

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Taylor House, 23 Turncroft Lane, Offerton
Stockport SK1 4AB Tel: 0161 480 3565
Fax: 0161 429 7279 Reg Charity No:212219

October 2004
Number 14

mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk

www.peakandnorthern.org.uk

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Firstly let's review progress on our two specific projects--membership drive and new signposts. Total membership bottomed at around 725 and has now recovered to an encouraging 845 --some initiatives have paid off others haven't (no surprise as we don't want it too easy!). Further ideas await Officers' discussion and hopefully agreement.

Concerning PNFS funded signposts, the first three for Hartington have been cast and should be planted in the next few weeks. Several more for there await agreement. Grindon has been 'reccied' and produced one definite and two possibles. The identification of suitable sites for new posts needs speeding up and we look here to the involvement of our Inspectors and members. Where is your ideal spot for a sign ??--there are a few qualifications however--particular interest is outside our Peak District heartland, not NT property (anti -signs), best at a junction of paths with no other signs there, and, can you identify the farmer/landowner. Your suggestions are urgently required please to **Fred Ogden** at Taylor House.

June Mabon continues to do good deeds as Media publicity co-ordinator getting the PNFS name into the public domain in national walking mags, local community news and **Whats On** leaflets.

The **L G Meadowcroft** memorial bridge is planned to be in place in Tom Wood Charlesworth by the end of October.

In July we held an All Members' (Council) meeting and there were 14 attendees. As some felt it being on a Friday was a drawback we will revert to Thursdays --next meeting 7.00pm ,Thurs Oct 14th, Friends' Meeting House, Manchester

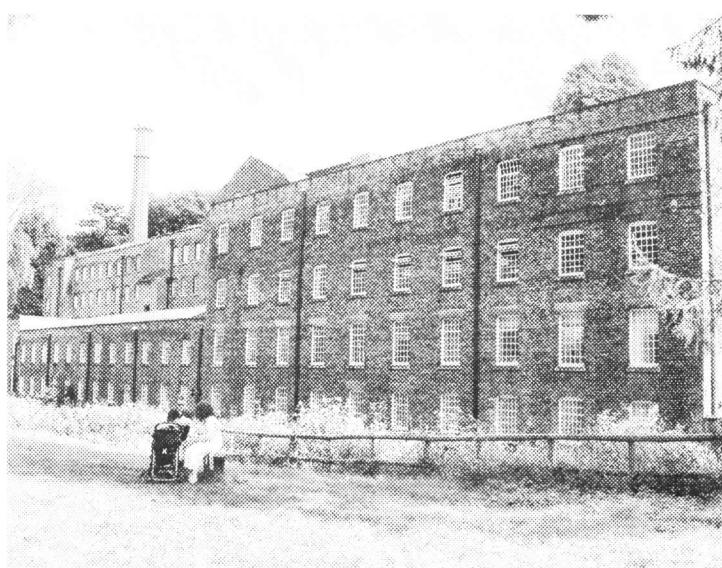
The July meeting determined that the Society position on wind farms would now

be that each individual application would be considered on its influence on the enjoyment of walkers.

A noteworthy financial decision has been the withdrawal of £46,000 invested in Hampshire Trust Preference shares and its placement into a lower interest earning account to minimize risk.

We have been invited by the Peak Park Authority to go litter picking on Kinder Scout on Sep 12th --an invitation we could hardly refuse! -so a small group will have been there by the time you read this and hopefully all visitors will be able to look kinder on Kinder.

Kindest regards,
David Bratt (01925 762472,
bratty41@hotmail.com)



Over 50 Booked for Inspectors' Conference

The demand for places at the Inspectors' Conference, being held on 3rd November 2004 at Styal Mill, near Wilmslow, has been brisk. Already over 50 delegates have confirmed their attendance and eventually we could end up with near the maximum of 70. A very topical and interesting agenda has been prepared and hopefully all the delegates will find the day enjoyable but, with a few challenges.

Tom Partridge, who is the Rights of Way Officer for Pendle B.C. has agreed to share his views and experiences on running his Local Access Forum. In addition, there will be plenty of opportunity for

discussion; giving feedback to Officers; meeting old and new friends; giving advice on existing and emerging policies covering all aspects of the Society's work.

A small number of places can be taken up by any Members who are interested in the work of the Inspectors and would like to know more. If you would like to take up one of these places then contact **Bob Dumbarton** or **Roy Spoors** at the Stockport office but, hurry 'first come first served'.



A peaceful woodland walk by the side of the river Bollin at Styal

Society Seeks Public Inquiry in Pendle

An Extinguishment Order made under Section 118 of the Highways Act 1980 by Pendle B.C. is being contested by the Society; we have requested a local Public Inquiry to hear the evidence and this has been granted by the Planning Inspectorate. It looks as though the Inquiry will be scheduled for November 2004.

This saga is a sorry tale of a developer who simply erected a series of garden fences over Barnoldswick 14, by increasing the size of a series of gardens. This was done without planning approval and despite an earlier Public Inquiry that left Barnoldswick 14 completely untouched by the proposed development. When completed, the houses were then sold and during the normal searches none of the buyers' solicitors discovered that a footpath existed through the gardens.

Now, of course, the house owners are up in arms but, between the Council and the developer, there are some very serious issues to be investigated. **Shirley Northcott**, our agent, is working closely with the local RA and the Public Inquiry promises to be an interesting and lively affair.

Roy Spoors



Tameside Withdraws from Public Inquiry at Eleventh Hour

The long running saga of Stalybridge 54 came to an unexpected end in June 2004. Just 48hrs before the start of the Public Inquiry called to consider the confirmation of a Diversion Order, Tameside M.B.C. simply withdrew the Order.

They reported that the Developer had agreed to modify the plans for the

proposed car park near the Celtic Football Stadium and that these changes meant that the Diversion Order was no longer needed. **Bill Johnson** had long had an interest in this Order by leading the Society's objection and he must be pleased with the outcome.

For everybody else it was a case of 'delighted with the result but, dismayed by the conduct of the council'. Their very late capitulation presumably had nothing to do with the very long list of



The courtyard at Styal Mill

objectors and the justified criticism that was headed their way at the Public Inquiry, had it gone ahead as planned.

Roy Spoores

Halton B.C. Feels the Ire of Magistrates Court

There are still too many instances of councils making inappropriate use of the wrong legislation to make changes to the footpath network. One recent example where the Society cooperated with the local RA, was the proposed extinguishment of a passageway in Halton. Alright, it was hardly earth shattering, but there was a very real point to be made!

Halton B.C. brought an order under Section 116 of the Highways Act 1980 before Halton Magistrates

Court; they cited vandalism, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour as the justification. The test to be applied under Section 116 is 'the path is unnecessary' and since it was used by local people the Society wrote to the Council suggesting the inappropriate use of Section 116 and pointing out that Section 118b of the Highways Act 1980 (recently enacted by the CROW Act 2000) was the correct procedure. The Council replied that it felt it was entirely correct in using Section 116.

The result? Halton Magistrates Court not only refused the order but, suggested to the Council that they should consider making an Order under Section 118b. It is not often that we get such a clear connection between the Society's position and the final outcome.

Roy Spoores Courts and Inquiries Officer

Another reminder from the Membership Secretary

In dealing with membership, it is almost like an exercise in book-keeping, having a Profit and Loss Account. It is no exaggeration to say that the influx of new members since the beginning of the year is certainly something for which we can be very pleased. Due in no small measure to the circulation of the Membership Forms through the medium of **SIGNPOST** and the enthusiastic support of individuals, amongst whom our Chairman has been the driving force, we can report some 58 new members. This figure is at the time of going to press and we naturally hope that there will be more.

That is the good side of the story. The pleasure, which with others I have felt at this upward trend, has been marred by the fact that, at the same time, no fewer than 47 individual memberships are still to be renewed. As I have said,

Council Meetings All members invited

**Thursday October 14th,
Friends Meeting House,
Mount St, Manchester Start
7pm**
**Thursday January 20th 2005
at Taylor House Stockport
Start 7pm**

on previous similar occasions, I am reluctant to criticise for I do not know the reasons behind this situation. I sincerely hope that the reason might be just an oversight.

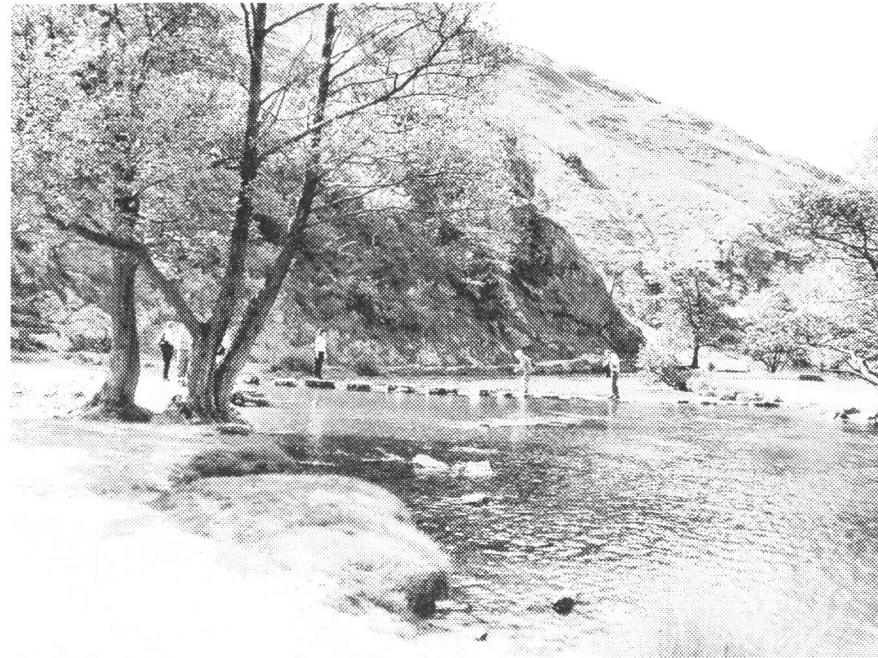
Whether our workers are those who turn up at Taylor House or those who go out into the countryside to try to keep things in order there, the only reward they seek is the support which will enable the Society to keep going. This can only be achieved by everyone striving to increase our numbers, i.e. by getting new members and keeping those we have.

Ernest Sutton

Anyone prepared to lend a hand?

As a regular member of the Monday morning team I wonder if there is a member out there who could come occasionally to Taylor House to lend a hand with the smooth running of the Society.

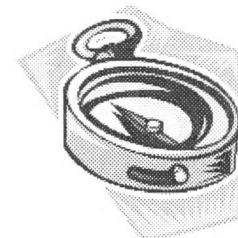
As the updated computer system is now fully functional, we have some extra capacity. If you are computer literate and can use a word processor then this might be a way for you to help. For instance, correspondence from local authorities needs to be recorded, photocopied and, with a covering letter, sent to our Inspectors for their own records. We are also always on the lookout for help with maintaining the filing system.



Dovedale Stepping Stones

For further details please contact me at Taylor House on Monday morning between 9.30am and 12.30pm.

Peter Rhodes



DOVEDALE STEPPING STONES

New bridge proposed

Harry Scott, our man in North Staffs, attended a site meeting in Dovedale with officers from Staffordshire County Council, the Peak Park and the National Trust.

Their aim is to reduce the danger to ill-shod people of the path up the dale where it passes below the steep scree at the foot of Thorpe Cloud.

Over the years there have been a number of accidents due to slipping, tripping or falling stones.

It is proposed to install a new bridge quite close to the stepping stones (which can often be slippery or under water) and to close the path under Thorpe Cloud. Walkers will still be able to walk up Dovedale by the left bank as far as the stepping stones or bridge, then continue up the right bank as usual. The suggestions are still in their early stages, but we at Taylor House are inclined to accept them as proposed. If any member should foresee any reason why we should not, please let us know.

PENNINE BRIDLEWAY OPENS

Back in June, our High Peak Inspector **Maurice Deakin** represented the PNFS at the opening of the new Pennine Bridleway riding, walking and cycling trail.

The initial 73-mile section starts at Middleton Top, near Wirksworth, Derbyshire and takes you to the Mary Townley loop near Littleborough (where it may well have a grand view of the Scout Moor Wind Farm, if that development is approved) passing through Parsley Hay, Peak Forest Hayfield, Uppermill and Hebden Bridge by both the White and Dark

Peak.

Eventually this will continue to Byrness in Northumberland to cover a total distance of 350 miles.

The official guidebook, published by Aurum Press, divides the route into a series of one-day walks.

The wind farm proposals are the subject of a public enquiry at Rochdale Rugby Club on Tuesday 23rd November 2004.

BUXTON-MATLOCK RAILWAY ABANDONED

Maurice Deakin also had the pleasure of hearing his prophecy of 12 months ago proved right when the proposed re-opening of the Buxton-Matlock railway was finally abandoned. The major bugbear was the projected cost of £100 million with little economic benefit to show for it.

Midweek Walks

We do not have any reports of the walks held in May, June or August as these were led by members of the Manchester RA in the absence of PNFS leaders. We are very grateful to **Gwyn and Dagmar Thomas, Brian Melling and Don and John Moseley** for helping us out of this difficulty. Old faithful **Janet Cuff's** report of the July meet is appended below, but

we would welcome new (or old) volunteers willing to carry on the tradition of leading these joint efforts between the PNFS and the RA. Could this be you?

Mid-week walk July 2004

The weather was warm, although not always sunny, on the day of the walk, which was a circular of just under 10 miles from Strines, passing Mellor church, Mellor Hall, Chisworth, Ludworth Moor, Whitle and Brookbottom. There were 35 out initially, although some left at various points to make for an alternative return point - Marple or New Mills - owing to difficulties with the transport back. The problem was that I had planned to catch the 16.10 train back to Manchester, but from the end of June, the timetable was changed so that this train no longer stops at Strines! So those wishing to return to Manchester had to catch the bus into Stockport and then take another bus into Manchester (Stockport station being out of action owing to West Coast main line engineering).

We valiantly do try to continue to use public transport but things are very difficult at the moment. However, the party coped with the problems with their usual good humour and my impression was that a good day was had by all, including myself. No obstructions were found, but several stiles were not in good condition. I would single out particularly the wall stile at GR 005905 which is in an

unstable condition and is potentially dangerous. I have reported it to the Stockport Rights of Way Officer, Geoff Funnell.

Janet Cuff

Forthcoming Walks

Wednesday 27th October:

STANDEdge TUNNEL

CIRCULAR:

9.20 bus (184) to Diggle from Oldham St. Leader (PNFS) **Eileen Leonard** (01623 874 183). 11 miles but a cut-off at Marsden possible.

Wednesday 24th November:

STALYBRIDGE CIRCULAR

visiting (special treat)! GR SE 000000 at the confluence of SD, SE, SJ and SK.

Leader (PNFS) **David Bratt** (01925 762 472). 9.32 train from Piccadilly or 9.20 from Victoria.

Wednesday 29th December:

CHEADLE HULME TO

POYNTON.

9.36 train from Piccadilly.

Leader (PNFS) **Jeff Lewis** (0161 766 4683)

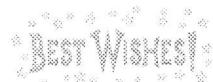
Wednesday 26th January 2005:

CHELFORD CIRCULAR.

10.00 start from Chelford Station. Car parking in the cattle market down Dixon Drive. Coffee and biscuits at Nether Alderley village hall; lunch at Stag's Head. 10 miles. Leaders (PNFS) **Peter & Hilda Bowler** (01625 432 246).

Goodbye Stan

Stan Lomas has been with us for over 20 years, from the days when the work of the Society was organised from the backroom in **Leslie Meadowcroft's** house in Hazel Grove. Then, he was one of the Assessors, watching for transgressions of the footpath network, but latterly he has been in efficient charge of the postal records at Taylor House, always the first man in on a Monday morning, always quietly cheerful. There was a time, a couple of years ago, when he was unable to gain entry through our side gate. Undeterred and not wishing to be prevented from getting to work, he shinned over the five-foot wall. He was 85 at the time. Now, two years later, he has decided to call it a day and retire. This Society which he has served so well for so long would like to record its gratitude for his devotion to duty. May your days be long and full of sunshine.



Regular readers will remember Graham Wilson for his 2-part description of a walk round 8 pubs in the Peak District. This time he has ventured further afield for his latest book 'Macc and the Other Islands'. Here is his report on one of them...

MINGULAY

The slopes of Heaval, Barra's highest hill, tumble down to Castlebay, across the harbour to neighbouring Vatersay, then on to the archipelago of islands that peter to the point where Scotland runs out. The names Sandray, Pabbay, Mingulay, Berneray trip off the tongue, spilling headlong to the fullstop that is the lighthouse of Barra Head. Of them all, perhaps, Mingulay is best worth a visit.

At its peak it held a school, a church and 150 inhabitants. In common with other islanders they survived by catching fish. But their speciality was collecting the eggs and young of the various seabirds that lived on the cliffs and sea stacks that form the western side of the island. As with the good Doctor's gradation of red wine so were the jobs divided. The boys caught puffins by laying snares outside their burrows or "fished" from the cliff-tops with nooses attached to long poles. The men descended the precipices on ropes made from horsehair, hanging on with one hand, collecting their catch with other. But to those who aspired to the brandy fell the most dangerous task of all. The technique was to sail a boat close to the cliffs of a sea stack and using the swell leap for a small and no doubt slippery ledge. The foremost hero, called the *Gingich*, carried a rope to assist the



party in making a safe landing, then led the way up the rock. The rest followed with suitable receptacles. The tricky bit was the return. Here the leader had to jump into the bobbing boat as it was buffeted by the violent seas before securing it alongside to allow a steadier retreat for the others.

In fact, you have to be a bit of a *gingich* yourself, if you want to visit the island. My own experience of landing, on a day trip from Barra, was of the boat pulling into a rocky inlet where visitors had to scramble with care onto nearby ledges. Also, as the boatman will be understandably cautious, your time on the island

may be short and it is best to plan in advance. The remains of the village are interesting and worthy of a lengthy study in their own right. But it would be a pity to miss the rest of the island, particularly the cliffs and stacks of the west coast. The best view is from Dun Mingulay, a steep sided peninsula rising 300 feet above the sea and joined to the mainland by a narrow isthmus. Somewhere below you is a cave where James Grant, a Catholic priest, hid after the battle of Culloden and in another, so rumour has it, is a treasure of French gold intended to fund the army of Charles Edward Stuart. If time permits visits to Hecla, Carnan, Tom a' Mhaide and Macphee's Hill make a fine round. You could split this itinerary over two separate visits, but, as many have found, Mingulay is not an easy place to get onto.

Or get off. When you reach Macphee's Hill, it is a well to check that your transport home is still available. Otherwise you might suffer the same fate as the poor lad after whom the hill is named. MacNeil of Barra, realising that he had not received his rent from the tenants on Mingulay for some time, sent in the bailiffs to investigate. As they approached the island, they could see no sign of life. To be on the safe side they despatched Macphee, the youngest member of the crew, to wade ashore and report back. In due course he returned to say that he had been to the village and found nothing but corpses. Fearing the plague, his colleagues immediately set sail and left Macphee to his fate. There he remained for a year and a day, sleeping in a remote rocky cleft and surviving on shellfish. He spent the rest of his time perched on his soon to be eponymous hill, until he finally attracted the attention of a passing boat.

Adapted from *Macc and Other Islands*, Graham Wilson, Millrace 2004.

And finally a notice seen recently at Tegg's Nose Country Park....

**Recently we at the Country Park have had a small problem.
Someone keeps putting their garden waste over this fence.
If the person would like to get in touch with the Rangers, as we have a large amount of waste that we would like to dump in their garden.**

**Rangers' Office
Cheshire County Council**