

PEAK & NORTHERN FOOTPATHS SOCIETY



ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS 1996

CONTENTS

ANNUAL REPORT 1996

Members of Council	page 2
Chairman's Report	4
Vice Chairman's jottings	6
To two comrades	7
Secretary's Report	8
Environment Secretary	14
Fifty years ago	15
Matters from the Minutes	16
Courts & Enquiries	17
Signpost Report	18
Footpath Inspectors	20
Treasurer's Report & Accounts	24
Membership	30
Constitution	37
Midweek Walks	39

Registered Charity No. 212219



Cover illustration

The footbridge in Dovedale below the stepping stones, the proposed resiting of which by local authorities will be opposed by the Society.

Photo by Derek Taylor

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

LESLIE MEADOWCROFT

*A*fter 25 years we are coming to the end of an era, at least as far as I am concerned, with the chairmanship of this Society. It has been a long stint but it cannot be said to have passed slowly. There has never been a dull moment to endure and never a case of 'what to do next' but that of 'which do we do next'. Time does not hang around in this organisation – to keep abreast one has to keep moving. Procrastination and 'manana' are not for us to harbour, but to deal with problems as they arise or as soon as possible.

We must ensure that the momentum we have generated, leading up to our recent centennial peak is maintained in the coming years and that our efficiency and vigilance do not falter. We need to recruit enthusiastic and practical members to our workforce and operations team. There is a valued fellowship within the Cosa Unit which can be experienced and extended to others.

This year has seen more than a fair share of official consultations, particularly in the second half of the period. Items dealt with include traffic regulations, Vehicles on Byways, etc, etc., Could it be that we are at last being recognised for our expertise on such related subjects with our voice of experience, But compiling such responses takes much time of your senior officers and the necessary co-ordination

involved doesn't happen overnight. This dedication of voluntary time and effort needs to be more fully understood at grass root level when contributory finances are being discussed by affiliated bodies, especially in comparison with those organisations with a more flamboyant image. Our work is never ending and continues throughout the year.

This year we have acquired several items of equipment including practical donations by the Pam Ayres Show on Radio 2 and the management of Stockport Infirmary. We pass our grateful thanks to all concerned including several members who have contributed equipment.

One of the larger public inquiries this year has been the appeal into the refusal of consent to opencast coal extraction at Poynton and which ran for well over a week. I appeared as a technical witness in support of the refusal. Other hearings are reported elsewhere in this report

Although not directly involved, we congratulate the East Cheshire Area of the RA on their successful claiming of the Nab path at Bollington.

During November we had the opportunity to meet Richard Simmonds, the new Chairman of the Countryside Commission, on his first visit to the Peak Park; this was almost a year after his appointment, and we presented him with copies of the Society's publications

The Society has been active, along with others, in its condemnation of the recent mismanagement of the Middlewood Way by Stockport MB and NW Water during a prolonged pipelaying operation which denied public access for some nine months.

The year 2000 is the target, set by the Countryside Commission and endorsed by government, for the opening up of all rights of way. As we approach the millennium we must give serious thought to seeing this is honoured by the highway departments of all local authorities.

Already we are hearing the timeworn excuse of 'lack of resources' from the less than efficient authorities that have dawdled in their operations during the last few years. In particular, there are those that can promote diversion orders for privacy and convenience but fail to give attention to obstructed paths or paths that need maintenance to make them passable. In the former case there is legislation for an identifiable obstructor to be surcharged if they fail to remove such an obstruction

In a recently published table of local authorities - Derbyshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Lancashire came in the first 17 out of 39 listed. Could this reflect credit on the activities of certain energetic footpath societies.

We hope the long running claim to a right of way through Longedge Plantation (GR 025785) will be resolved by the sealing of a Creation Order on the 12th December 1996, the end of January 1997 being the last date for lodging objections. The Society initiated this claim with supportive evidence in 1989!

The Society is almost unique amongst voluntary organisations in that basically we are a semi-professional body of volunteers working in a disciplined environment, often against full time legal officers of local authorities and DoE planning staff. We urgently need to fill the post of signpost officer by a practically minded person; an administrative assistance is already in post.

We organise only a very limited social programme, but then we are a working charitable society whose members obtain satisfaction by whatever means they can put into our work, not by what they can take out. In return we give wide protection to the footpaths and bridleways of the seven counties of north west England over which many walk freely. We provide a legal and technical facility which many others, and possibly more glamorous rescue and social organisations, are unable to supply. Given the strength of adequate funding and support we can continue to provide that freedom which we so dearly cherish.

✂ Annual Dinner 1996 ✂

On the 26th April 1996 a large number of members and friends gathered together in Manchester on the occasion of the Society's 34th Annual Dinner.

Again we were made most welcome by the manager and staff of the Freemason's Hall in Bridge Street where the food and service was again of the highest order.

Our guest speaker was Society member Councillor Martin Doughty, Leader of Derbyshire County Council and Chairman of the Peak Park Planning Board.

The response to the toast 'The Society' was made by the Society's Courts & Inquiries Officer Adrian Littleton.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Harry Sutcliffe, the Society's Inspector for the City of Salford and was warmly supported by those present.

In view of the very large area we cover, this event presents the only opportunity for many friends and colleagues to meet together.

Please make a note, therefore, that the annual dinner in 1997 will be held on the 11th April when the guest speaker will be Mr Steve Tivey Countryside Access Manager, Cheshire County Council.

VICE CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS

NORMAN EDWARDS

I would like to draw your attention to the following four items –

Chairmanship

This year our Chairman will have completed 26 years in this office. Leslie has indicated to Council that he wishes to stand down at the next AGM and so it will be indeed the end of an era. With earlier posts of delegate and then vice-chairman to the Society he will have given over 50 years' service. In that time many momentous events have taken place including many rights of way bills. Under his leadership the Society has been moulded into the present successful one. I know you will join with me in thanking him for all the time and effort which he has put into the Society. I hope that next year's report will contain an article on Leslie and list some of the many achievements with which he has been involved. I am sure that all who have visited the archives will be as amazed as I by the amount of material we have accumulated over many years.

Snake Path centenary

Our recent centenary reminded us that the Society was formed with the aim of reopening the path between the Snake and Hayfield. The amount of work carried out by the early officers in obtaining declarations from various elderly men as to their use of the path was admirable considering that transport was nothing like as easy as at the present. It surprised me that the path was so well used by shepherds and their sheep as well as travelling salesmen. Obviously the Snake Inn was well used by these travellers as were the hotels in Hayfield after crossing the moors. This

report will include a leaflet giving details of the centenary celebrations of the reopening. This reopening was the start of a very active period for the early members of the Society. The following year saw the Doctor's Gate path being opened. These were probably the first access agreements entered into as the moor on Doctor's Gate was closed at certain times.

Computer database

Some concern has been expressed that the names and addresses of members and affiliated societies are held on a computer database. On behalf of the officers I wish to state that this database will not be handed to any other society or firm and will be used only for printing labels to mail members and affiliated societies. If you so wish, you may ask for your name to be removed from this database but, after the above assurance, I hope you will allow us to keep your name on the list.

Premises

Your officers are looking into the issue of accommodation for the Society. The material which has accumulated over the last century needs protection and there is a need to accommodate the society's workers. You will recollect there was an insert in last year's annual report appealing for funds. Whilst encouraging this has not brought the anticipated response. An application to the lottery fund is being formulated but we will still have to raise a considerable portion ourselves.

I cannot predict how the Society will progress in the future. Will there be a need for a part time director or similar to take over the day to day running of the Society? Will there be a need for a legal department to take on the numerous inquiries or court cases affecting the rights of way in our area? A permanent office will be required to accommodate the equipment and suitable space will be essential with the advent of computers in mapping. I will try to keep you updated but, if you or your society wish to make a donation, the fund is still open. You might consider making a bequest in your will.

TO TWO COMRADES

ANON

Over the beautiful fells in the Lakeland, the wonderful mountains in Wales.
The magnificent Bens up in Scotland, and the lovely green hills in the Dales.
In these heavenly places I've wandered, as free as a bird on the wing.
Yet, ever two comrades were with me, whose praises from peaks I could sing.

With those trusty old friends I have rambled. Those delightful sights I did see.
Through flower strewn meadows in springtime, by brooks dancing down to the sea.
No voice of complaint e'er came from them, no matter how far we did tread.
So little they asked for their service. No praise for them was ever said.

In the full flush of summer we travelled, under the sun in a cloudless blue sky.
Where the lark climbs the notes of his chorus, or where the buzzard wheels slowly on high.
Over rocky hard tracks we have wandered, by golden gorse covered heights.
To reach the peak of our journey and look out over nature's delights.

When autumn at summer's ending, clothed the woodlands in russets and golds.
When falling leaves, at nature's command, o'er pathways a carpet unfolds.
When those leaves whispered, with each step we trod. 'Feel the wind how it grows in
spite.
Hard winter is coming and soon you will know the north wind's terrible bite.'

Together we walked in the uplands, through sleet, through hail, and through frost.
Facing the bone tearing talons of that cruel north wind, 'Without you, my comrades,
I'm lost.'

Through the cold snows of winter I struggled, where you were ever my friends.
To the shelter of gulleys away from the blast to the place where our journey ends.

The seasons of pleasure and vigour in their passing brought with them the years.
My trusty old stalwarts, as we battled alone, I could feel the welling of tears.
For in the near distance, as we journeyed on, I fancied the sound of a bell.
Oh my dear friends, this made my heart ache, for it was sounding your knell.

The years of hard toil and struggle have taken your measure at last.
Your spirits could never be broken, but your days of service are past.
In old age you are now bent and crippled. You gave me all of your best.
Now the time has come for our parting. Now, the time to lay you to rest.

I look down on you now, my dear comrades, and my heart is aching with tears.
For the pleasures and joys you have given me, for the silent obedience of years.
What paeans of praise could I sing you? What trumpets sound out salutes?
What monuments raise at the end of your days? You're just a pair of old battered boots.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

DEREK TAYLOR

As the year draws to a close I have been pondering on the word 'duty' as in the statutory duty imposed by the Highways Act on local authorities to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of every highway.

Strangely the majority of councils ignore that legal duty explaining that they have no money. So what we really have are councils which blatantly ignore the law when it suits them but conversely are quick to invoke the law when the occasion demands. For instance, the next time you receive your rate bill, can I suggest you say to your council, sorry no money and see how fast the council will invoke the law when it is to their benefit.

This 'no money' reaction, which affects most councils is, I believe, effectively laid to rest in a letter from an Anne Wilks of Whitstable to the Byways & Bridleways newsletter; she writes ...

Please stop this line of argument that highway authorities are short of cash to carry out their statutory duties. They are not; it is just that they are spending on optional extras instead of giving the correct priority to their duties as the law lays down.

She adds ... Our highway authority spends a fabulous amount of time and money arranging diversions and even extinguishments – this is not a duty but only discretionary. They spend a further fortune on an endless stream of expensive literature, again an optional extra. Then they tell me that they are too short of money to get and keep the definitive map up to date.'

Anne, I could not have put it better myself.

These thoughts lead me conveniently into my review of local authority action/inaction during the year past...

CHESHIRE

Cheshire County Council

It is rather nice to be able to say something complimentary about a local authority and I do this with regard to Cheshire, with the greatest pleasure; they really do try hard to improve the network and they are succeeding. Evidence of the work done by countryside managers and their staff is very much on view, new stiles and signposts appear regularly, and the clearance of obstructions proceeds apace. What a great pity, therefore, that the impetus is lost when matters are referred to the County Legal Department, I think particularly of ploughing cases where little progress appears to be made. This issue will be raised yet again at our meeting with the County early in the new year.

Warrington B.C.

In April 1997 Warrington will become a unitary authority. They have always been poor in dealing with rights of way matters – will the situation improve when they are their own masters, I very much doubt it but we must wait to see. I will report more fully next year.

Macclesfield BC

The improvement in path maintenance noted last year is just about being maintained but overall the borough lacks drive

when dealing with rights of way matters. I have a list of some nine cases where paths are illegally obstructed by buildings etc and have been so for many years, but the Council fails to take any action to get the matters resolved. I believe there is sufficient justification to ask the County Council to cancel the agency agreement they have with the borough and to deal with matters themselves and I will be inviting the County Council to take this course of action at our next meeting.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Bolton MBC

I mentioned last year that there had been a fall off in the positive approach we had seen in previous years. I detect that that fall off continues though I am assured that additional staff are to be recruited and that things will improve as the year turns. We still await some positive response to our request for a replacement bridge at 764064 and representations in that respect will continue. We continue to meet regularly with council officers and there is no doubt that the scene is right for continued improvement if we can re-establish the feedback which was present but which has at the moment dried up.

Bury MBC

We meet the Council on a regular basis and there is a very positive response to most if not all our complaints. We are in dispute with the Council about the amount of money being poured into cycleways when the footpath section is, in keeping with other authorities, starved of funding. The bridge at Belle Vue Terrace is still closed although there are promises of immediate action, possibly before the end of the financial year. We had thought to take the Council to the magistrates' court on this issue but it was felt this was not the way forward at this time. I hope that by next year I will be able to report the bridge re-opened.

Manchester City Council

Our sound relationship with officers 'on the ground' in the south part of the city area continues with positive results achieved. The problem with the city council, as with many others, is that when matters reach the level of legal issues then the problems start. There are many cases outstanding which have been so for many years with little positive progress to report. The Council is however very prompt at promoting closures and diversions and is at the moment in dispute with the amenity bodies with regard to footpaths Manchester 222 & 252 at Freshpool Way, Sharston, with the distinct possibility of a public inquiry in the offing.

Oldham MBC

A strange authority this which tends to distance itself from the Society. It chooses to concentrate what little resources it has on major footpath routes which provide good public relations opportunities but conveniently forgets other routes, many of which are obstructed. There is an urgent need for the definitive map to be updated, this being long overdue, with the network in the Saddleworth area in a particular state of disarray. I can see no prospect for an improvement unless there is a fundamental change in the Council's approach.

Rochdale MBC

I am unsure what to say about Rochdale. We meet the Council regularly but there seems to be little progress as a result. I have a massive list of outstanding obstruction complaints which increase almost on a daily basis but I get very few clearance reports which would indicate that the Council are taking any sort of positive action. A 'wait and see' situation applies here, perhaps next year I will be able to report some improvement, who knows!

Salford City Council

There has been an improvement here since the appointment of a footpath officer. A new draft footpath map for the city area has been published for consultation and this is a very important precursor to a review of the definitive map across the entire area. However, Swinton & Pendlebury FP51 remains illegally closed. I first reported this problem to the City Council on the 7th March 1981 but despite correspondence and meetings there appears to be little progress. Persistence is, however, the name of the game in footpath preservation matters and members in that area may be assured that I will never allow the matter to rest until it is resolved. As the year turns we hear of a scheme for tank driving experience adjacent to and possible across Worsley 97 on Chat Moss where members of the public may, if they wish and have the necessary £60 per hour, experience the delights of driving a Chieftain tank. We are watching the situation carefully and will take such action as is needed to protect both the path and the adjacent environment.

Stockport MBC

As we go to press Stockport is without a footpath officer and this situation almost always means that nothing, or at least very little work, is being done on footpaths. I have the feeling, echoed by our chairman, that although there are very few if any major problems in the borough, there is a

fair amount of work required on minor items such as stiles, signposts, etc. Perhaps we need to wait until a new officer is appointed and then perhaps we will have a clearer picture. So watch this space next year.

Tameside MBC

In my report last year I said that Tameside was an authority with little concern for rights of way. Nothing has changed!

Trafford MBC

At long last a meeting with user groups has been set up and we are represented at those meetings by the chairman and Robert Fysh, one of our inspectors for that area. These meetings are time consuming for officers but are no doubt extremely useful in allowing an exchange of views. It is early days yet to say if the meetings have resulted in any sort of improvement in the Council's attitude towards rights of way but I have the feeling that things will improve in due course. Perhaps 1997 will be the year of change for the better in Trafford. The signs are right and I am, as always, ever hopeful.

Wigan MBC

This Council continues to flounder, and I use the word advisedly, at the bottom of my league table. Things have not been helped by the dismissal of the footpath officer earlier in the year and a replacement has still not been appointed. There are so many problems in the borough that it is impossible to list them but certainly our claim for paths at Bamfurlong which has been with the Council since the 1st January 1993 must rank as the prize delaying tactic of all time. The overall situation is so bad that, at our last meeting with the Council, the Chairman of Highways actually admitted that he was embarrassed at the lack of progress. For myself I am just frustrated at the continuing delay on all matters.

DERBYSHIRE

Derbyshire County Council

There was a time, not all that long ago, when the Society and its inspectors had established a very real dialogue with the Council's footpath officers. I can think of two such officers, now no longer in post, who made positive attempts to liaise with our inspectors and myself, with the result that there was a real improvement in the network. Alas, those relationships appear to have been lost to the detriment of both sides. There are many outstanding issues which I feel sure could be resolved with the establishment of closer contacts but the 'in' thing would appear to be to establish a 'distance' between us. This cannot be good.

Perhaps the situation will improve in 1997, I do hope so.

Derbyshire Dales DC

As always, few problems in this area and those which do appear are promptly dealt with. *This authority must rank at the very top of my league table.*

North East Derbyshire DC

As always our inspectors continue to report many problems in this area and many do get resolved reasonably quickly. Last year I praised the authority for its system of serving notice on landowners who plough out rights of way and do not restore the line of path. I continue to tender that praise but a degree of concern creeps in. Many farmers in this area plough out rights of way year after year which means the Council has to serve notices on a regular and recurring basis. I have suggested to the Council that this situation is very demanding on time and effort by its officers and they should now take selected cases where ploughing and non-reinstatement take place regularly and take legal action against those responsible. The Council does not accept my advice and, therefore, continues to waste valuable resources of time and money. Surely they will see the light eventually.

LANCASHIRE

Lancashire County Council

At our meetings with the County Council, we have again expressed concern about the destruction of paths by quarrying. We have pressed the issue to such an extent that the Council have recognised there has been a lack of co-operation between Highways and Planning and have introduced *Draft guidance notes on Public Rights of Way and Mineral Extraction Sites* which, if followed, will improve the situation in the future. But the totally unacceptable situation we are left with as a result of past practices has really got to be dealt with promptly. Problems with paths in Pendle borough have also been causing us concern and our agent for that area, Simon Wilson, has compiled some statistics which suggest the clearance figures given by that authority to the County Liaison meeting are dubious to say the least. Our concern has been passed to the County rights of way officers and we await a reply.

Lancashire (continued on next page)

Blackburn BC

Last year I said that there were signs of an improvement at Blackburn, how wrong I was, the situation if anything has got even worse than previously. I am convinced that the Borough Council has abrogated all responsibility for rights of way, I can draw no other conclusion. The Council takes Unitary status in April next year. The footpath situation cannot get worse but can it get better ... I wonder! Our inspector for Blackburn, Ken West, also suffers from severe frustration in his attempts to get answers from Blackburn, to such an extent that he has raised several longstanding problems with the Local Authority Ombudsman. He has done that as an individual rather than as our inspector and that pleases me as I feel confident that the Ombudsman is not happy to take up complaints made by organisations such as ours. It will be interesting to see what his attitude will be to complaints made on a personal basis. My thanks to Ken for his positive approach to a problem which I have found impossible to resolve.

Chorley BC

This authority has responsibility for only a small core area of the borough but in that area any work required is carried out promptly and our relationship with the footpath officer could not be better. A model authority which others could do well to emulate.

Rossendale BC

I am rather 'blind' in this area because we do not have an inspector covering Bacup, Haslingden & Whitworth. I would be pleased to give details of what we require from inspectors, to anyone interested. The Council still finds problems in replying to letters, one usually gets an acknowledgement but nothing further. Greater pressure required but a person to fill the inspector vacancy would help.

WEST YORKSHIRE

Calderdale B.C.

This Council has a massive problem. Literally hundreds of paths are obstructed in one way or another and those are only the ones I know about. Just how bad the situation is can be gauged by the Council's own comments in their Milestone Statement - *rights of way are underfunded and understaffed in Calderdale they say and continue - expenditure in the order of £65k and the employment of three extra staff members is required in order to promote a properly maintained public rights of way network by the end of this century.*

Well, well, what an admission and don't forget they have a statutory duty here. Also let us not forget that the problems

have arisen due to years of neglect so it really is no use weeping now, the wounds are self inflicted. I will be agreeably surprised if any extra money or staff are made available so we must expect the problems in Calderdale to deteriorate rather than improve.

Kirklees BC

Neighbours of Calderdale but with a much more positive approach. I report a problem today and receive an acknowledgement seven days later with an indication of the steps being taken to resolve the problem. All is not roses in Kirklees but at least there is the correct attitude, sadly missing in Calderdale.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Our regular meetings with the County Council continue and there is a positive approach to footpath problems. We have recently concluded lengthy correspondence with the County about footpaths in the area surrounding Stanley Head outdoor pursuits centre. Lengthy, we found out in the end, because Staffordshire are using up to date definitive maps and the ones they supplied to us are long out of date, but they didn't think to tell us. We are hopeful that new maps will be supplied to the society in due course.

SOME OTHER THOUGHTS.....

Havannah Lane, Congleton

Last year I asked for any information with regard to this lane which had been closed off by a palisade fence. I had very little response from members but due to a considerable amount of research by Mrs Lee one of our inspectors, for which many thanks, we were able to provide copies of maps and archive material to the Clerk to Congleton Council who, we understand, is preparing a claim for definitive status.

So what else is new ! !

Whilst on holiday in southern Spain recently, I picked up the local paper 'SUR in English' and was intrigued by the headline '*Residents denounce illegal building works*'. Reading on, I was even more intrigued, though I have to admit not really surprised, to read '*four buildings in the estate called Bello Horizonte in Marbella have been put up on an ancient right of way which crosses the area*'. It appears there is no escape from developers who illegally obstruct rights of way – even in Spain.

John Holness

As we go to press, we are saddened to hear of the death of John, our inspector for the Warrington (North) area. He was a person with a great deal of expertise on footpath matters and will be sorely missed by the Society and his many friends.

Fred Darwin

Sadly, Fred died earlier this year; he was for quite some time our inspector for Bury but was always prepared to give assistance in adjacent areas. He was a tenacious character who just could not accept the off-hand way in which many authorities dealt with rights of way and he was not afraid to say so. I know that Fred will be sadly missed by his wife and family but this will also be the case in respect of his many friends in the Society. We all share the grief of his passing.

My thanks...

Each year I express my thanks to all who have assisted me during the year, particularly our Inspectors who provide me with the information I need to pursue problems with the appropriate local authorities My 'thank you' paragraph appears at the end of my report year after year, almost as a matter of routine, but is nonetheless sincere. The society just could not operate without its inspectors, so again many thanks.

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY

MRS EILEEN LEONARD

During 1996 the constant attack and erosion on the countryside and the public rights of way network continues. However the Society's members have been vigilant and active in keeping paths open.

As you are aware, over the past few years the countryside has been invaded by so called recreational activities – paint ball shooting for one. Beware, one of the latest money making countryside devastating pastimes ... to pay your money and hire a military tank. Then, you have a choice of tank depending on the price you wish to pay. If, whilst driving around, you happen to knock over a few stiles and obliterate a few public footpaths, well! Oh sorry it was an accident but there is a notice on the fence saying BEWARE DANGEROUS TANKS. You have been warned!

In November 1996, I was approached by Warrington Borough Council seeking the Society's support for a Mersey Valley project named *Warrington Regineses*. An information brochure was sent to the Society containing a visionary and very interesting plan. This included a commitment to creating a comprehensive network of footpaths and cycle ways, together with other environmental proposals such as woodlands and waterside recreational development. The long distance Trans Pennine Trail already comes into this area and, it is hoped, will become popular with walkers. I wrote a letter on behalf of the Society supporting this Millennium bid. Warrington are expecting to hear if they have been successful in January 1997. We wish them good luck.

Many members of the Society have been very busy working for the general benefit of walkers throughout the area. Their knowledge, expertise and time consuming work which is done to keep the footpath network open on our behalf is greatly appreciated.

Harry Hadfield represented the Society and several other walking groups at the recent public inquiry at Macclesfield Council Chambers to determine whether the appeal of Coal Contractors Ltd should be upheld against the refusal of Cheshire County Council to allow 250,000 tons of coal to be extracted by open cast mining from an area near Norbury Brook on the Hazel Grove/Poynton border. If allowed, this extraction of coal would mean the closure or diversion of nine public footpaths and indirectly affect 17 other paths in the area. Harry attended the inquiry every day and on the final day professionally presented his evidence, calling on our Chairman, Leslie Meadowcroft, as an expert witness. We cannot predict the inspector's decision, expected in a few months, but the professional presentation of Harry Hadfield must be congratulated.

Derek Seddon has been very actively working on and monitoring a path at Stable Clough, Longdendale. This path was gouged by the owner who wished to develop the moors as a shooting enterprise and planned to take four wheel drive vehicles along it. The plan has been abandoned and we are now left with a derelict obstacle course.

Finally, another piece of good news: the Inspector at a public inquiry found in favour of a definitive path to the top of Nab Head, near Bollington. Bill Shercliff with members of the East Cheshire RA and officials of Cheshire CC collected and presented with great skill, evidence for a path from Cockshead Hay Farm to the top of Nab Head. The views of the surrounding countryside from the top of Nab Head are excellent. Unfortunately, it was impossible to obtain evidence for an alternative way for the descent.

MATTERS FROM THE MINUTES

NB No meetings of Council were held in January, April or August

February

Hope-Aston bridleway proposals – chairman outlines to the National Park Officer our objections.
Lancashire seeks our support for **coastal footpath**.
New countryside movement greeted with suspicion.

March

Milldale footpath – short and expensive creation on Staffordshire side; no movement on main issue.
Dumplington retail centre: footpath diversion under discussion.
Astley Green Colliery: redevelopment being monitored.

April

AGM and Annual Dinner.

May

Tom Wood, Charlesworth: serious concern over Woodland Trust management of footpaths.
Middlewood Way: extensive closure over pipelaying deplored.
Suspended walkway proposed to link **Goyt and Mid Shires Way** at New Mills.

June

Milldale: Derbyshire CC cannot see any progress with the National Trust over alternative path.
Alderley FPS report **Chelford** footpath affected by mineral extraction.

July

Environment officer reports **Warrington Revised Local Plan** has no commitment to rights of way.
Overhead projector gifted to Society.
Security diversions becoming a matter of concern.

September

Society responds to government consultation documents on **electrically powered cycles and vehicles on byways**.
Chairman appointed to **Stockport MB's Sustainable Transport Advisory Committee**.
DoE Inspector at **Leek** inquiry decides further upgrading of footpath to **BOAT**.
Wigan – Westhoughton bypass: Society's objections upheld.

October

Reported **Peak Park** proposing to close certain roads on bank holidays.
Staple Clough, Longdendale still awaiting restoration.
Poynton Opencast appeal concluded.

November

Sharston Manchester 222 & 252 inquiry: cancelled after numerous objections.
Middlewood Way: claim reported for definitive status.
Consultation on **traffic regulations**.
Senior officers meet informally with new **Chairman of Countryside Commission**.

December

Lever Park Bill: representations made via NW Sports Federation.
Snake Path centenary arrangements outlined by vice chairman.
Officers report on AGM, future senior officers, annual dinner & accommodation

Yearly totals -

Paths obstructed 160
Paths Cleared 196

COURTS & INQUIRIES

ADRIAN LITTLETON

Blore Heath

1996 began on the Wars of the Roses battlefield of Blore Heath. The Society supported the Parish Council's objection to diverting a path away from the *Great Hedge* – from which the Yorkist army began its victorious assault. Admiral Woodward (retired), an inspector with recent battlefield experience, decided that it would be just as satisfactory if walkers looked at the Great Hedge from 15 metres range.

Wortley FP9

To the west of M1, near Barnsley, a diversion for Wortley 9 would take that path too far from one of its termini for our comfort. We ran our objection to inquiry but the inspector thought the new route would provide a better walk. Such diversions will affect users for many decades to come. When there is cause for suspicion of impending cosy carve-ups of the network, our Society does a precious public service by calling 'Halt - is this diversion truly in the public interest?'

St Helen's footpath

In St Helens Magistrates' Court we opposed the closure of a path which, the local authority alleged, prevented badly needed OAPs' bungalows from being built upon the land which it crossed.

The threatened loss of an EEC grant is a mother of invention; the authority needed to start work very soon to get such a grant. So, when the case was adjourned because there was insufficient time that day to hear it, a diversion route between the bungalows magically appeared.

M56 tunnel

A torrent of local outrage killed Manchester City Council's attempt to extinguish the tunnel path under the M56 at Baguley; the application was withdrawn before its fictitious merits could be tested in the City Magistrates' Court.

Open cast mining threat at Poynton

Leslie Meadowcroft and Harry Hadfield have been battling strenuously at a planning appeal against open cast mining at Poynton which would ruin several paths for several years. Watch this space for the inquiry's outcome.

Leek FP25

gives spectacular views. There is a strong case for upgrading this path to bridleway but, when an inquiry was held into this upgrading, the inspector decided that some of the evidence justified a further upgrading – to *Byway Open to all Traffic* status which means that four wheel drive vehicles and motorcycles could cavort upon it. A second inquiry into BOAT status was held in August.

Evidence of ancient status and 'as of right' vehicular use were the **only** issues.

Local residents put up a resourcefully researched fight using, amongst other things, early 20th century Land Tax records. Derek Seddon and I attended to give what support we could.

At the end of 29 pages of masterly historical analysis, the inspector concludes that – *on the balance of probabilities, I believe that a public byway had already been dedicated on this route before 1930.*

It is now to be hoped that a traffic regulation order will preserve the tranquillity of that early morning walk along Leek 25 which Derek and I enjoyed before the inquiry started.

SIGNPOST REPORT

KEN HOLT

The year has not been quite as hectic as last but nevertheless the signpost team have been quite active spending more time on repainting and other maintenance. For their valuable assistance, my thanks go to all members of the Society, affiliated rambling clubs, wardens and rangers operating within our area.

It was with regret I had to resign as Signpost Officer early in October due to moving to the kinder climes of Norfolk. I have really enjoyed my association with the Society and will remain as an ordinary member. Sonia and I proffer our best wishes to the Society and may the good work continue for many, many years.

NEW SIGNS ERECTED

Crossplate GR947825 nr Middlewood Way, affixed to Cheshire CC post shows 'To Poynton'

SP249 GR952831 Higher Poynton
Donated by PNFS *imo* Ruby Irlam

SP256 GR993892 Mellor
Donated by Manchester Associates to mark their 50th anniversary.

SP257 GR744225 near Calfhay Reservoir
Donated by Bolton HF *imo* Jim Carberry.

SP258 GR735149 near Jumbles Reservoir
Donated by Bolton HF *imo* Jim Carberry.

SIGNS REPAINTED/NEW POSTS FITTED

SP24 GR041812 Lydgate Farm, Eccles Pike
Stockport Field Club *imo* HR Brown

SP26 GR218318 Hathersage/Hope Road
SP78 GR225781 Sir Wm Hill Road, Eyam
Hallamshire FP Society

SP132 GR991637 near Crag Hall,
Wildboardclough: *imo* J McCauley

note: *imo* = 'in memory of'

DAMAGED/NEEDING REPAIR

SP151 GR977830 near East Lo, Lyme Park
imo H Meadowcroft

*Original sign broken beyond repair so SP158
from stock was used to replace it.*

SP222 GR116788 Dam Side, Peak Forest
Donor JR Page *imo* M Page
Sign broken: repaired and re-affixed.

SP245 GR950824 near Green Farm, Higher
Poynton *imo* HJ Axon
Memorial plaque re-affixed.

SIGNPOSTS VANDALISED

SP23 GR048850 Peep o' Day, Hayfield:
unauthorised removal.

SP109 GR979823 Dissop Head, Lyme
Handley
Donor: City News Fellowship
Unauthorised removal; replacement erected

SP202 GR009983 Devil's Bridge, Arnfield
Donor: BBC Radio Manchester
Broken at base but repaired by team.

SIGNS REPAINTED

SP34 GR243778 Grindleford Bridge

SP43 GR249783
below Maynard Arms, Grindleford

SP52 GR197015 Flouch Inn, Hazlehead

SP115 GR932804 Lower Cliff Farm, Lyme
Handley: *imo* AF Hart

SP116 GR972808 south of Bowstones Farm
Donor: Manchester CHA 'D' section

SP134 GR983808 opposite Handley Foot
Farm: *imo* H Meadowcroft.

SP150 GR981332 S of Green Lane, Disley:
Donor: Altrincham RC *imo* Miss H Wood.

TREASURER'S REPORT

KEITH WYKES

Once again the Society has more than held its own, achieving a £12,052 increase in funds. This comfortable position has arisen from the increase in membership subscription rates, an 11% increase in investment income and your magnificent response to the *Challenge '96* appeal, offset by a small increase in expenditure.

To all donors to the Society – including testators; estate administrators, covenantors, payroll/Cafcash voucher givers and those who forego their legitimate claims for expenses – a very big 'thank you'.

To those who ask why we increased membership rates when we had £87,552 in funds (in 1995) and we now have about £100,000 of funds, my reply is twofold. Firstly, we should always maintain sufficient and substantial general & defence funds in pursuance of the Society's objectives; for example, members would be astonished at the astronomical costs involved should we ever need to resort to law on any footpath matter. Secondly, it is my task to ensure that we have sufficient funds to hand to fund any premises related expenditure referred to elsewhere in this annual report.

To this end, Council agreed to transfer 50% of 1995's General Fund balance (£36,329) to the Development Fund in advance of my application(s) to National Lottery Boards.

If they meet with success, we will be able to finance any premises related expenditure up to £100,000. If unsuccessful, then we may only resort to the £42,518 Development Fund balance as earmarked for premises and for this reason the *Challenge '96* appeal is carried forward to 1997. Please continue to support the Development Fund as your number one port of call.

Taxpayers should note that Inland Revenue approval has been given to the Society's scheme for covenanting membership subscriptions and donations to the Society which means your covenanted membership subscriptions and donations are worth 30% more to the Society in recovered tax, at no extra cost to yourself. May I invite all taxpayers to consider covenanting their membership/donations to the Society and to contact me (☎ 01625 618782) for further details. Members who, since early 1996, have expressed interest in covenanting should find the appropriate forms, etc with this annual report.

EXAMINER'S REPORT

I have had access to the books and documents concerning the Finances of the Society and consider that the Statement and Balance Sheet for the Year ending 31st December 1996, prepared by the Treasurer, presents a true and fair view of the Accounts as at that date.

signed: Ron McKnight, Honorary Examiner

Hazel Grove

9th February 1997

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

As permitted by the Charities Act, your trustees have elected to provide a Statement of Assets & Liabilities (Balance Sheet) and a Receipts & Payments Account (Income & Expenditure) and the Society is exempted from the need for professional audit.

all figures are £

FUNDS OF THE SOCIETY as at 31 December each year

fund name	1995 b/fwd	+ income	± Transfers	- expenses	= 1996 c/fwd
Capital					
Development	1,051	5,086	+ 36,529	- 148	42,518
MIRR	8,038	3,544	- 3437	- 2,773	5,372
Revenue					
Defence	4,137	27	0	- 3	4,161
Signpost	1,221	420	0	- 472	1,169
General	72,658	11,968	- 33,092	- 5,597	45,937
Memorial funds					
E Royce	55	0	0	0	55
H Wild	250	0	0	0	250
FSH Head	142	0	0	0	142
	87,552	+ 21,045	+ 0	- 8,993	= 99,604

FUNDS

are to be used only for the specific purposes defined hereunder and as their titles suggest.

- The **Development Fund** was established in 1995 for the purpose of buying replacement premises to house and equip the COSA/Archives Unit including upgrading equipment where necessary.
- Its income is derived from individual donations, generous bequests (against one of which a contingent future interest attaches) deposited loan covenants, relevant transfers from General Funds including 'pump priming' funding in advance of National Lottery Funding application(s); and the transfer of lecture fee income.
- Expenditure relates to telephones, postages and van rental to collect donated office equipment.
- The Matured Investment & Revaluation Reserve (MIRR) balance effectively reduces the Balance Sheet value of government stocks to their £36,944 nominal/maturity

value as dictated by prudent accounting; consequently a one-off release of £3,437 for the benefit of General Funds has occurred.

- The **Defence Fund** exists to fund professional advice and meet any legal expenses if required; this fund would benefit immeasurably if donors specify *Defence Fund* as opposed to *General Fund* for example; it should be your second port of call if donating.
- The slightly reduced balance in the **Signpost Fund** reflects income and expenditure at roughly one third the 1995 level; however sufficient funds remain to undertake identified backlog of maintenance work.
- Apart from the net transfers referred to above, General Funds have benefited from the receipt of the 1996 surplus £6,366 (1995 £5,341).
- **Memorial Funds** are not open for further donations; they are used, when needed, to maintain the appropriate memorials.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 December 1996

all figures are £

INCOME	1996	1995
Subscriptions		
Ordinary	848	573
Joint	865	660
10 year suspense transfers	1,306	1,279
5 year suspense transfers	68	-
Junior	3	3
Affiliations	866	558
Total subscriptions	3,956	3,073
Donations - General	525	608

Investment Income -

Deposit accounts and terms:

Long term accounts	2,607	2,460
Medium term accounts	1,255	1,211
Short term accounts	2,829	2,335
Total investment income	6,691	6,006

Other income

Affiliates Service charge	101	115
Fees for annual report ads and other donations	596	571
Sundry	94	294
Total other income	791	980

Total income for the year 11,963 10,667

EXPENDITURE	1996	1995
Travel	1,005	793
Annual Report (net)	886	955
Postages	762	755
Telephones	388	394
Printing & stationery	351)
Computer consumables etc	247) 568
Photocopying	280	317
Office equipm't maintenance	215	228
COSA Unit expenses:	2	9
	4,136	4,019

Room hire:

COSA Unit (inc hosp)	565	551
Secretariat	372	359
Meetings	244	165
	1,181	1,075

Subscriptions + donations	70	107
Map purchases etc	97	20
Insurances (work parties)	30	26
Publicity/advertising	33	-
Sundries	50	79
	280	232

Total expenditure 5,597 5,326

transferred to General Funds 6,366 5,341

Total income for the year 11,963 10,667



DONATION FORM

From:

Name

Address

Tel No.

I/we wish to make the enclosed donation to the following fund -

Development Defence Signpost General Covenant forms needed

Please return with your donation to Keith Wykes, Honorary Treasurer,
30 Langdale Close, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 7YS

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT – NOTES

- Income has risen by 12% (£11,963; 1995 £10,667) and is shown as it arises.
- Subscription Income has risen by 29% reflecting the general increase in subscription rates.
- Ten and five year members may see that one tenth and one fifth respectively of their subscriptions have been treated as income in these accounts.
- General donations have fallen by 15%, not unexpected in the light of launching the Development Fund Challenge '96 Appeal. In view of the need to continue that appeal into 1997 and my earlier plea for members to consider converting their general donations to *Defence Fund* donations, this source of funding may decline but the Society is sufficiently well funded in General Funds.
- Investment income continues to rise (11.4%) reflecting the investment policies outlined on p29; a crude analysis indicates a 6.6% return on capital. This outturn is probably twice the rate of general net investment returns which have eroded further during the year to their lowest since WWII.
- Interest receivable on the 1st January 1997, on the Leeds & Holbeck BS Charity Account and the Skipton BS Matured Instant Access Account, is accrued to the 31 December 1996 year end in the interest of providing true, fair and accurate accounts.
- Affiliates service charge: income has declined by 20% as has the ratio in comparison to affiliations income (1:9).
- Sundry income comprises –

~ Centenary book sales	70
~ Recovered expenses	7
~ Badges (net)	17
	£94
- **Expenditure** is recorded as incurred plus accruals.
- Travel has increased substantially (£212) as a result of £125 of 1995 claims submitted in 1996 and increased mileages (total 8000)
- Most other expenditure has decreased or remained static.
- COSA Unit & Secretariat costs have risen in line with the lesser of rental RPI increases (3.61%) or the sum(s) claimed.
- Meetings room hire cost reflects the increased costs associated with the room charge at the Friends' Meeting House
- Sundry expenditure is –

~ Publications	18
~ Annual dinner (net)	16
~ Officers' subsistence	15
~ Bank cheque charges	1
	£50

THE SOCIETY'S SLIDE LECTURE

The Chairman or Secretary would be pleased to present the Society's slide lecture to any interested organisation.

Please contact either of them for further details

BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December 1996*all figures are £*

	1996	1995
ASSETS		
Investments -		
Long Term		
Government Stock at market value	42,316	34,017
Medium Term		
Woolwich BS 3 year 8.5% Fixed Rate Bond (matures 31 December 1997)	10,000	10,000
Skipton BS Two year 8.1% Fixed Rate Bond (matured December 1996)	-	5,000
	10,000	15,000
Short Term		
Cafcash Deposit Fund	26,839	25,529
Hampshire Trust 12 month Deposit Account	22,465	15,100
Royal Bank of Scotland: Business High Interest	4,019	3,076
Current	17	(80)
Leeds & Holbeck BS Charity Account	527	2,115
Skipton BS Matured Instant Access Account	500	-
Postages float - Membership Secretary	33	56
Cash float (COSA Unit)	20	20
	54,420	45,816
Badge stock on hand	177	207
Debtor - Inland Revenue re covenants	23	-
	106,936	95,040
LIABILITIES		
Funds of the Society (page 25)	99,604	87,552
Ten year membership suspense	6,847	7,463
Five year membership suspense	246	-
Advance Subscriptions 1997/98	5	25
	106,702	95,040
Creditors: Development Fund DL covenants	195	-
Five year membership DL covenants	26	-
Expenses claimant (R Fysh)	13	-
	234	-
	106,936	95,040

BALANCE SHEET – NOTES

- There has been a switch from medium term investments (upon maturity) to government stock (able to be sold before maturity) and short term investments. This is a deliberate policy change by the Investment Sub-Committee to meet the overriding need to have realisable funds available to finance the purchase of premises; this is the reason for the £8604 increase in short term investment values. However, this policy change carries a slightly increased risk, in terms of partial loss of investments, should any institutions holding our investments fail.

Long term investments

- Government stock is generally shown at market value.

• Government Stock investment values –

	1996	1995
	£	£
Purchase cost	36,745	29,443
Maturity value	36,454	28,728
Market value	41,826	33,526

- A 1991 stock is delisted from the Stock Exchange due to the small amount in issue; although payable in 2000/03, as previously it has been included in the accounts at maturity value but is excluded from the above table as its market value is unknown.

Medium term investments

- The proposed Woolwich Building Society conversion to Plc status attaches a contingent interest comprising the free issue of an estimated 850 Woolwich Plc shares (est. value £1,700) on 7 July 1997 provided building society members vote for conversion. I cast my vote FOR conversion.
- The Skipton BS Fixed Rate Bond matured in December and was immediately converted into a Short Term Maturity Instant Access Account with a much reduced retained balance.

Short Term Investments

- The difference of £4,500 was reinvested in the Hampshire Trust 12 Month Notice Deposit Account as this provides the most advantageous interest rates available to us at short term account rates; at 31 December this account attracted a gross interest rate of 7.25%. £17,465 of this account is under notice expiring November 1997.
- The Postage Float reflects the cash and stamp values remaining from floats issued during the year; it does not take account of three unused cheques held by the Chairman at the year end and drawn blank as to amount, payable to 'P.O. Counters Ltd'; two are marked 'Not to exceed £30' and one 'Not to exceed £35'.
- Badge Stock represents the value of 216 badges held by officers at the year end.
- Ten year membership suspense comprises those amounts not taken to the Income Account until due. This balance is much reduced this year reflecting much lower take-up (1996 £690; 1995 £2,470) due to the unusually high 1995 figure as members took advantage of the then prevailing lower subscription rates.
- The five year membership suspense account is established for the first time this year; it also comprises those amounts not taken to the Income Account until due.
- Creditors show the amounts owing to individuals should the balance remaining on their Deposited Loan Covenants (DL) be repaid; also an individual expenses creditor.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

ERNIE SUTTON

Once again I am sorry to report that many of our annual members have failed to renew their membership. Fortunately, the number involved is much lower than last year, declining from 72 to 48, made up on 32 single and 16 joint members (eight pairs).

I am happy to report that we have welcomed one new affiliated society, ten joint and 30 single memberships.

The introduction of the five year membership has met with a good response, resulting in eight single and five joint memberships, most being transfers from annual membership.

Another pleasing fact is the interest shown in the covenant scheme and so, as last year, you are invited to show your interest (if so inclined) by placing a 'X' in the box at the foot of the membership renewal form. Our treasurer, Keith Wykes, will be very pleased to answer any queries or supply further information.

Last, but by no means least, may I again express my sincere appreciation to individual members and affiliated societies for their most welcome donations to our funds.

The membership year terminates at the annual general meeting, but for statistical purposes membership figures are shown as at 31 December

	1995	1996
Annual	429	391
Ten year	612	616
Five year	-	18
Honorary Life	13	13
Juniors	2	2
Total membership	1056	1040
Affiliated societies	94	91

AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 Alderley Edge, Wilmslow & District Footpaths Society | 34 Good Companions Rambling Club, Sheffield | 65 Ramblers' Association: Bolton Group |
| 2 Altrincham & District Rambling Club | 35 Greenfield & Grasscroft Residents Association | 66 Ramblers' Association: Congleton Group |
| 3 Barlborough Parish Council | 36 Hallhill/Springbank Neighbourhood Association | 67 Ramblers' Association: East Cheshire Area |
| 4 Barnsley Mountaineering Club | 37 Halcyon Rambling Club | 68 Ramblers' Association: Manchester Area |
| 5 Blackbrook Conservation Society | 38 Hanliensian Rambling Club | 69 Ramblers' Association: New Mills Group |
| 6 Brookdale Ramblers | 39 Hazel Grove District Scout Council | 70 Ramblers' Association: North & Mid Cheshire Area |
| 7 Buxton Field Club | 40 HF - Bolton Group | 71 Ramblers' Association: Oldham Group |
| 8 Buxton Rambling Club | 41 HF - Bury Group | 72 Ramblers' Association: Sheffield Group |
| 9 CAE | 42 HF - Manchester Group | 73 Ramblers' Association: SYNED Area |
| 10 CHA - Bolton | 43 HF - Nottingham Group | 74 Ramblers' Association: Stockport Group |
| 11 CHA - Bury & District | 44 HF - Warrington | 75 RSPB - High Peak Group |
| 12 CHA - Eccles | 45 ITT Rambling Club | 76 Rucksack Club |
| 13 CHA - Leigh & District | 46 Knutsford Civic Society | 77 Sheffield Clarion Ramblers |
| 14 CHA - Manchester Rambling Club | 47 Leek Footpath Rambling Club | 78 Sheffield Co-op Party Rambling Club |
| 15 CHA - Mansfield | 48 Littleborough Civic Trust | 79 Shirland & Higham Parish Council |
| 16 CHA - Nottingham Rambling Club | 49 Longendale & Glossop Footpath Preservation Society | 80 St Catherine's Rambling Club |
| 17 CHA - Oldham & District Rambling Club | 50 Macclesfield Rambling Club | 81 Stockport & District Federation of TWG's |
| 18 CHA - Rochdale | 51 Macclesfield & District Field Club | 82 Stockport East Area Bridleways Association |
| 19 CHA - Sheffield: Section B | 52 Manchester & District Retired Teachers Ass'n | 83 Stockport Field Club |
| 20 CHA - Sheffield A Section Rambling Club | 53 Manchester Associates Rambling Club | 84 Stockport WEA Social & Rambling Club |
| 21 CHA - Stockport | 54 Manchester Fellowship Rambling Club Independent | 85 Sutton in Ashfield Rambling Club |
| 22 CHA/HF - Ashton-under-Lyne | 55 Manchester Field Club | 86 Toc H |
| 23 Cheadle Hulme & Bramhall Natural History Society | 56 Marple & District Rambling Club | 87 West Lancashire Footpath Group |
| 24 Cheshire County Scout Council | 57 Marple Community Council | 88 Wickersley Evening Townswomens' Guild |
| 25 Cheshire Tally Ho | 58 Marple Naturalists | 89 YHA - Central Region |
| 26 Christian Endeavour Holiday Homes: Manchester Section | 59 Mellor Society | 90 YHA - Stockport |
| 27 Crescent Ramblers | 60 Mid Cheshire Footpath Society | 91 Zeneca Social Centre Hiking & Rambling Society |
| 28 Derby Nomad Ramblers | 61 North Western Naturalists Union | |
| 29 Derbyshire Footpaths Preservation Society | 62 Nottingham Wayfarers Rambling Club | |
| 30 Derbyshire Pennine Club | 63 Pennine Paths Protection Society | |
| 31 Elmton with Creswell Parish Council | 64 Poynton Rambling Club | |
| 32 Eyam Village Society | | |
| 33 Geriatrics Group | | |