. Previous schemes have resulted in a reduction of the burglary rate by a claimed 90%. Our assessors viewed this as a reasonable request by the authority, supported by the residents and one which does not interfere with the rights of way of pedestrians who

could still use the parallel streets.

In any case, by the new DEFRA proposals, local authorities have to produce evidence after an alley has been gated for two years, that there has been a measurable reduction in the crime rate in the district or the gate must be removed.

THE WAY THE WIND BLOWS

News arrives that the first wind turbine in the Peak Park, where they have been hitherto forbidden, has been granted permission at an isolated farm near Wincle. There are extenuating circumstances - a single unit will replace a diesel generator and the alternative would be cables carried on poles. Acceptable, then?

You may have heard of Abbots Bromley, the Staffordshire village where the annual Horn Dance has been performed for centuries. The Staffordshire Way goes through the old Lord of the Manor's private land at Bagot's Park and it is there that Powergen are proposing to set up a Wind Farm of 8 turbines each with a height of 98 metres to blade tip, four turbines on either side of the footpath. Which are unlikely to improve a walker's enjoyment of this ancient landscape. Powergen state "At the end of their lifetime the turbines can be removed" The turbines, yes, but what about their enormous concrete pedestals? That problem is always avoided.

RETURN TO SHUTLINGSLOW

The stainless steel memorial plate to Arthur Smith which was ripped off its seating on the summit of Shutlingslow by vandals unknown, has now been replaced, with the invaluable assistance of Hazel Winder, Teggs Nose Park Ranger. Arthur, a doughty fighter for rights of way, was responsible for the establishment of the paths along Macclesfield and Peak Park canals.



Replacing the plaque
December 2002



The scene on the summit of
Shutlingslow, Oct 1979 when the
plaque was dedicated.

Eighty ramblers gathered in October 1979 to pay tribute to his memory. Twenty-three years later some mindless goon took a tool up to the summit in an attempt to rip off the plate, but was interrupted by the rangers. The plate (not the vandal) had to be flattened out, but on December 13th it was back in place. If you visit 'The Matter-horn of the Peak District' please keep an eye on it and let us know if the bad guys have been back.

THE SIGNPOST LOG JAM

Since Bill Johnson (Signpost Officer) and Fred Ogden (S.O. Admin) reluctantly had to admit that they are no longer physically up to the hard labour of planting signposts we have built up something of a backlog in the garage at Taylor House. Bill was still doing the carpentry and Fred the liaison with donors and landowners until we had 13 posts waiting to be installed. But a concerted effort at the end of the year cleared 8 of them with the assistance of members and the Trafford Walkers. Most of the remainder are awaiting confirmation of their eventual site, but we hope to clear them very soon.

MID-WEEK WALK : NOVEMBER 2002.

Led by Roy Standring.

Thirty people and two dogs assembled at Disley station in bright and breezy weather for our figure-of-eight walk.

The start took us down behind the Dandyclock, up past Hagbank and across the canal. A steep descent through woodland and across the babbling brook brought us to the paper mill- and its stink- on the Goyt, which was followed to the B6101. Half a mile along the road got us to Strines and thence eastwards past the station, where the mandatory coffee break was taken, and up the steep but pleasant old cobbled lane, with good views to the south over Lyme, to Brook Bottom. We were too early to take advantage of the facilities of the Fox Inn!

Our route then lay north- eastwards, through woodland and field paths, by Shaw Farm and Castle Edge Farm, gaining height steadily, to Primrose Lane and the lunch stop. A left turn and west along Black Lane below Cobden Edge to the Banks, south by Lower Cliffe, and we were back in Strines. An easy last stretch up and under the canal, then south over the golf course by Stanley Hall, and we were back where we started, having covered six or seven miles.

Twenty- nine walkers completed, one

having apparently dropped out way back without, sadly, informing the leader. We were so lucky with the weather: the frightening forecast had told of a day of wind and rain but in the event we got only the wind and occasional bright skies; the walk was over by half past two and the first rain hit at a quarter to three!

SITUATIONS VACANT

The Society is in a permanent state of renewal and (we hope) improvement. Valued people come and go. New technologies are embraced and we are always in need of new people to keep us going. If you feel that you could tackle one of the posts listed below, please contact Taylor House. Training could be given for the more complex jobs.

1. President (Active or figurehead)
2. Secretary
3. Representative at northern Magistrates' Courts
4. Assistant Treasurer
5. Assistant Signpost Officer
6. Trainee assessors
7. Footpath Inspectors
8. Reserve typist (computer experienced)
9. Representatives on Rights of Way Forums (various areas)
10. Assistant Newsletter editor
11. Library archivist
12. Exhibition stand designer/ exhibitor
13. Lost Ways researchers (old maps, documents)

THE DERWENT VALLEY HERITAGE WAY.

The Derwent Valley Heritage Way is a new long distance walking route, to be officially opened in April 2003. It follows the River Derwent from Ladybower reservoir dam to the confluence with the River Trent close by the historic inland port at Shardlow. Going down stream the route passes through the beautiful Peak District scenery created by various gritstone edges and into Chatsworth Park. The route continues through Rowsley, following the river and the preserved steam "Peak Rail" to Matlock. The Mills of Matlock Bath and Cromford brings the Way into the World Heritage Site made up of historic mills, towns and villages sited on the river down as far as Derby city. En-route the Way goes through the historic town of Belper which is well worth exploring. North of Derby the Way makes use of the wonderful cycle route created on the river bank through the city and out to the Alveston Park. Finally the Way takes us through Elvaston Castle Country Park and onto Borrowash Bridge. Field paths and lanes bring the walker to the Trent and Mersey canal at Shardlow where we follow the canal towpath to Derwent Mouth. Here the River Derwent flows into the River Trent. Interestingly, the canal towpath can be walked northwards to Runcorn, a distance of 93 miles. The Derwent Valley Heritage Way has been devised and created by the Derwent Valley Trust. The Trust was established in 1996 to promote the sustainable

development and use of the whole of the valley and its amenities for the benefit of the public, both residents and visitors. It is registered as a charity, and governed by a Board of 7 Directors, supported by a Consultative Council of 28 members, comprising a) nominees each of a) public authorities b) charitable organisations/trusts for all amenity aspects c) industry and commerce, d) government agencies, landowners and other community organisations. The Peak and Northern has been represented from the inception as an expert on footpaths matters. The late County Councillor, Harry Lowe asked for P and N representation at the initial meeting of the proposed long distance path when he remarked about P and N "They know all about footpaths". I have been the P and N representative since that time, and have worked with the Peak Park, County and other Local Authorities, World Heritage Site officers, officials and consultants on the project. My congratulations go to the present chairman of D.V.T. Dr Brian Waters, who recently retired from the Environmental Agency and Rick Jillings, Project Officer, for bringing this project to completion.

A description of the route has been prepared and a guide book will be ready in 2003.

The Derwent Valley Heritage Way can be walked as a complete route, or in sections. Definitive paths are followed for the majority of the route.

Public transport is available throughout the full length of the Way.

Starting Point	End Point	km	miles	Total miles
Ladybower	Hathersage	9.5	6	6
Heatherdene				
Hathersage	Baslow	11.5	7	13
Baslow	Rowsley	8	5	18
Rowsley	Matlock	9	5.5	23.5
Matlock	Whatstandwell	10	6.5	30
Whatstandwell	Belper	9.5	6	36
Belper	Little Eaton	7.5	4.5	40
Little Eaton	Derby City Centre	6.5	4	44
Derby City Centre	Borrowash	9	5.5	50
Borrowash	Derwent Mouth	10	6	55

From Maurice Deakin Inspector for Castleton, Hope etc

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OUR WEDNESDAY WALKS : COULD YOU LEAD ONE?

Jeff Lewis is busy preparing his list of walks, in conjunction with Manchester RA, to be published in the next Annual Report. These take place on the last Wednesday of each month but he is short of leaders for November 2003 and February and March 2004. The outings usually attract 20 or so friendly people and are over 8 to 10 miles. Any experienced volunteers will be welcomed. Please ring Jeff on 0161 766 4683.

INSURANCE. We are happy to be able to confirm that all leaders of PNFS walks are now covered against civil liability claims which might be made by injured walkers or disgruntled landowners.

CYCLE TRACKS

WALKERS NEED FOOTPATHS AND CYCLISTS NEED CYCLE TRACKS

AND THEY CAN COEXIST.

Cycling is currently encouraged as a healthy and environmentally friendly form of travel, and many Highway Authorities are keen to create new, mostly urban, cycle tracks. Pedestrians may use these and, since they are generally well-surfaced and often provided with street lighting, they are of benefit to walkers- perhaps not to serious ramblers, but certainly to schoolchildren and to housewives with prams or shopping trolleys- and they should therefore be welcomed by the Society.

Unfortunately, cycle tracks were not recognised as a separate type of highway when definitive maps were drawn up in the 1950's and therefore they are not shown on definitive maps. It has, moreover, been commonly accepted that, whenever a new cycle track has been routed along a definitive footpath (or bridleway) for all or part of its length, the definitive status of that section of path must then be removed by a map modification order. Most users of the path would not know, nor care, about this. It is, however, of great importance to footpath preservation societies who depend on the definitive map both for an assurance of the legal status of a path and, because the number provides an unambiguous way

of referring to it.

After previous cases where loss of status had occurred, the Society's assessors received, in March 2002, an order from Lancashire County Council to create two cycle tracks at Ormskirk. One of these ran along an abandoned railway line which had not previously been a right of way. We had no reason to object to this- the cycle track would be useable by pedestrians and an undefinitive path is better than no path at all. The other was a definitive footpath (Ormskirk 76A). We therefore entered an objection and suggested that it should instead be made a bridleway which would allow its use by cycles, as well as horses, whilst retaining its definitive status.

Lancashire replied that by making the footpath a cycle track rather than a bridleway it could be maintained to a far higher standard- regular inspections, filling potholes, surfacing, and street lighting. Although removed from the definitive map, it would be available for pedestrians and a stopping-up order would be needed for its closure. We maintained our objection for several months during which Lancashire made further orders for conversion of footpaths at Lytham St Annes and Preston to which we also objected.

There are many cases where, because of housing developments, footpaths have been diverted on to new estate roads and have retained their

definitive status and numbers.

IF A FOOTPATH AND A ROAD CAN COEXIST, WHY NOT A FOOTPATH AND A CYCLE TRACK?

We put this argument to Lancashire County Council at the end of August. Two months later, they replied that when an order was made under the Cycle Tracks Act 1984 the pedestrian right of way remained. We already knew this, but the letter continued “Unless a definitive map modification order is madethe public footpath will remain.” The reasons for such an order were listed and the letter continued “As none of these apply in this case.....there will be no requirement to modify the map and this will allow the route to remain recorded on the definitive map”.

Lancashire thus believes that there is no requirement to make a map modification order following the conversion of a footpath to a cycle track and implicitly accepted that they would not do so in the three cases to which we had objected. We accordingly withdrew our objections and asked them to make the above policy clear when proposing future cycle track orders. We have since had this assurance for a cycle track conversion at Pendle and have publicised Lancashire’s enlightened policy to other Highway Authorities who are considering such conversions.

Of course, retention of the converted

path on the definitive map, could equally be achieved if cycle tracks were recognised as a fourth category of definitive highway, in addition to footpaths, bridleways, and byways open to all traffic. This would require legislation but, if parliamentary time could be found, it would have the advantage that cycle tracks which were not converted footpaths would also be included on definitive maps.

PETER CROFTS

One Over The Eight (part 1)

By GRAHAM WILSON

The following is an abridged, adapted version of a chapter from Graham's book Climbing Down, recently published in hardback by Millrace (Tel. 01663 765080; 2a Leafield Rd, Disley SK12 2JE) The drawings are by Gerry Dale, whose maps illustrate the book. Copies of Climbing Down are available from bookshops at £13.95, or direct from the publishers at £10.00, p&p free. Please state that you are a member of PNFS when ordering.

The eight are the pubs of that number that lie in the parish of Sutton and Sutton is a parish in Macclesfield. The Sutton Eight is a traditional walk that conjoins these pubs. As with all traditions, it goes back as long as is necessary and is satisfactorily vague when it comes to detail. There may be

other versions of the true nature of the event but all this humble researcher can plead is that he asked the question of a participant who not only completed this hazardous enterprise but has also an inscribed glass tankard to prove it. There seems no doubt where it began—with breakfast at the Hanging Gate—and, assuming the course is octoliptical, there it must have ended. It is when investigating what happened in between that the memory of the witness tended to slip in and out of focus. So, if the Keeper of the Eight finds the detail to be in error, I apologise in advance. There is amongst walkers, however, a general philosophy that it is better to get more miles than pints under your belt and, given the proximity of pubs in the vicinity of the village of Langley, it



is more than probable that these lay towards the end of the course. The longer 'half' to include the Ryles Arms, the Fools Nook and Sutton Hall, is twice as far as the second leg comprising the Lamb Inn, the Church House, the St Dunstan and the Leathers Smithy.

The first part of the journey is across



farmland, but the paths are well marked and the relationship between walker and farmer is generally good. This is not always true and land owner or occupier is likely to employ a variety of devices to deter the timid walker from exercising his or her legal rights.

These fall into three categories, of which the first is the intimidatory approach. In this field there is the possibility of death or serious injury through (a) high velocity bullets (b) uncontrolled domesticated animals and (c) supposedly controlled sporting spheroids. There is quite properly an outcry when vandals drop lumps of masonry off motorway bridges on passing BMWs but there are those who would hold that if an owner behaves in like manner on his own land, he is entirely within his rights and it is the walker who should beware. Type 1(b) is of current interest. The owner of an estate in north-west Scotland has taken the Beware of the Bull concept a stage further. He proposes to introduce wolves and lynx onto his property to keep the deer population in proper proportion, no doubt with large notices posted at strategic points to this effect. Even if this is not a bluff

to deter visitors, I can't see the scheme being very successful. Whilst no expert on the hunting psyche of these particular *ferae naturae*, I would suspect that, having established the average running speed of sheep as opposed to deer, they would happily settle for a diet of lamb over venison.



The second method is obstruction by default. Examples of this illegal practice are: failing to reconstitute footpaths after ploughing, nailing barbed wire across stiles, or the ambiguous placing of notices relating to electric fences. The worst offender is undoubtedly the slurry lagoon. The farmer finds a suitable dip in the path, fills it with slurry and invites the walker to continue knee-deep if he wishes. An added refinement, encountered on the Southern Upland Way, is to encourage the growth of nettles on the margins between the pool and suitably aggressive barbed-wire fencing. Complaints are usually met with some bluster about long established agricultural custom and practice, with undertones of U-Boat blockades and the invasion of substandard food from the Continent. If you attempt to stand your ground, Plan Ib is brought into play in

the form of ill-nourished cross-bred alsatians.

However the third is the most insidious. It suggests at first sight that both the landowner and the walker are on the same side and they are acting together for a greater good. The notice, conspicuously discreet, tends to read as follows:

This long-established woodland is the natural habitat of a variety of indigenous flora and fauna and is an area of unique scientific interest. Visitors are requested to leave the path at this point and follow the arrowed diversion.

-a diversion that is usually along an A road belching with juggernauts. As time passes, discretion is thrown to the winds and the notice is continually toned-up in appearance and content until it reads:

KEEP OUT

Area of Special Scientific Interest as specified by E. U. Reg 432 (ii)

There are many variants of this, most often concerned with health and hygiene or dangers more apparent than real.

Editor's note:

The second part of this article will appear in the next edition of the newsletter.