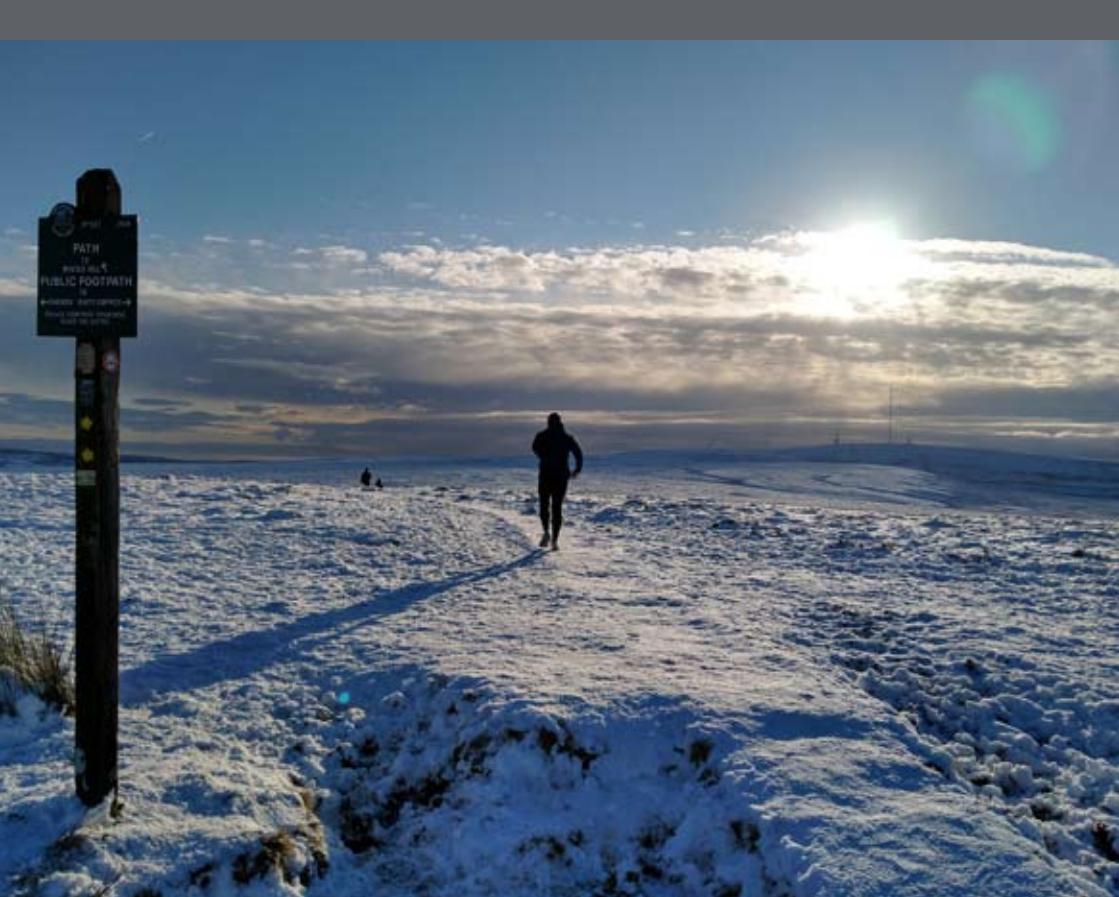


SIGNPOST

Magazine of the
Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Number 67 - Spring 2021



S527 Great Hill towards Winter Hill
Photograph by Ian Chivas



As 2021 started, so did my role as Chair of the Society. I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, David Hurrell, who sadly passed away in 2020. David was a great advert for the society and a committed chair and path inspector. I also want to say thank you to David Gosling who acted as chair during the interim and has been hugely helpful during the past few months.

Whilst I know we are still in the middle of a pandemic there are reasons to hope for better times ahead. Although limited to very local walks I am sure like me you have seen signs of spring. Snowdrops in clumps, wild garlic just appearing and more bird song filling the air, great tits and robins particularly abundant. The seasons don't stop and whatever our personal challenges it is comforting to know that we can rely on them changing.

Behind the scenes members of PNFS are continuing with their important work, which is impressive. There will be backlogs of improvements and with the increased use of paths over the past months some serious inspecting to be done once it is safe and we are allowed.

I chaired my first Management Meeting in February and it was tremendous to hear about the rising membership numbers. This reflects the good work the society has done to publicise PNFS, but also the greater interest in walking and being outdoors which has been a feature of the

past year. Increasing our membership and making the Society relevant to everyone is one of our aims this year, we are entirely dependent on volunteers to undertake the work of maintaining Public Rights of Way and we should ensure we appeal to a wide range of people.

Inevitably our regular programme of walks had to be postponed but I hope we can get that started again as soon as it is allowed safely. Joining others for a shorter or more challenging walk is a great way to make friends and explore an area you may not be familiar with. We will let everyone know when these start again.

The society is run by Trustees, volunteers who take on leadership roles to ensure the society is able to function effectively. We currently have seven Trustees but over the next few months we plan to increase this number to enhance the capacity and skills in the society. I will update you on progress in a future *Signpost*.

Although we cannot gather together to have meetings or training sessions, David Gosling has set up a great training programme on line. Many people have adapted to communicating on line and I am sure we will continue to benefit from this approach even when no longer strictly necessary.

Our website is a great resource for members and inspectors, but we feel it will need updating to make it more interactive and modern. We are making good progress in identifying someone to help us with this significant piece of work. It will take time but should make a big difference to members and others, big thanks to our webmaster, Mel Bale for his work on the website.

I am hoping I will meet many of you when that becomes possible. In the meantime, stay safe and stay local.

Kathy McLean, Chair

Editorial

As I write this editorial, the country is in the grips of bitter cold weather as well as the lockdown restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic. Instead of feeling frustrated, I find myself doing much more walking from my front door. After struggling in the copious mud of the previous months, walking across frozen fields is like a stroll in the park.

Enjoy your walk.

Shirley M Addy, BA, Editor and Footpath Inspector

Vacancies for Courts & Inquiries Officers

Are you passionate about rights of way and interested in the legislation that helps to protect them? If a Highway Authority (HA) fails to fix a problem, could you help to give them a nudge or, if necessary, take enforcement action to get the problem fixed?

If yes, then the Courts & Inquiries team would love to hear from you.

About you ~ Ideally you will have experience of inspecting footpaths and be familiar with reporting faults and assisting with proposed diversions or other changes to the network. However, if you don't have the above background but are enthusiastic and willing to learn, we would love to hear from you. Full training and support will be provided, including the opportunity to attend a comprehensive external training course.

About us ~ We are currently a team of seven C&IOs covering 35 Highways Authorities. Our backgrounds range from new members to those with years of experience as a PROW officer. We meet six times a year (currently on a Friday morning) and support each other with all aspects of the role.

The time commitment for this role varies but on average takes around one day a month. Our vacancies are in Lancashire, Staffordshire, Wigan, and other areas. Interested and would like to know more? Please email us at candi@pnfs.org.uk and a member of the team will respond to you.

AGM

Please note that due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the 2021 AGM will be held online via Zoom at 11 am, 17 April 2021.

Joining instructions will be sent to members and delegates in due course.

Please contact the membership secretary by email at membership@pnfs.org.uk for further details.



There is now a Facebook - Peak & Northern Footpaths Society Members' Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/130329145485717>. This is a forum for discussion of all matters relating to the PROWs across our region, our signposts, bridges and unrecorded ways. We hope it will also be a good place to share images of walks that can also be posted on our Instagram account #loveourfootpaths.

Retirement of David Bratt, President

Dear David, As the acting Chairman of the Society, albeit only an interim one, I am writing to you on behalf of PNFS members to mark your retirement as our President and to thank you for everything you have done for the Society over the many years of your involvement. During the years of your service to the Society over a quarter of a century, you have achieved an enormous amount, but perhaps most important were your years as Chairman when you affected nothing short of a transformation of the Society.



These are the words of Derek Seddon in 2005: *Lately I have taken to standing back and watching in admiration at the transformation which has taken place in the PNFS. The Society has been revitalised by the ideas and efforts of our Chairman and his deputy. Few members outside Taylor House will realise how David Bratt leads from the front with a total commitment in all that goes on, be it planning signposts, negotiating the construction of bridges, joining in the Wednesday walks - leading some - to controlling meetings and overseeing our publication. Very little happens without his involvement.*

This summary of the impact of your work followed shortly after Derek's comment about 2003 in which the best he could say was that the Society 'survived'. Many of the changes you brought about have stood the test of time and continue to have an impact on the running of the Society today. All of this history will be embedded in your memories of that time and since it predates my involvement with the Society, it is perhaps best left to you to reflect on that period. As President you continued to be as committed as ever, though taking more of a back seat, and you were willing to intervene when you thought the Society was under threat of one sort of another. You spoke out, with eloquence and passion, for what you believed to be right. I am speaking personally now, when I say, that these interventions have been hugely influential and valued. I know you are a proud member of the PNFS, and you value its history and traditions, whilst not being afraid to bring about changes when they are necessary to keep up with the times. You care deeply that the Society should thrive, and, despite your retirement, you continue to be devoted to achieving the best outcomes for the future.

After all you have done and achieved, it seems totally inadequate to simply offer a 'thank you' for your contribution to the Society but thank you we must. We owe you a huge debt of gratitude and you will go down in the history of the Society as a Chairman and a President of whom we can be immensely proud. David Morton tells me that Bridge 14 at Mobberley will soon publicly acknowledge your work for PNFS with plaques at both ends. We wish you continued health in your retirement and, of course, we hope to be seeing you again on PNFS walks just as soon as we can resume them.

Very best wishes for your retirement.

Yours sincerely, David Gosling

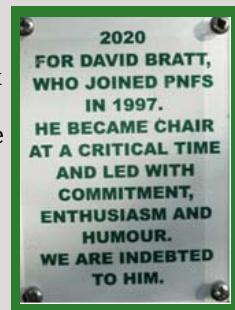


To the Trustees, Other Volunteers and Members of PNFS, I have been delighted by the kind and generous contents of the letter written on your behalves by David Gosling as Acting Chairman to mark my withdrawal from active service after 20 plus years. I also acknowledge with gratitude the commemoration in my name of Bridge 14 at Mobberley and thank in particular David Morton for his role in bringing this honour to fruition.

My journey with PNFS has been so rewarding from being an Inspector answering Derek Seddon's clarion call to become Chairman and then to a couple of stints as President. Everything that was achieved during my tenure could only have come about by the enthusiastic and committed contributions of the many volunteers and the vital support of our membership. I salute and thank you all.

Our Society today is in a good place with the welcome prospect of ongoing sound management and we remain well regarded and respected by the walking fraternity and highway authorities. May the Society continue to prosper and flourish as it delivers its vital, noble and honourable role in the protection of our precious Northern footpaths.

My ongoing thanks and kindest regards, David Bratt



Fault Reports Received by Taylor House

Recently I took over responsibility for answering the emails from PNFS Path Checkers and from the general public via our website. I wanted to continue to support the work of the Society while my role as the Short Walks organiser was temporarily suspended because of Covid restrictions. I took over on 1 July 2020 and between then and the end of the year we received 148 fault reports. The process involves locating the fault from the grid reference usually given, using the PNFS Footpath Inspection Database, identifying the Inspector, and replying to both the correspondent and the Inspector. It has certainly improved my geography and I have had contact with many PNFS members and inspectors.

Using this process 129 of the faults were referred to 45 different PNFS Inspectors. Nearly all of them acknowledged receipt and the majority indicated their actions to the correspondent. Thanks are due to all the Inspectors who have responded to the faults reported; two in particular who have been helpful are Bill Parke with a multitude of parishes in the Derbyshire Dales and Tony Brackenbury with several large parishes in the High Peak. The remaining 19, which were for parishes with no inspector appointed, have either been sent to PNFS Area Officers, reported direct to the Highway Authority, or distributed to volunteers.

The majority of correspondence concerned the Peak District. Numbers were evenly split between North (Saddleworth) and South (Ashbourne and Leek) but with a marked decrease from west to east, with much fewer near Sheffield or Matlock. Perhaps there are other organisations operating here. A smaller number were from Lancashire where there are fewer Inspectors, particularly missing in Rochdale and Bury boroughs. Outliers with small numbers of reports were Bradford, Cheshire West and the North Lancashire/Cumbria border. The November lockdown brought a record amount of correspondence. It is important for PNFS to respond promptly to all the reports it receives, so let's all hope for a more evenly spaced 2021.



I got my new year present on 4 January 2021 with a new footbridge which I have been asking for over two years. John Fisher had a complaint sent to him from a resident of The Wash and it was forwarded to me. A quick look at the the state of planks showed them to be breaking up and dangerous with a risk of a walker falling into the stream. I asked Derbyshire Council Council to have a look at it, stating it was dangerous. A temporary repair was made to the plank walkway in June and the new footbridge followed. The photographs show the planks in 2018, the broken walkway last June, and the other is the completed work.

This walkway was reported back in 2018 along with a broken stile using the DCC's "Report a Fault" form. The stile was repaired in 2018, but when I looked at the fault number to check the walkway, it appeared to be still waiting to be done. What I can only assume is that this is a fault of their report system, in other words when you fill in their fault form it asks you if have another fault to report, as both problems were on the same footpath (Chapel FP77). I entered the second fault so both faults were given the same report fault number. Later someone marked up the work as being completed, hence the outstanding fault on the walkway appeared as being done. This is something that inspectors should look out for. Incidentally, I also reported another stile fault along the same footpath on the same form as used for the second report of the walkway. Both faults have been completed satisfactorily.

Tony Brackenbury, Footpath Inspector



New Footbridge for Chapel-en-le-Frith

FP77



Digitalising Historic Correspondence

I would like to congratulate the team that has been busy digitising historic correspondence relating to public rights of way in our various parishes - David Brown, Jeff Coulson Graham Smith, Geoff Jones and Paul Easthope. This must have been a mammoth task, but it is essential that we are able to track past correspondence from the Highways Authorities and other parties when it comes to dealing with long-standing or difficult issues on our paths. I have been assessing outstanding issues on some of my own routes and it was useful to look back to gather any relevant history. I would urge others to look at the resource at <https://www.tinyurl.com/PNFS2020> and contribute to it with copies of your own key correspondence (to David at dcb.pnfs.filing@gmail.com).

Acceptable file formats are PDF, JPG and TXT. The name of any file should start with the date in the format YYYY-MM-DD.

Linda Smith, Footpath Inspector, Cheshire West

Inspector Spotlight: Chris Davison

Chris Davison has been a volunteer with PNFS since the early 1990s making him one of the longest serving footpath inspectors. As he explains below, he has been looking after not just one or two parishes, but the whole of Barnsley, originally as an 'agent' and today as 'Area Officer'. Although he now has seven inspectors who help him in ten parishes, Chris seems to know every path in Barnsley, as his hundreds of inspections reported on the Inspections Database testify. Chris is truly one of the stalwarts of the Society!



Looking after the byways of Barnsley

Sixty years ago, as an Army Cadet at school, I was taught basic mapreading skills, and quite soon had to put them to the test on the slopes of Plynlimon in Central Wales when I had to guide my section to safety in whiteout conditions, using an OS 7th series map: and this was the first time I realised what a useful skill it was - almost the most useful thing I learnt at school. My parents and I were early members of the Consumer Association, but it was several years later that these two strands came together, and I became a member of PNFS, with the intention of improving the experience of local walkers. About 30 years ago, as I was the only PNFS member in Barnsley, I was asked to take on a more formal role of coordinating with the ROW team as an 'agent' and so assessing proposals for diversions and creations (seldom extinguishments). I was subsequently 'promoted to area officer - so I never was an inspector, although I had wide experience of Barnsley's 29 parishes (over 300 paths in the old County Borough). Currently, ten parishes have their own inspectors.

Perhaps my main concern has been deliberate obstructions of rights of way which are thankfully fairly uncommon in Barnsley, but which have provided my favourite success stories. The Eagle Nest affair was a long running saga about an electric gate with an obscure push button to open it. The electronic timer allowed precisely 12 seconds to get through the gate and, when closing, would crush anything in its way, which was a fairly obvious health hazard to families or dogs. The (very ornate) gate had to be reconstructed to include a simple latch operated gate. At another location, an electric gate was set up to delineate a boundary between two warring families - but with no way through for walkers. I insisted that a side gate had to be constructed. Elsewhere a padlocked gate prevented progress and the farmer denied the existence of a right of way, despite it being on a diversion which he had initiated! On this occasion, I negotiated the construction of a stile. Another battle was over signposts. Every time a signpost was erected to guide walkers, the owners of the electric gates removed them. I think seven signposts were erected and removed, even though the posts were embedded in concrete. (Am I obsessed with gates?)

A happy moment was the opening of a path through a housing development from a suburban station to open country, after negotiation with the CEO of the building firm, and the clearing and reopening of a path across a golf course.

I mentioned the infrequency of extinguishments in Barnsley, but a couple stand out - one was deleted in the town centre about 25 years after the police station had been built over it, and another path was severed by the building of the motorway, but the path was left in place so that people could get a grandstand view of the speeding traffic! The farmer successfully had it extinguished, and PNFS did not object!

On the other hand, I have recently added about 50 new creations to the database - our local team are very keen on putting new paths across council-owned land, and of course the Trans Pennine Trail was originally thought up in and is still administered from Barnsley. There is little to criticise in Barnsley's attitude to diversions either - they always seem to ensure that there will be improvements in the route's surfacing and furniture, perhaps because they don't have to pay!

In my opinion, there is little to dislike about footpath inspection in Barnsley - we have an efficient and cooperative (if understaffed) PROW team. Signpost has recently reported on two examples of very swift remedial action, including the provision of a handrail through a slippery narrow passage which had been proposed by one of our Trustees and an inspector in Barnsley, Mel Bale! The only weakness in their operations is probably their tardiness in replacing footbridges which I think is caused by the insistence of the engineers that any new bridge should bear the weight of a tank.

Barnsley might not spring to mind as a great walking area - but we have 450 miles of public rights of way which offer pleasant, if not spectacular, views, many interesting localities and (in better times) a wide variety of watering holes and interesting buildings, which you rarely find in the hills. One can climb to the summit of the Woodhead Pass on the old ('Snow') road and still be in Barnsley, and one day, perhaps, Yorkshire Water might create a path round Winscar Reservoir! During the recent months I have concentrated on Barnsley's urban footpaths, which have much to recommend them as they give some impression of what must have existed before all the housing estates were built.

It will be interesting to see if the recent increased usage of public rights of way is maintained when the pandemic is over, and whether this will lead to restoration of adequate funding ... let us hope so!

If you would like to become a Footpath Inspector for PNFS contact me at inspection@pnfs.org.uk or ring 07841647275.

David Gosling, Footpath Inspection Co-ordinator

Obituary: Patrick Justin McCarthy

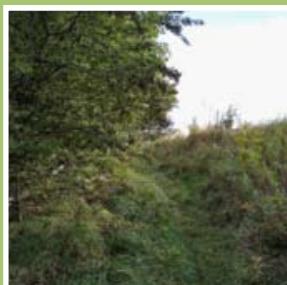
Patrick Justin McCarthy died in the autumn aged 91. Justin would have been known to many as a footpath inspector, active member and pioneer on claiming new rights of way. He did the latter though his deep interest in railways and canals and was well known to the Cheshire archive personnel in his research of claims in the 19th century for possible railway routes.

He was also keen member of the Ramblers and Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society and his knowledge of rights of way legislation was used by both those societies. When we had active consultative forums in Cheshire County he was well known to both councillors and officers through his effective participation at them.

John White, member, emeritus footpath secretary of Vale Royal and Knutsford Ramblers and ex chair Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society



Sheffield 209



Boundaries take many forms and their impact on people who try to cross them varies widely as many a walker or traveller knows. Part of the Sheffield/Rotherham boundary follows the A630 dual carriageway which links Sheffield city centre with the M1 motorway. When constructed in the 1960s, it severed public footpaths in several locations. One of them is FP209. In a national survey by the Ramblers' some years ago ("You're quick, or you're dead"), it was listed as the second most dangerous crossing for walkers in the country. This has a knock-on effect on the rights of way that connect to it, and similar roads. Even now, road builders give only passing thought to the needs of non motorised users who have to get across these. Another footpath crossing only half a mile away from this one was legally extinguished a few years ago, not long after tax payers' money was spent building a flight of concrete steps with handrail to allow easier access up/down an embankment from the carriageway edge. What's that saying about left hand and right hand ...?

This crossing was rendered awkward by overgrowth on the ramp up to the carriageway edge. A warning sign at the edge was obscured by tree growth. On the Rotherham side, sight lines along the A630 were limited by shrubbery on the embankment. Precious seconds to judge traffic flows were thus denied to walkers. I filed a report to both Highway Authorities and action was taken to clear the tree growth and shrubbery. Until next time ...

All this begs an interesting ethical question as to whether by reporting such problems, PNFS is encouraging users to risk their safety by using the crossing. I would argue that it is the road builders who bear the responsibility for failing to factor into schemes they advocate, sufficient safeguards for rights of way users of all kinds. In the sum total of a major road project, I suspect we are talking pocket money. The same could be said of major projects like HS2. In the 1960s maybe they didn't know any better. What's their excuse now ...?

John Harker, Area Officer Sheffield & Rotherham



Waymark

The society recently emailed its new *Waymark* newsletter to all members for whom we have an email address. If you didn't receive a copy please email the membership secretary at membership@pnfs.org.uk with your contact details to ensure that you receive future newsletters. *Waymark* can be viewed online at pnfs.org.uk/waymark.

Wilpshire FP1

In June 2020, I asked the Wilpshire Parish Council if it could consider improving one of the four paths that meet at where PNFS's new signpost S598 was to be placed. FP1 was very muddy, cow churned and walking it involved negotiating a very messy and slippery ditch. Fourteen months earlier I had proposed a PNFS signpost for this location, but its placement had been delayed by the dreadful wet winter and then the coronavirus restrictions. Eventually it was erected in August 2020 during a lull in very strict lockdown conditions.



Photographs by Tony Gaffney

Wilpshire Parish Council receives an annual grant of £500 from the Lancashire County Council to stow footpaths locally but nothing for actual stoning or bridges, etc. It also gets a concurrent function (25%) grant from the Ribble Valley Borough Council towards footpath improvements (although the Borough no longer has responsibility for footpaths). Under the Highways Act, the Parish Council has statutory powers to improve footpaths, but it is believed that the Wilpshire Parish Council is the only such council that actively pays and arranges for a contractor to improve footpaths in this manner. For several years, residents in Wilpshire have enjoyed footpaths and bridleways with better surfaces, waymarking and several benches through its efforts.

The Parish Council considered my suggestion at its meetings and agreed to two timber walkways being placed across the ditch on FP1 and some foliage removal and tidying-up at a cost of £1,175. Permission was then obtained from the LCC, landowner and tenant of the field where the footpath crosses.



Photographs by Shirley M Addy

In late November and in spite of the heavy rain and horrible muddy conditions, the contractor started work. A few days after completion - and on a dry day - I walked on both walkways and I was impressed by their robust construction, which should last for many years.

Many thanks go to the Wilpshire Parish Council, especially Councillor Tony Gaffney, for financing and arranging the work on FP1. It is to be congratulated on this and other path improvements in Wilpshire, which go a long way to make it a most pleasant parish for walkers. It is gratifying that through very little effort on my part that Wilpshire has a PNFS signpost and one of the footpaths radiating from it has been vastly improved. I have previously written about this parish in Signpost 59.

Shirley M Addy, Editor, Footpath and Signpost Inspector

Obituary: Bob Proctor

Bob Proctor was an active member of the Society until his death in January this year. He was a keen fell walker and was a rock climber in his earlier days. Bob was appointed as a footpath inspector in Ilkeston (Erewash) and Waterhouses (Staffordshire) in Jan 2014. He always travelled by public transport but managed to inspect 104 paths in Ilkeston (43 with faults) and 146 paths in Waterhouses, 42 with faults, as recorded on the Inspection Database. In 2015 he began to help Neil Collie with assessing possible bridge projects and became Bridges Officer from April 2016. Since then he supervised the installation of bridges at Tanyard Beck (Ingbirchworth); Wessenden Head Moor (Holme Valley); Howroyd Beck (Whirley Lower); Chee Dale boardwalks (Derbyshire Dales); the Pennine Way crossing at Hebble Hole, Heptonstall; Blackpool Bridge, Goodbent (Kirklees) and Mill Beck, Flockton (Kirklees).



As a real ale enthusiast Bob liked to round off site inspections at a suitably enlightened pub. He was a quiet and gentle man with wry sense of humour, who was blessed with the necessary patience to handle the negotiations necessary to agree new bridges with landowners and local authorities. Each of these bridges will be a memorial to his hard work and dedication.

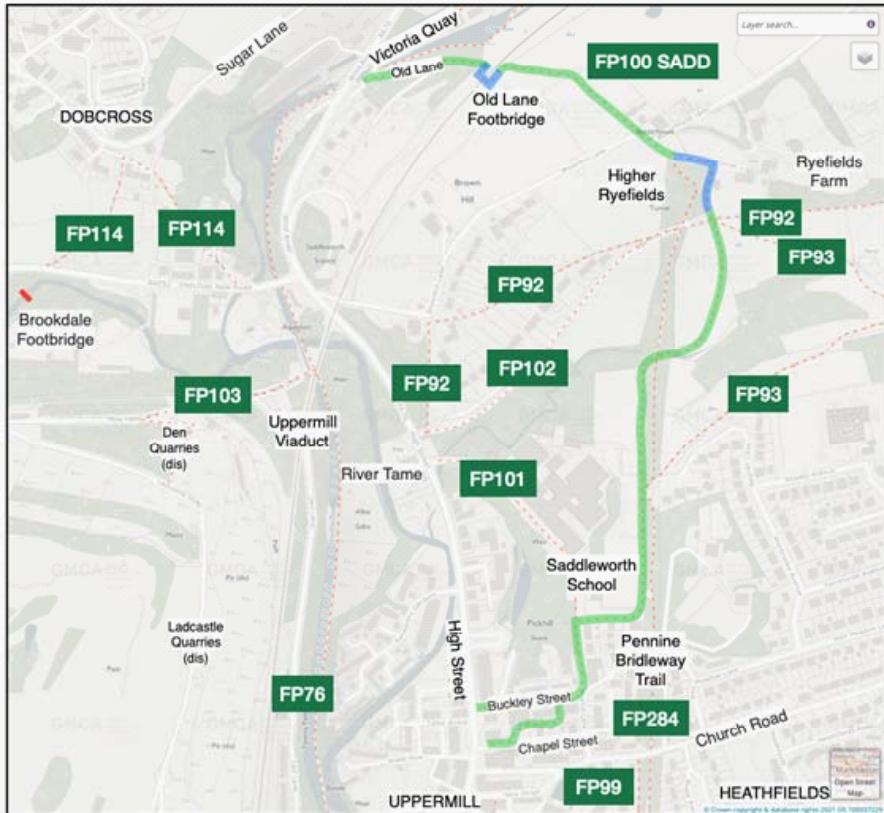
Bob will be sadly missed by all his friends in the Society. A plaque in his memory will be fixed to signpost 354 in the Weaver Hills, which is close to one of his favourite pubs, the Yew Tree at Cauldon, where Bob would often finish his inspection walks in Waterhouses.

David Gosling, Trustee and Inspection Co-ordinator



Footpath 100 Saddleworth Old Lane Footbridge Dobcross

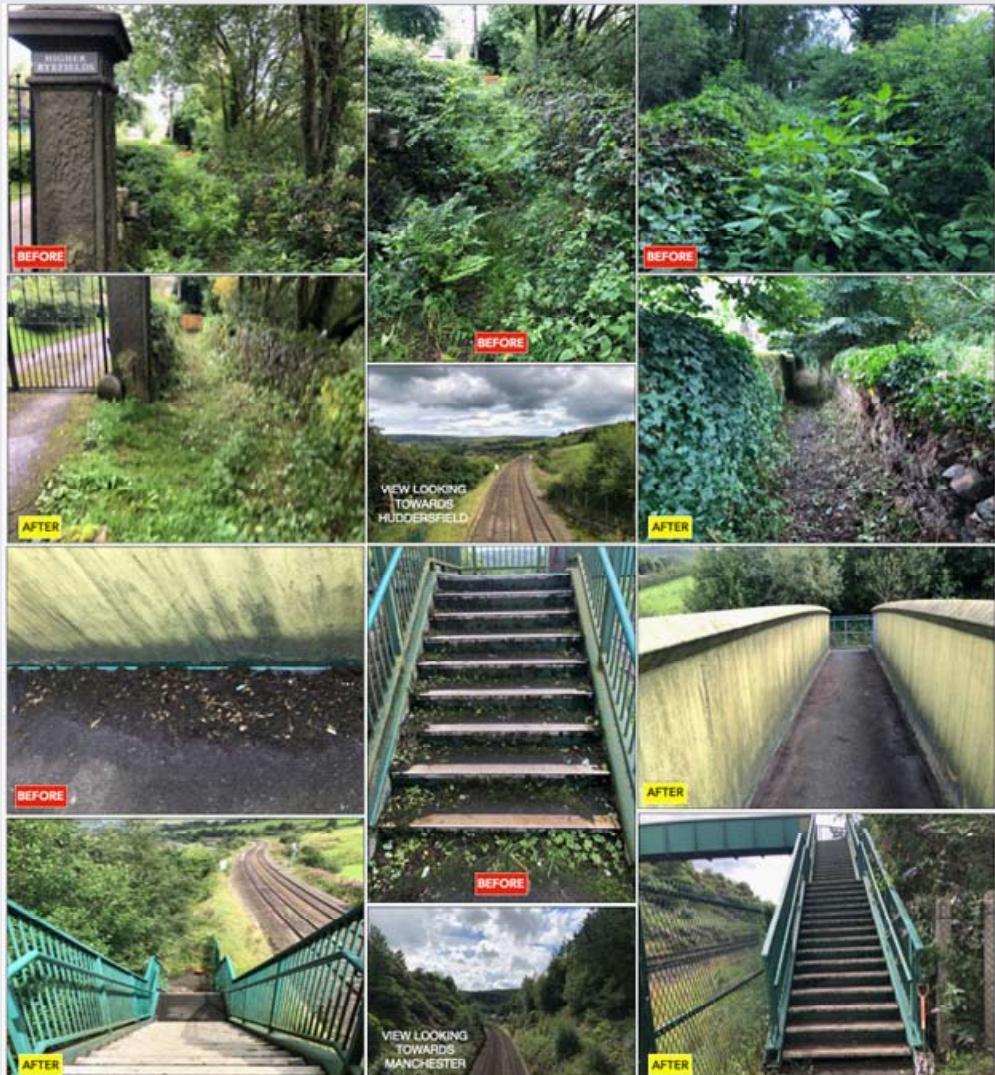
Footpath 100 Saddleworth runs from Old Lane, Dobcross, Saddleworth North to Buckley Street with a short branch leading on to Chapel Street both coming out on to High Street Uppermill Saddleworth South. It is a nice alternative route when walking from Dobcross to Uppermill.



The above footpath shown in green is FP100 Saddleworth. The blue lines shown on FP100 are sections that were overgrown late last summer. The first section at Old Lane footbridge and the second section at Higher Ryefields. This sterling work was carried out by the Oldham Ramblers Footpath Clearance Team in August 2020.

These overgrown sections of the footpath 100 are now neat and tidy and are definitely fit for walkers to enjoy thanks to the volunteers that clear footpath all year in and around Oldham. The footpath team are out in all weathers throughout clearing footpaths every week from April until October.

Mike Lawton (strimmer) cleared Ryefields section and Ken Smith and Martin Riley cleared the footbridge. To see more please view video, Ramblers Footpath Clearance Team Saddleworth Footpath 100 <https://youtu.be/uRwzTXSyJrA>.
Ken Smith, Footpath Inspector





Smisby FP24

I said in an earlier article that research for a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) application is like a jig-saw puzzle. I would now add that the puzzle is sometimes back in the box when that elusive missing piece is found. Calke is a well known and popular National Trust property and Estate in South Derbyshire. Like most NT sites it has imposed limits on visitors but the park is crossed by public footpaths which should remain open. An issue that the local inspector has had to address, complicated by dead end paths created by the construction of Staunton Harold Reservoir. Photograph shows unrecorded route from Smisby FP14 with stile and waymark, not lost just not recorded.

A fellow PNFS member who lives in the area invited me to join him for a walk and I found the undulating fields on the edge of the Trent valley a pleasant alternative to the limestone of the dales. So much so that we have taken a number of walks attempting to cover different paths on each excursion. Inevitably I studied the map and found two dead end paths at Smisby on the Leicestershire border close to Ashby de la Zouch. Smisby footpath 24 has a gap of just 110 metres from other paths at Wicket Nook. Old maps soon explained the cause. The path had been in Leicestershire and the gap was in Derbyshire. The boundary has since been moved putting the path and gap in our patch.

Leicestershire Rights of Way team provided a copy of their early definitive map which shows a path 087a stopping at the then county boundary. Not a lot of help. But unlike Derbyshire, they have the Tribunal records and the path number indicated a later addition. On 27 April 1954 an Inquiry was held to consider objections raised by publication of the Draft Definitive Map. Representation by local walking groups alleged that a path running from Heath End, Ashby, south-westwards to Wicket Nook and the county boundary had been omitted. The Tribunal agreed to recommend that this objection be allowed. this only confirmed what is now recorded on the definitive map but the Tribunal was also told that the path "does actually link up with a path that goes by Wicket Nook". Along with other evidence it was agreed we had a case worth submitting a DMMO application to DCC.

I find it frustrating that we don't have the Tribunal records for Derbyshire although we have discovered maps at the Records Office that show the paths affected by the review of the Draft Map. Sad to say some useful links are recorded on these maps as 'to be omitted' and they were.

Back to that missing piece. I thought I'd take a look at the PNFS material that has been digitised and uploaded. What I found didn't go back to the Tribunals but taking a lucky dip in Smisby I found a 2002 diversion of FP16. Why not take a look if only to remind me where FP16 is. It starts at Wicket Nook and the plan prepared by South Derbyshire District Council marked up connecting paths including our claimed route annotating it 'unnumbered footpath'. Jigsaw complete!

Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector



Sheffield 452



This footpath is one for the connoisseur of the obscure footpaths in our network. Squeezed between housing estate and heavy industry on the Sheffield/Rotherham border, it was a footpath I hadn't walked since 2002.

I know that because it was that date when the new "Rotherham Ring Route" was inaugurated circling Rotherham, and created by the Rotherham Ramblers' Group. I purchased a copy at the time and set off from the start point which happens to be where this footpath meets Sheffield Road at Templeborough. See website for more details: www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?path_name=rotherham+ring+route.

Back then Rotherham Council had spent a lot of time and money improving the footpath on their side of the boundary. However, as is often the case, time had taken its toll. The three photos attached show a snapshot of what I found on 7 October 2020. Wearing shorts that day didn't help. Overgrowth and undergrowth rendered progress slow and sometimes painful.

The footpath follows Chapel Flatt Dike, a stream forming the Sheffield Rotherham border. The path crossed the dike by bridge twice, shifting between the two Highway Authorities. Even I wasn't 100% sure who would need to do what.

So, my report and photos went to both and between them everything was dealt with satisfactorily by 16 November 2020. Thanks to staff at Sheffield and Rotherham PROW Units, especially Rotherham who had a lot of clearance to do.

*John Harker,
Area Officer
Sheffield and
Rotherham*



Membership and Website News

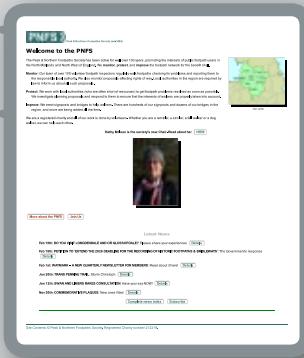
I think it safe to say that none of us can remember a year like 2020. We have all had to change our everyday routines to cope with the pandemic. We have had to get used to limiting what we can do and where we can go for our own safety and that of others. The certainty of normality has been replaced by uncertainty and doubts about when the old normal will return. Some of us may even be asking ourselves if we really want to return to how things were or whether we can learn from the last 12 months and create a new normal.

Let me give you an example. I have been the society's membership secretary for well over 4 years. Looking back, I can see that our membership numbers each January have remained more or less constant at around 1150. Each year people joined, some existing members declined to renew and sadly a few passed away, all this was normal. But, despite the pandemic or maybe because of it, 2020 wasn't a normal year for our membership numbers. In January of this year, the society's membership had increased by almost 10%. No one reason can explain this rise, there are a combination of factors at play. My fellow trustee, Jenny Allen placed a volunteering advertisement on the website do-it.org and this has led directly to a number of people joining the society and becoming Footpath Inspectors. Our Path Checker initiative has also encouraged people to join. Also, it has never been easier to join PNFS. People can now do so online and pay their subscription either by bank transfer or PayPal. This in turn means that their membership is usually confirmed within 24 hours. Finally, and possibly most importantly, I think that the pandemic has led to more people spending time outside and experiencing the PROW network and open spaces in a range of ways. A recent new member emailed me to say that walking had kept her and her partner sane through these dark days.

More members means not only increased income for the society but also potentially more volunteers to carry out our important work. This is what I meant about a new and better normal. Wouldn't it be great if our numbers could continue to grow at a similar rate over the coming years? I urge everyone to renew their membership when their subscription falls due and also tell their friends and families about PNFS and encourage them to join us.

I would also like to say a few words about the website. The last issue of Signpost carried an advertisement asking for volunteers to help us with our website redesign project. We had a good response and a number of members are now actively involved. In addition two new features have been added to the website. There is now a dedicated area that shows routes devised and contributed by members, pnfs.org.uk/routes. This was prompted by Gordon Richard's article in the winter issue. If members would like their routes to be included they should send as much detail as possible to me at webmaster@pnfs.org.uk. Finally, the tenth Parish Notes is published in this issue and they can all now be viewed at another area, pnfs.org.uk/parishnotes.

Mel Bale, Trustee, Membership Secretary and Webmaster

A screenshot of the PNFS website homepage. At the top, there's a header with the PNFS logo and a map of the United Kingdom. Below the header, there's a large image of a person's face. Underneath the image, there's a section titled 'Latest News' with several news items listed. The overall layout is clean and professional.

A Victory in Calderdale

All planning applications potentially affecting a public right of way have to be advertised by a notice on the site of the proposed development and in a local newspaper. This is a legal requirement under Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) England Order 2015. Some local planning authorities send copies of these notices to the Society. This enables us to look at the planning application on line and check that the path is not threatened by the development. In the case of large developments e.g. those involving the building of a housing estate, we will request improvements to the path, such as better surfacing and path furniture, and links to other paths near to the development. Without sight of these Article 15 notices it is very difficult to ascertain which planning applications might affect public rights of way. The position is made worse by the government's removal of any obligation to show the line of the path on the location plan within the planning application.

In January 2020 I write to Tameside Planning Services to ask them for a list of their Article 15 notices so we could monitor these applications. This request was firmly rebuffed. If the list was provided for us then other interest groups would want it so there would be an unreasonable burden on the Council. They also pointed out that we could look at the list of planning applications on the Council web site – even though this gives no indication of which proposed developments could affect a PROW and in any event the line of the path is not shown!

I then used Freedom of Information (FOI) Act requests to ask for lists of all Article 15 notices issued over a period of several months. I also looked each week at the Public Notices columns of the Tameside Reporter. The answer to the FOI requests was that there had been no Article 15 notices. Also no notices had appeared in the Tameside Reporter. During the same period my local authority, Kirklees, had issued three or four notices each week. It was not obvious why Tameside, which is subject to similar development pressures, should be totally different

By this time I began to suspect that the law was not always being followed. I set out my concerns in a letter to the Development Control Manager. After failing to receive a satisfactory reply I contacted the complaints section of the Council. The Manager eventually responded by assuring me that his team were following all the legal requirements to advertise planning applications. He quoted as an example an article 15 notice relating to an application affecting Mossley 182. This passes through the site of a proposed house extension. This caused a wry smile as this was a case which I had drawn to the attention of the planning officer at the request of one of our inspectors in Tameside. Chutzpah or what?

This continued the note of absurdity surrounding my complaint joining the failure to agree to send the Society copies of notices which did not exist because it would impose an unreasonable burden.

However, a satisfactory ending. Tameside Planning Services has now agreed to email us a list of all planning applications which potentially affect a public right of way. These are being monitored by our assessors and will be referred to our inspectors where there are concerns,

Terry Norris, Consultations Manager at Taylor House

Signpost Report

At the end of **October** we had 537 signposts in total. As at 31 January 2020 we have only 536. No new signposts were erected in the three month period, so this is a report on our maintenance and inspection work.

PDNP volunteers from Fairholmes, putting up one of several signs near Ladybower reservoir

In early **November** John and I reinstated S369 (the original S005) at Higher Hills Cottage and S001 at Carr Meadow. S369 is now fixed to a concrete stump. S371 at Claire Ho. Children's Hospice, Wirral, turned up and was re-instated by their maintenance staff, who had found it fallen over and then briefly lost track of it. Robin Tutchings, Wirral's PROW officer, mediated. I inspected and cleaned 8 of our signs and fitted MPs to Bridge 14 at Mobberley for David Bratt and to S227 at Ollerton IMO Brian Summerscales. S157 at Reeds Bridge, K'humle was temporarily wedged. It will be reposted. S081 at Pickmere since 1935, was stolen from its roadside hedge, making a total of 5 signs stolen since May, plus a sixth (S273 at Prestbury) removed by Cheshire East contractors, when they renewed their fingerpost. With their permission, I fitted two new plaques to their fingerpost. As S081 was in a vulnerable, roadside position it will not be replaced, but the other four will.



Photo shows S142 being repainted by Pete and Mike

In December S292 in Glossop was reposted, repainted and re-instated. A new S258 replaced the old sign at Jumbles; the original had been burned and the plate lost. I inspected S129 at N. Turton, then fitted a new MP to S537 near Darwen Tower, IMO Sue Stephenson. On a cold, sunny Christmas Eve, I went to Alsop en le Dale to retrieve the fallen S327 and inspected/cleaned 11 more signs.



In **January** S381 at Higher Hurdfield fell and was retrieved, then 354 at Weaver Hills was reported uprooted by off-roaders. The farmer will reinstate it when the land is less wet. It had only been reinstated on a concrete stump in October. This time the cows were innocent! I inspected/photographed 3 of our signs and 3 of our bridges on Gigg Brook, Compstall. S616 at Ashover has consent and awaits a site visit.

Good news: The signpost team gained a new recruit called John Shuttleworth of Marple Bridge.

David Morton, Signpost Officer



SLOW WAYS

The Many Ways of Slow Ways

Background to the Slow Ways Project

The benefits of walking for our physical and mental well-being are well known. Interest in hiking has increased year on year and particularly during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak when people were forced to find new forms of exercise close to home. In England and Wales, we have over 140,000 miles of public rights of way, giving us the opportunity to walk for leisure and to get from one place to another on foot, sometimes by using paths which have been walked for thousands of years.

In recognition of this interest, an exciting new national project called Slow Ways (funded by a wide variety of organisations) aims to connect 2,500 towns, cities, large villages and other principal destinations across Great Britain using public rights of way. Slow Ways aims to get more people walking, more often, and to make journeys more accessible to walkers of all abilities. People will use the Slow Ways routes to plan walks between neighbouring communities or combine routes for long distance journeys. Routes will be free to browse, search, view, share, download and enjoy via the project's website www.slowways.uk.

The project completed its first stage during 2020, creating a network of 7,500 proposed routes, covering 110,000km, drawn from a range of sources including OS maps, Open Street Map, Google Street View, National Cycle Network and Access Land in a 'desk based' exercise. PNFS inspector Ken Brockway was involved in this phase and reported to our members in the Autumn 2020 edition of *Signpost*. Volunteers were asked to identify routes that people should be able to walk reasonably directly, safely, easily, and enjoyably between neighbouring settlements. Route selection criteria were:

1. Start and finish at a good central point (and go via train and bus stations)
2. Be direct and off road
3. Be easy to navigate
4. Be safe and accessible
5. Have resting places (eg, shop, pub or hotel) every 5-10 km
6. Be enjoyable and beautiful, but not tours
7. Use already established routes, where appropriate

The average route length is 12km in England, 20km in Scotland. Hundreds of the routes are just 5km long, and thousands are under 10km.

Second Project Phase – Call to PNFS Members to Get Involved!

The second phase of the project will recruit volunteers to walk, test, review, record and verify their suitability for path users. PNFS has signed up to the project and we encourage PNFS members to get involved (you can sign up for updates on the Slow Ways website). The routes will appear on the project website, which will launch when COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

What will the route information look like?

This map shows how the routes will be represented on the Slow Ways website. Routes will be searchable to identify those available in any area or between any specific cities, towns or villages and will be named using the first 3 letters of the start and end location. Several route options will be offered for each and will include a description of the features to expect, issues relating to access, previous reviews, etc. You can then download a file for your

preferred route or print off a map. Users will be able to create 'Waylists' on their account which they can share with others.

Path grading system

A path grading system will aid the selection of suitable routes.

Whilst this has not yet been finalised, we know that it will be based on grading systems used in the 'Countryside for All Access' standards, the 'Paths for All' system and the 'Australian Walking Track Grading System' for more challenging routes. Each grade is likely to be explained in terms of:

- Grade & Duration
- Surface materials/surface condition
- Obstacles
- Usable width
- Distance limits



Review of Proposed Paths

This is where PNFS members can use their valuable local knowledge of paths in their area. Once a path has been selected, volunteers are asked to walk the route and share their views. Reviewers will be asked to provide feedback to Slow Ways via a simple or detailed technical review option (via a Slow Ways app or by downloading the review sheet to take out on your walk). The review will include:

- Verification of the route grade
- Comment on aspects of the route (e.g. path width, presence/absence of kissing gates and stiles, path gradient etc)
- Uploading photographs to help users decide if a route is suitable for them – this could include photos showing the general nature of the walk or any difficult features (such as deep mud, broken stiles or problematic gates) that may be present
- Suggested alternative routes if there is a better option in terms of scenery, accessibility, or path quality

Your reviews will help to build a national picture of the routes on offer, help future Slow Ways path users with their route selection, and benefit the public rights of way network by promoting their value to a wider audience.

Your findings will not only be invaluable to the Slow Ways project but also of value to PNFS footpath inspectors if you have identified any problems that need to be fixed.

What to do if you Find a Fault on a Public Right of Way

If you come across any faults on your Slow Ways travels (or on any other walk) please do report the matter to PNFS or the relevant Highway Authority:

- Via the Path Checkers scheme
- Via the online form 'Report a Problem to us'
- Direct to the Highway Authority (information on how to do this is found on the PNFS Highway Authorities page)



Common faults include broken stiles and footbridges, locked or difficult gates, obstruction due to fallen trees, barbed wire across stiles, poor surface conditions not easily crossed, misleading signs to deter walkers and landslips taking out part of the path.

Getting Involved with Slow Ways.

I hope you agree that this is a worthwhile project. Take a look at the website (<https://slowways.uk/>), sign up to the scheme and take on route reviews once the full website is launched. Spread the word amongst your friends and talk to your local council about supporting the Slow Ways project. I am taking a lead on Slow Ways for PNFS, so you can direct any questions to me via volunteer@pnfs.org.uk.

Linda Smith, Footpath Inspector, Cheshire West

Fred Ogden - A Joint Appreciation by David Bratt and David Morton

Fred Ogden died on 6 February 2021, aged 86.

Fred was our Signpost Officer (Admin) twice, in 1992-93 and again in the early 2000s - a position he embraced with great enthusiasm and commitment.

He gave me (DB) unstinting support when I became Chairman in 2004 and Fred had a particular interest in the well-being of footpaths in his Marple homestead and did not hold back from insisting that the new Chairman should walk the local paths with him!

Fred attended General Meetings without fail and endeared himself to all with his pleasing blend of gravitas and humour. When he spoke, all sat up and took note of his wise opinions.

Fred suffered a major stroke five years ago and over time various medical issues then took their toll but he was ever cheerful when phoned.

It was our intention to drive him this early year to the Lancashire coast to visit his signpost at Browns houses but the Covid regulations had other ideas.

Pre-stroke Fred was very active outside of PNFS organizing world wide tours for a vast number of friends - he would even answer the phone with "Thomas Cook's Marple Bridge"! and he was also a key player with Marple Probus.

When I (DCM) arrived at Taylor House in 2006, Fred was sharing the job with Keith Wykes (SPO maintenance) and Bill Johnson, who had been SPO from 1998-2002, but now restricted himself to fixing the new plates to the posts. Judging by the laughter from the upstairs front office, in contrast to downstairs, it was the place to be and I readily fell in with Keith Wykes' invitation to join the signpost team. By late 2007 I found that I'd become the team, as Fred and the others bowed out.

I've enjoyed myself enormously as a result and I owe a lot of that to Fred. I was pleased to be able to partly repay him, when he contacted me a year ago about sponsoring S605 at Brown's Houses, Silverdale, which marked the successful conclusion of a long battle for walkers' rights on Silverdale Footpath 14 (see Signpost 64 cover). I gladly put a memorial plaque honouring Fred on it and my one regret is that we were unable to visit it together. It is in a lovely spot and will always be "Fred's sign".

In conclusion I wish to offer condolences and thanks to Fred's two sons and their families from all those of us at PNFS, who enjoyed what David Bratt so aptly called "his pleasing blend of gravitas and humour".



Parish Notes ~ Long Eaton and Sawley

Erewash Borough in Derbyshire is a well populated place with a mixed history of engineering, furniture making and lacemaking. The parishes of Long Eaton and Sawley blend into one, as do many others here. Seventy five paths, many are urban snickets used by residents as short cuts

which have the advantage of avoiding busy roads. Unfortunately most have barriers to perhaps prevent motorised use but they also obstruct pushchairs and those who use mobility scooters and wheelchairs. Reports have been made for the removal of these barriers but the reply is always, when funds permit.

Derbyshire ends at these parish boundaries, abutted by Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire but there are no linking paths across the wide River Trent. The pleasant river side paths draw the crowds along with two Inns at the ever popular Trent Lock (SK 49092 31124) which is the river lock of the Erewash canal. The canal towpath, Sawley FP20 is a multi user path busy with cyclists.

The parishes are well served or perhaps blighted by rail lines. Only one station remains. Once known as Sawley Junction on the Nottingham to Derby line it was hijacked and renamed Long Eaton. A third station, now completely vanished was Trent. It served no community but had a thriving refreshment room as passengers waited for their connecting train. Network Rail are attempting to remove all 'on the level' pedestrian crossings but one remains here on FP7 (SK 50313 33067) across the very busy Midland Main line. If HS2 comes to pass it will pass here over the top of Long Eaton FP12 so we make the most of the peaceful walk along Cranfleet Cut before more trains arrive on their way to Toton, Sheffield and Leeds.

Many of the paths here have been diverted to allow for gravel extraction but the exhausted water filled holes offer tranquil locations for nature to take over.



There are oddity paths which record long gone river ferries. Derbyshire record the crossing points with a public footpath to the centre of the river, Long Eaton FP30 and Sawley FP18.

Lost ways research revealed an interesting story for LE FP59 (SK 49833 34167). This lies

close to the River Erewash which forms the eastern parish boundary. Until a boundary swap in 1992 fourteen houses built in the 1920s on the bend of a quiet suburban street in Long Eaton were actually in Nottinghamshire along with the said footpath.



Sandiacre Lock Cottage (SK 48230 35762)

So if you like waterside walks these parishes should be on your bucket list of must do walks. And I can recommend an end of walk pint of Sawley Brewery bitter in the White Lion (SK 47252 31469) but if it's busy on a summer evening you might find FP11 obstructed through the outside seating.

Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector

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.



Book Review: *A Practical guide to Planning Law and Rights of Way in National Parks, the Broads and AONBs*

by James Maurici QC, James Neill et al. Law Brief Publishing

The C&IC were invited to review this new book as a possible addition to their library. The book is intended as a reference guide for lawyers and non-lawyers who need to have a working knowledge of this niche area of law. It focuses on the legislative and policy decisions that protect important landscapes. Divided into eight chapters, it has two chapters on rights of way & access rights. There is an interesting chapter on wildlife biodiversity.

Is this book relevant to the work that PNFS undertakes? Clearly, we do not have any Broads in our area, but we do have one National Park (Peak District National Park) and three Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (Forest of Bowland, Arnside and Silverdale, and Cannock Chase). The introductory chapter gives a useful, simple, clear potted history of how National Parks etc came into being and the current legislation that governs them. This includes a reference to relevant legislation and changes made, up to the current day. It describes the powers and duties of National Planning Authorities, their role in the planning system and national planning policies. There is a helpful overview with references to enable further study. We found the explanation of how National Parks came into being, with a purpose to provide opportunities for recreation, helpful, particularly for new C&IO's. The description of the role of the National Park as a Planning Authority was also useful.

Following the theme of the first few chapters, the chapter on AONBs describes how they were created. It highlights the differences between AONBs and the establishment of National Parks. It sets out the role of Natural England to designate an area as an AONB. There is a useful description of the purposes of AONBs, and that they, unlike National Parks have no purpose to provide opportunities for recreation. There is a useful explanation of the criterion for becoming an AONB accompanied by a list of current AONB.

There is an excellent discussion of the National Planning and Policy Framework in chapter 4, with a particular focus on the major development test. This is a strong chapter with plenty of case law references. This is by far the best chapter and the passion the author of this chapter has for his subject shines through.

The chapters on access rights and public rights of way (PROW) are functional. There are useful descriptions of the characteristics and categories of a PROW including towpaths, long distance paths and coastal access. However more on this would have been valuable, particularly with work ongoing along the Lancashire coastline re this coastal network. The chapters describe how Rights of Way come into being, with a section on dedication, recording of RoW and modification orders. Further information is provided on who is liable for maintenance and protection of RoW, interference with public use, diversions, and extinguishments. The publisher describes these chapters as a 'look at various rights of way...'. We agree, they really are a 'look at' - more depth and discussion about the impact of planning in NPs and AONBs on these rights would have been beneficial. It is disappointing that these are the weakest chapters of the book.

In summary this book is really intended for planners - officers and consultants - and possibly landowners and solicitors. We would not recommend it for PROW practitioners in local authorities or user groups. The PROW chapter is basic - anyone who works in PROW management would do much better to use the Blue Book*.

**Rights of Way A Guide to Law and Practice, 4th edition, Riddall and Trevelyan, Ramblers' Association and Open Spaces Society, 2007*

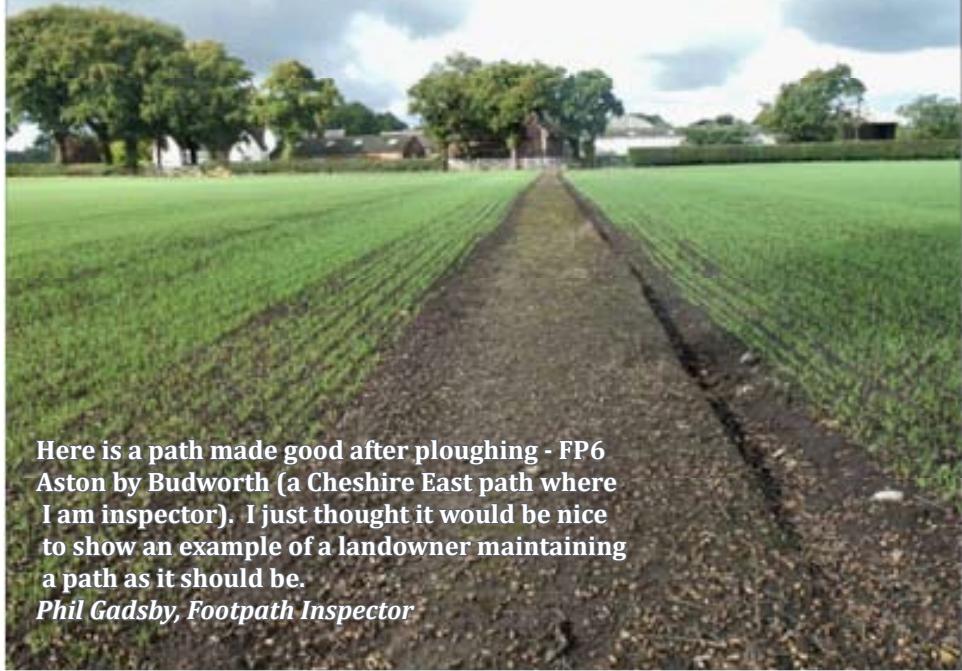
Jenny Allen and Rhoda Barnett, Trustees and C&Os

The Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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Aston by Budworth FP6



Here is a path made good after ploughing - FP6 Aston by Budworth (a Cheshire East path where I am inspector). I just thought it would be nice to show an example of a landowner maintaining a path as it should be.

Phil Gadsby, Footpath Inspector

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