



PEAK & NORTHERN FOOTPATHS SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

1998

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Registered Charity No. 212219

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

LESLIE MEADOWCROFT

*Scene
from
the top...*

As commented elsewhere in this annual report, the Society has entered into a new phase of its centennial existence by the purchase of its new headquarters just off St Mary's Way in Stockport, some eight minutes' walk from the Town Hall

Officers and members have been very busy extracting a quart out of a pint pot at Hazel Grove and, in our enthusiasm, we need to be aware of Parkinson's Law not to establish a threat to the space of our newly established workshop and office.

In addition to a normally heavy workload, during the latter part of the year the efforts of some of our voluntary team were deflected to preparing our new premises and we are grateful for their effort.

We had a number of public inquiries and magistrates' court hearings during the year and, with depleted staffing, our resources have been strained. This applies particularly when the event lasts more than three days needing full time attendance of the Society's representative. However, we have heard recently of a satisfactory outcome of one such case at Leek where the district council was on the side of the 'angels' opposing the county council's nefarious activities.

We have made written representation to the White Paper of the dying Countryside Commission's proposals to overhaul existing legislation on Highway Law and procedures; where these are unfavourable we are opposing them such as abandoning the 20 years' rule for claiming public rights-of-way. In the near future we may be asking members to contact their members of parliament

Earlier in the year we responded to the government's paper on *Access to the Countryside* and my paper was also used as a base document by Stockport MB in its response. This authority has sought help with their inner urban rights-of-way survey which they opted out of under the 1949 Act. Also our views have been taken on their section of the Trans-Pennine Trail. Apparently we do have our uses!

Trafford MBC have donated to us a set of their Definitive Map Schedules to complement the Definitive Map and for which we are most grateful. We normally meet with this authority some two or three times a year to help resolve problems as they do not have a full-time rights-of-way officer.

We maintain our interests with the Peak Park Authority and appropriate officers and by purchasing copies of their Park Management and Policy Committee papers. Other attendancies are reported elsewhere in this annual report.

Finally can YOU help to fill our new premises with active help?

ANNUAL DINNER 1998

Friday 8th May was the occasion of our annual dinner when again we were made most welcome by the manager and staff of the Freemasons' Hall in Bridge Street.

Our guest speaker was Alan Mattingley who gave us the benefit of his long experience as Director of the Ramblers' Association in a rousing speech seeking greater support from all for the outdoor movement.

The response to the toast 'The Society' was made by Jack Burling of Sheffield, a long time supporter of the Society, and the vote of thanks was proposed by Maurice Deakin the Society's inspector for part of Derbyshire.

Please note the 1999 dinner will be held at the same venue on the 14th May 1999 when the guest speaker will be Mike Crabtree, Head of Conservation, NW Water.

Welcome to our new home....

by Norman Edwards

For some time now your officers have been on the lookout for suitable premises. It had become apparent that the rooms at Hazel Grove, so graciously loaned to us by the President's wife, were becoming too small. Papers, files and equipment were spread out and every officer was storing items, it was essential these were brought together as much as possible.

The old post office on Turncroft Lane came on the market. Recently renovated, double glazed and centrally heated it seemed ideal. It was close to Stockport and the existing volunteers would have no problem transferring there. There is plenty of parking and buses frequently run past the end of the road.

Downstairs, the large front room has been converted into the work room and the rear room has become the filing room. Upstairs, the main front room has been turned into the office with phone, fax and computer. The rear upstairs room has been made the

general storage room; here are the records, old maps, minutes and a host of other items. The small room is now a spare office. The well equipped kitchen and bathroom complete the accommodation.

The Treasurer uses the rooms for his work and, although the membership secretary still works from home, duplicate records are held at the new premises. There will be room here if your Secretary needs to move his files.

Outside, the brick built garage provides more storage and will be equipped for the signpost team. The posts, arms, tools and trailer are stored here.

The acquisition has been aided by many grants and the Society would like to thank all members, affiliated societies and others who have contributed to the cost.

Equipment has been given or purchased – the challenge now is to make full use of all these tools.

continued on page 17

*photography
by
Derek Seddon*



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

NORMAN EDWARDS

I am disappointed that you will not see a picture of the Society's new offices on the cover of this report due, I am informed, to its colour. However I hope you have noticed Derek Seddon's photograph on the previous page. The purchase of these premises has been a priority for some time, I wonder how long it will be before we need an extension!

I think it only right to give a big thank you and the appreciation of the Society to our President and his Lady for accommodating the Society for so long at their premises at Hazel Grove. I am sure Leslie will agree those premises were getting too small and cramped. You only have to view Turncroft Lane to wonder how all this fitted in at 1 Nelson Street. The Society has grown so much over the last few years that it became essential for us to make this move. It really opens up so many exciting prospects and will enable the Society to remain a major force in the rights of way field. I do hope that you can find the opportunity to pay us a visit sometime to see for yourself what is stored here and get an idea of the work carried on at Offerton.

With this move we have taken the opportunity to upgrade some of the tools used by the Society. As our computer was old and incompatible with modern machines, we have bought a new PC enabling us to store some of our many records in a modern form. The presentation to local authorities and others with whom we correspond is much more attractive. The accounts will be computerised as will the index of paths dealt with by the Society.

The tables and chairs have been modernised to give our volunteers a comfortable place of work. This move into the twenty-first century will be exciting but needs your support and encouragement. If you enjoy using the many rights of way in the area covered by the Society then you need us just as much as the Society needs your support. This combination will be essential if we are to continue to be effective as a preservation society.

Early in the year the Society carried out a survey of the footpaths in Chapel en le Frith to aid the County in their audit report. Similar surveys have since been completed in the Wigan Area and, as the year ended, one in the Buxton town area. These surveys have helped the Society to update its records and really see the problems that are affecting these rights of way. For example, the Buxton survey has shown the number of paths unsigned and in some cases almost derelict. Two members were accosted by a land owner, I thought that this type of obstruction was extinct. Thanks go to all the members who helped in these surveys.

The year started in rather hectic fashion with our Treasurer in hospital. Fortunately he was discharged to be able to finalise the accounts but not in time to meet the deadline for printing the annual report. I intend making it a priority for 1999 to get the accounts onto the computer so that, if the unforeseen occurs, it will be an easier task for someone to take over. With the amount of money passing through the accounts and the number of cheques being written it is not a simple charitable account but more a small office account. Yet the accounts must not be so complex that only an experienced accountant can understand them.

We hear that the Countryside Commission is to merge with the Rural Development Commission. Whether this new Countryside Agency will be of help to us remains to be seen, the rights of walkers appear to be subjugated to other users at the moment. The pressure groups for trail riders and off road organisations are well orchestrated

and walkers are having to share more rights of way with these users and watch aghast as the routes are torn apart. We really need the Countryside Agency to appreciate what is happening and stand up for the rights of those who go out for a walk to enjoy peace and tranquillity away from the noise and fumes in towns and villages. I do not know whether this is a personal viewpoint but I am seeing more and more of my favourite paths becoming almost unusable. Trying to take my small grandchildren along paths that were once pleasant and reasonably surfaced is becoming almost impossible.

We are being reminded constantly of how the countryside is changing with numerous applications for diversions around developments being built in our countryside. The shopping centres and industrial sites springing up in the fields where I used to walk; wind farms appearing on the horizons taking our eyes off the beauty that is still around. Where will this end? I know the Society is primarily a footpath preservation society but we are still concerned at the rape of the countryside. No doubt our Vice Chairman & Environment Secretary will have more to say on the subject. We must all be vigilant about what is happening. If we can support local opposition to these developments we will continue to do so.

A major problem we are encountering is the regrading of rights of way. The old RUPPs (roads used as public footpaths) are having to be looked at and converted into paths, bridleways or BOATs (byway open to all traffic). If a local authority receives evidence that it has been used as a bridleway, they have no option but to take steps to regrade it accordingly. Still worse is the evidence that vehicular traffic has used the route at some time (but not motorised traffic after the 1930s when it became illegal under the Road traffic Act). The problem once regrading is accomplished is that you sometimes need a boat to use the route due to the sorry state it has become! I feel the regulations have been so poorly drafted that we are unable effectively to challenge the regrading.

The Society would not function without the help and assistance so willingly given by our many volunteers. I would like to express my appreciation to the Society's officers for their assistance over the year – from their reports you will see a little of what they have accomplished. The Monday team do not appear to get the recognition they so richly deserve. It would take a full report to explain what happens when this team gets going on the work awaiting them. They proceed efficiently and quietly with their jobs and the Society benefits greatly from their efforts, I cannot thank them enough. Our inspectors and agents similarly need recognition for their efforts on behalf of the Society.

We are constantly needing more help in all areas of the Society's activities. Now we are no longer restricted to when we have access to the office, within reason you can use your expertise at times to suit you. Might I give you some areas (not exhaustive) where help is needed apart from the inspectors, office staff and typists? We need qualified persons to help prepare cases for and attend inquiries and magistrates' courts hearings. I would like someone to set up a web site for us, that can be updated easily with details of problem paths. We need to start archiving the many documents held by the Society and all that entails. The computer needs programming so that we record our work and index the records. Finally, there is an urgent need to redesign our membership leaflet so that it stands out amongst the other leaflets on display at various sites.

Finally a big thank you to all members and affiliated societies for their support. It means so much to your officers knowing that we have this support. Might I suggest that you all try to acquire at least one new member this year. This may mean that we will not require a rise in subscriptions and help pay our way in our new offices.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

DEREK TAYLOR

Once again the year has been dominated by the savage cuts by local authorities in funding for rights of way work. This I suppose is in line with cuts in other departments but I have to say that rights-of-way appear to have suffered more than most.

Cheshire and Staffordshire are prime examples. In both these shire counties, local government reorganisation has resulted in the county councils shedding areas to new unitary authorities with the resultant loss of income that brings about.

Cheshire has had to make savage cuts in the rights of way staffing which results in almost nil attention to the maintenance aspect which in turn results in more obstructed and ploughed out paths and signposting and bridge works put on the back-burner.

The Staffordshire County Council document 'Rights of Way Strategy' published in October 1998 says 'the estimated shortfall between existing and required funding for the achievement of the legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised targets was £325,550 a year until the year 2000'. Little wonder the vast majority of complaints I make find their way into their 'low priority' bracket.

As we go to press, further evidence comes to light. Kirklees MBC estimate the minimum cost of correcting all defects and to bring the network up to an acceptable standard would be £1.9 million plus £536,000 for legal work. The Council concedes this is due to 'neglect over the years'. Their budget figure is £125,000 per annum ... no further comment needed.

Members may recall that my report last year referred to my dream that before long we would have a building *which has been or could be modernised, at a correct location, of adequate size, with suitable parking and a facility to accommodate all departments of the society including a workshop and storage area for the signpost team and its equipment.* Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that we would, on the 1st/2nd December, move into premises at 23 Turncroft Lane, Offerton, Stockport, which meet every single requirement of my original dream. Now that we are installed and working well, we need more volunteers to man the office and work on our maps and records which still require some work on them to make them instantly available for research etc. If you feel that you can be of assistance then talk to me, there may be some area of work which would be tailor made for you.

And now for my annual appraisal of the various authorities with which I deal on matters relating to the obstruction of rights of way. Closures & Diversions are dealt with at Turncroft Lane.

CHESHIRE

Cheshire County Council

The 'new' Cheshire is very different to that which we have known in previous years. The loss of Warrington and Halton to unitary status has meant a very real drop in the county income which has been reflected in the work carried out, or rather not carried out by the rights of way team. A further change has been that footpaths in the borough of Macclesfield, previously dealt with by the Borough have now been taken back by the County; who knows, perhaps as a result of representations made by this Society.

Subsequent reorganisation has resulted in the closure of the rights of way office in Wilmslow to concentrate all maintenance work at a place called Whitegate Station at Winsford. From this address flow acknowledgements of my many complaints, and nothing further. I see Whitegate Station as the land based equivalent of the Marie Celeste.

There is a suggestion from the County that things will improve next year. I do hope so, my feelings are that we have been set back at least four years on the maintenance front by the reorganisation programme.

Warrington BC

The new Warrington started with a bang by arranging a meeting of all user organisations and several parish councils. A very constructive meeting with targets set for the future and which appear to be being met. A second meeting has recently taken place and a new footpath officer has been appointed. Things are looking good in Warrington; we must see how things progress this year and I will update my report in January 2000.

Macclesfield BC

As mentioned above, footpath work in the borough of Macclesfield has now been taken back by the County.

GREATER MANCHESTER

Bolton MBC

Bolton continues to occupy a place at the top of my league table of local authorities. A first class rights of way team, with good communication techniques. Who could ask for more.

Bury MBC

Regular meetings with the Council's rights of way staff mean that problems are few and when they do arise they appear to be dealt with promptly. Again a top of the league authority. As we go to press we learn that no further maintenance work can be carried out until April ... budget exhausted.

Manchester City Council

Very little to say about the City Council; they have a very small footpath network and, when I ask for action on any particular issue, they appear to deal with it promptly. This is particularly so when signposts are requested, they seem to respond pretty quickly.

Oldham MBC

There has been no change in this authority's approach to rights of way work, I seldom if ever get a reply to complaints, but then I don't send very many to them. If there is any sort of liaison meeting with Oldham, then I have not heard of it. They should consider setting up such a committee, they are one of the very few Greater Manchester authorities who do not have one.

Rochdale MBC

I really don't know what to say about this authority except that there is a total lack of communication. If they are doing great things, then they fail to make it known. I would have thought that an authority with a positive approach to rights of way would have shouted it from the roof tops but as this does not happen, at least in my direction, then I suspect they are not all that good.

Salford City Council

We regularly attend meetings with this authority and there are at least three items which have been ongoing for many many years which somehow don't appear to get resolved, we must keep up the pressure and will of course do so. The updated situation with regard to Swinton & Pendlebury 51 is that the Council are to take the obstructers to the High Court, but as we go to press I have no positive details of when this will be though I expect it to be early in the year.

Stockport MBC

The Borough has recently appointed a new footpath officer and my initial reaction is that he has a very positive approach. We don't always agree but at least he appears to get things done on the maintenance front. I think we must give him time to settle in and reserve judgement until next year. But one thing is certain – he will only operate to his full potential if he gets support from senior officers and elected members. Now that's another matter altogether.

Tameside MBC

For many years I have been saying that this authority has little or no concern for rights of way. I sense a change, at long last we are getting responses from the Council and an officer has been brought back from retirement to see what improvements can be made. I also hear on the grapevine there are proposals afoot to set up a footpath liaison group and we will of course be represented when/if that occurs.

Trafford MBC

Trafford is an authority with few footpath problems and these are fully discussed at our regular meetings with them; I really cannot say very much more about the situation in this borough.

Wigan MBC

A first class rights of way team operate in Wigan and the results show. Certainly there are problems which remain but these are often of long standing and require a great deal of effort to put them right. The team are working towards a positive milestones statement and though they will not achieve all by the year 2000 they will be well on the way. I am unhappy that our members in Bamfurlong are still waiting for their application for a number of paths to be added to the definitive map. This is poised on the verge of a public inquiry and I just wonder if an alleged shortage of cash by the Planning Inspectorate will delay this matter further, I do hope not.

DERBYSHIRE

Derbyshire County Council

I am well aware that the County Council suffers from a cash shortage, who doesn't. My feeling is there is somehow a lack of communication between the County rights of way team and myself. I do wish that authorities would tell me when they resolve a problem, that then saves a lot of time sending follow up letters and tells me that they are taking note of my complaints. Silence from a local authority is certainly not golden (!) but rather shows a somewhat tarnished image. The county's programme for the erection of signposts moves very slowly with a 16 page schedule of 284 posts now put out to tender which hopefully will be erected early in the new year in North East Derbyshire.

Derbyshire County Council (continued from page 10)

The Society's filing system depends on parish name and path number but I have a very real concern that the county will insist on altering these when boundary changes take place and then keep it a secret from all but themselves. A list of changes would be much appreciated.

Derbyshire Dales DC

Problems are few and are dealt with as they arise.

North East Derbyshire DC

There is something very wrong here. I believe the footpath officer tries to do a good job and his communication with myself is to a standard of which other authorities might well be envious. I suspect, however, that he ploughs a lone furrow. All footpath officers

require formidable back up not only from senior officers but from elected members; I suspect that is not available in North East Derbyshire. The District Council acts as agents for the County and it may well be that we must now ask the County to take back the public footpath aspect of the highways agency as we did many years ago for High Peak. Alternatively elected members and senior officers might just get involved !

LANCASHIRE

Lancashire County Council

The County's handling of path problems remains quite good and I have not as yet seen any great deterioration following the loss to Unitary status of Blackburn, now known as Blackburn & Darwen BC.

Blackburn & Darwen BC

Blackburn remains firmly at the bottom of my league table, though the new footpath officer tries hard, the results do not some how filter through. There is a distinct lack of communication between the borough and this society, how nice it would be to occasionally receive a letter or even a phone call to say that one of the footpaths I complained about has been re-opened. Alas that apparently is not to be. So to Blackburn I say; if you are managing to clear obstructions tell us about it, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Chorley BC

No problems with Chorley. If we have a problem we tell them and in due course they reply to say either we need new specs or the way has been reopened. We can't ask for more.

Rossendale BC

The Society now has a new inspector for part of Rossendale and perhaps during the coming year I will be able to judge what sort of response I get from complaints. For the moment I am deferring judgement.

The ongoing problem of the paths which have been destroyed many years ago by quarrying in the area of Britannia and Facit quarries in Whitworth is still ongoing. Promises ... promises is the order of the day but no positive action, I remind the council on a regular basis and will continue to do so until Orders are made for diversions. There is nothing to be gained by trying to walk the definitive routes through the quarry unless one fancies an abseil to the quarry floor. The situation here is a disgrace.

WEST YORKSHIRE

Calderdale MBC

This Borough Council continues to languish at the bottom of my league table. During the year I was amazed to see advertised in *The Great Outdoors* – 'The Calderdale Walking Festival' – I just could not believe it; a walking festival in Calderdale where anyone chancing to stray from the Calderdale Way stands a very high chance of facing an obstruction of one kind or another. I just felt that I must pen a reply and did so expressing my concern. It may just be a coincidence but following that exchange of letters there came a move from Calderdale to re-establish the Rights of Way Liaison Group and the first meeting has now been held. We will be well represented at these meetings which, hopefully, will result in some improvement to the network.

Kirklees MBC

A continuing improvement in the borough with good lines of communication, an acknowledgement of complaints and then a follow up letter advising what action is to be taken. I do wish that other authorities would copy this system which is very positive.

STAFFORDSHIRE

The County Council continues to hide behind its priority system. It is strange that the vast majority of complaints I lodge fall into the lower category range which in effect means that, because of financial constraints, they never receive attention. Even top priority paths such as the Staffordshire Way are not given the attention they require or deserve. In short I am not at all happy with the way in which Staffordshire deals with obstruction cases.

And finally...

My thanks to all who have helped me during the year.

A special thanks to all those, too numerous to mention, who helped in the preparation work on our new premises and to those who actually helped on removal day and since.



THE SOCIETY'S SLIDE LECTURE

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

Please contact either of them for further details

OBSTRUCTIONS & CLEARANCES – 1998

<i>local authority</i>	<i>obstructions clearances</i>	
Cheshire CC	14	40
Warrington BC	5	2
Derbyshire CC	11	8
Derbyshire Dales DC	5	3
North East Derbyshire DC	35	22
Chesterfield DC	-	1
Greater Manchester		
Bolton MBC	5	27
Bury MBC	2	3
Manchester City	-	-
Oldham MBC	8	-
Rochdale MBC	8	-
Salford City	-	1
Stockport MBC	3	9
Tameside MBC	3	3
Trafford MBC	1	-
Wigan MBC	5	10
Lancashire CC		
Blackburn & Darwen DC	5	10
Chorley BC	3	-
Rossendale BC	1	-
South Yorkshire		
Rotherham MBC	1	-
Staffordshire CC		
	5	7
West Yorkshire		
Calderdale MBC	4	3
Kirklees MBC	19	1
totals	144	156

The above statistics reflect the situation which has applied this year. However, the clearance figures relate to paths which have been cleared this year but were mostly reported as obstructed in previous years. Therefore, I would not wish you to make any sort of comparison between the two sets of figures.

I estimate that I have in the region of 2500 unresolved cases on books awaiting clearance or clearance reports. I do not accept a local authority report of clearance until it has been confirmed by one of our inspectors.

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY

DEREK SEDDON

You win some and you lose some. This year the environment won more than it lost. The quarrymen at **Longstone Edge** decided to drop their application for a large new operation inside the Peak National Park, though they may be back for another try later. The quarrying of **Win Hill** was agreed to be necessary so that the Ladybower dam could be reinforced to comply with EU directives and it is gratifying that the work appears to be going ahead without undue disturbance. Because of the known public concern great care is being taken and work on the dam will now stop until August for the bird nesting season (goshawks and herons).

Four-wheel drivers appear to be having a quieter time and no noteworthy cases of vandalism have been reported in the Peak although five motorcyclists have been fined for riding on Kinder.

On the **windpower** front, developers withdrew their application for a 'farm' on Flaight Hill, Calderdale in the face of vigorous opposition. Other proposed schemes near Bacup and Todmorden have not yet reached application stage. A scheme for 25 turbines 54 (yes 54) meters high at Barningham on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales has been refused by the Secretary of State after an appeal, reinforcing the protection of the National Park. The Inspector commented that the power generated by what would have been the largest windpower station in England would have been insignificant, unreliable and would have damaged high quality landscapes.

The UK's biggest single commercial wind turbine with a blade diameter of 66 meters started in Norfolk in January, producing 69% of Swaffham's domestic electricity (if the wind remains steady) in perhaps not such a high quality landscape.

In 1998, the National Auditor gave his opinion that wind farms were not financially viable and the Government should cease promoting their use. The Society's attitude is one of neutrality except where it can be shown that public rights of way are likely to be interrupted or the views from them substantially damaged which the proposals for the South Pennines undoubtedly would.

Similarly, in the current **right to roam** controversy, we do not join in the demand for the right to walk anywhere in open country. Our business is the protection of footpaths and that is what we will continue to do. If suitable new footpaths are to be established we will support them.

A recurring problem causing some heart-searching at Turncroft Lane is that of the desire of residents of **urban housing estates** to stop up long-established rights of way running past their back gardens. Vandalism, rowdyism and litter caused by gatherings of teenagers are frequently cited as reasons for closure, often supported by the police as a way of making their life easier. Here, the Society will always oppose the closure of a definitive path unless an adequate alternative is provided since agreeing to closure would create a dangerous precedent. We feel that keeping order is still a job for the police and rights of way should not be sacrificed to this end.

Finally, the saga of the wrecked path up **Stable Clough** on Bleaklow nears its climax. The shooting syndicate causing the damage lost its appeal against the PPPB's refusal of their application for a Land Rover track but the Inspector's report left a loophole which may allow them to construct a path allowing restricted access for Land Rovers for fire fighting and moor maintenance (not shooting parties). They may get their way after all, but the fact that it has cost them about £100,000 is some consolation.

MATTERS FROM THE MINUTES

No meetings of Council were held in January or August

February

- Two Fax machines bought.
- The Woodland Trust now attending to paths within Tom Wood, Charlesworth.
- Negotiations with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, via Peak Park Planning Board, for an escape route along the Trust's boundary in Cheadale proved unsuccessful.

March

- Reported that Blackburn is to become a unitary authority and they would set up liaison arrangements as soon as possible.
- A donation from the Third Age Rambling Club of Sheffield had been received in appreciation of the Society's work.
- Meeting with Derbyshire CC revealed that revised dates for 'milestone' work were not being met.
- Bill Johnson, newly appointed Signpost Officer, reported on the six armed post at Rowarth.
- Chairman's concern over current staffing levels at Cosa Unit; despite this the Unit had made over 300 responses during the year and the Honorary Secretary some 600.

April

Annual General Meeting.

May

- Stockport meeting disclosed that 30 paths need attention.
- Reported death of Reg Hampshire and his bequest; also that of ex FP inspector Dr Angus Bateman.
- Liaison meetings with Bury MB and City of Salford.
- Very successful annual dinner with speaker Alan Mattingley.
- President to attend meeting with DoE at Bristol.
- Chairman reported signing contract for purchase of 23 Turncroft Lane for £60,000 with completion expected by 24th June.

June

- Much officer time occupied by purchase of new headquarters.
- Liaison meeting with Wigan MB.
- Peak Park PB taking legal action over Stable Clough.

July

- Countryside Commission's Right of Way Review proposing withdrawal of modification order affecting new claims is not acceptable.
- The previously contested access point at 'The Intakes', Little Hayfield, now reinstated opposite Monks Road junction.

September

- Secretary reported liaison meetings with Cheshire, Bolton, and Bury councils.
- Much time spent on equipping new premises
- Secretary asked that inspectors no longer able to execute their duties should keep him informed.
- Details of the Cross Cheshire Bridle Route received from the County Council; the chairman had replied expressing concern that rights of way monies were being spent on such schemes when statutory maintenance duties were neglected.
- Stable Clough: the government inspector had found against the shooting syndicate.

October

- Reported death of John Harrop, ex Cosa member and author of his last poem in this annual report.
- The Chairman voiced concern at his additional position of head of Cosa Unit; may not stand at next AGM but will consider the situation further.
- President and Vice Chairman attended annual meeting with Peak Park Planning Board.
- Illogical tax reductions to unnamed landowners discussed.
- Concern expressed over quarrying at Ladybower (Win Hill) for dam materials and footpaths affected.

November

- Proposals of the Countryside Commission in its last breath on 'Rights of way in the 21st Century' give concern.

December

- COSA Unit moved to 23 Turncroft Lane, Stockport on 2nd December and became operational the following week.
- Gratitude expressed to those volunteers who assisted in the move including Eric Hulme for his technical expertise.
- Members are invited to inspect by arrangement.
- Meeting with Salford and discussion of total obstruction of Swinton & Pendlebury 51, first reported in 1981; after much procrastination legal action now under way.
- Proposals received affecting 15 rights of way crossings on West Coast Rail Track.

Welcome to our new home (continued from page 5)

On Mondays a team of volunteers meets to deal with the mail. The post is opened and, after checking the records for an existing file, is entered into a post book. The file is then handed to the assessors to deal with. Three members look at the file and give their verdict whether a reply is required.

The Society is receiving many more consultations before local authorities make orders. Attempts are made to give a reasoned reply or sent to our local inspector or agent for their comments; many planning applications affecting rights of way are received and commented on. The files are then sent upstairs where the replies are dictated and typed out using the word processor.

Having our own property means that the premises are available at most reasonable times and perhaps those members who are not available during the day would be willing to assist at other times.

I believe this acquisition is one of the most important steps the Society has taken. We struggled with the Snake Path over 100 years ago, Doctor's Gate a little later. Numerous battles have been won over the years.

The work of the Society moved from the Secretary's back room to Hazel Grove. The importance and work of the Society has grown and this acquisition is, I feel, one of the most important steps the Society has taken in many a year. Your Society can march into the next century confident that it is able to work effectively in protecting the rights of way network.

COURTS & INQUIRIES

ADRIAN LITTLETON

We objected successfully to -

Leith Court Dewsbury where an order was made on the inadmissible legal ground that closure would thwart vandals and other people up to no good.

Ribchester 25 and 26 where an old mill has become a very des res and the new owners don't want ramblers ruining their view; and -

Barnoldswick 3,11 and 15 where we foiled the local authority's wish ('temporarily') to replace definitive status with permissive - to facilitate development. The Order was confirmed without its permissive sting.

However -

At Prickshaw Lane, Rochdale efforts to stop a public right of way from being shunted sideways to facilitate development failed.

The Inspector who held the inquiry into the order diverting **Westhoughton 26** wants to confirm it with amendments - watch this space for the outcome.

The timber yard and Leek^k FP8

But the major story of the year is **Leek 8**, located at the northern edge of Leek between Abbey Green Road (GR 97905720) and Brough Park (98425710). For many years the owners of a timber yard at Abbey Green Road have obstructed this path. Instead of compelling them to re-open it, Staffordshire County Council made an order deleting most of Leek 8 from the Definitive Map; it had, they said, been 'included in error' when the map was made in 1954.

At a three day inquiry in August your President, Leslie Meadowcroft, joined successfully with other walking groups and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to resist the Deletion Order.

Why am I so jubilant? Leek 8 provides splendid views across the River Churnet to the moorlands and the Roaches. It is very close to Leek town centre and exactly what recreational walking is all about.

Optimistic ostriches at County Hall, Stafford have probably celebrated the non-confirmation of their order by dumping the files into their 'too hard' trays in the hope that the public will soon forget that they are entitled to walk the western part of Leek 8.

Having won at inquiry, we must now get all of Leek 8 re-opened. On a clear day, mix lovely views with public service by walking it from its Brough Park (Park Road) end - you may park there. If you find obstructions please report them to Derek Taylor or, if you live in Staffordshire, write to SCC's Chief Executive with a copy to Derek.

The more complaints the County Council gets, the more likely it is to jilt its timber yard co-belligerents and compel removal of the obstructions that these co-belligerents should have been prosecuted for long, long ago.

SIGNPOST REPORT

BILL JOHNSON

This was my first full year of appointment and I started off with plans for a regular scheduled maintenance programme. And then the monsoon period began ... washing away all plans for a regular schedule and hopes of catching up on the backlog of work. However, some work has been done as listed in the right hand column.

I jokingly say that dealing with some of these ancient signs makes me feel quite young. Recently I had the pleasure of repainting sign No. 1 (circa 1905) at Carr Meadow. Whilst there I checked on the state of footbridge No. 1 erected in memory of Thomas Boulger, a past secretary and chairman; the bridge is in excellent condition as is the commemorative plaque.

We have a number of requests for commemorative signs to hand, these are being dealt with by my administrative colleague, Brian Luckham. He has the pleasurable but also time consuming job of finding suitable sites, negotiating with landowners/farmers, then laying out the details for the manufacturer and, of course, liaising with donors.

We are, as always, indebted for reports from officers, affiliated clubs, wardens and rangers regarding the condition of signs. Particular thanks are due to Ian Hurst, Peak Park Ranger, for continuing help in many ways.

New signs erected

- SP263 Long Edge plantation (GR028782)
Donated by Barney & Margaret Brown
- SP264 Litton (GR168748)
Donated by Mrs Jennifer C Hawley
(daughter) imo Marjory Edwards

Work in progress

- SP265 Lower Bank, Hollingworth
(intended location GR008984)
- SP266 Lyme Park
(intended location GR959832)

Repairs & maintenance

- SP1 Carr Meadow, Little Hayfield
(GR035895)
Repainted sign and post
- SP5 Long Leigh Farm, Rowarth
(GR015890)
Replaced rotten post, repainted sign.
- SP8 Blackshaw Farm, Little Hayfield
(GR025889)
Six arm post; complete replacement of this ancient and decayed post.
- SP120 Gun Road, Mellor (GR002905)
Repainted sign and post, reset commemorative plaques on new hardwood bases.
- SP125 Bradshaw (GR079811)
Replaced rotten post, repainted sign, reset commemorative plaque on new hardwood base.
- SP154 Keeper's Cottage, Pott Shrigley
(GR95458062)
Repainted sign, commemorative plaque set on new hardwood base.
- SP155 Keeper's Cottage, Pott Shrigley
(GR95458052)
Repainted sign, commemorative plaque set on new hardwood base.
- SP169 South of Bowstones (GR971806)
Fixed new commemorative plaque on post in memory of John Lomas.
- SP211 Nether Alderley church (GR84097621)
Fixed new finger to post.
- SP? Highgate Road (GR05028532)
Replaced rotten post and repainted sign.

TREASURER'S REPORT

KEITH WYKES

The Society's £146,919 Funds represents a substantial 24% increase year on year (£117,634 in 1997) due, in the main, to the receipt of a large legacy and the Income & Expenditure Account surplus; but against the backdrop of the Balance Sheet changing out of all recognition due to the acquisition of our splendid Turncroft Lane.

The Income & Expenditure Account surplus, transferred to General Funds, contributed £5,265 (£6,997 in 1997). This is commendable especially in view of the fact that the I & E Account has suffered a double 'whammy' – lower investment income resulting from the realisation of Gilt Stocks to finance the acquisition and incurring new partial year costs (£1,027) related to the running of Turncroft Lane.

The slight decline in **subscription** income of £3,839 (£3,979 in 1997) is worrying when considered in tandem with falling Investment Income.

The 1998 Accounts do not bear full year costs associated with **Turncroft Lane** as it was acquired in mid year.

The **Development Fund** is being wound down, having now largely fulfilled its purpose; it carries a small residual balance of £2,619 (£45,928 in 1997).

The **Signpost Fund** year-end balance of £1,720 (£1,917 in 1997) reflects lower activity in signpost erection.

Although your £655 value of donations to 1998's No. 1 donations priority – the **Defence Fund** – is acknowledged, the balance on this account of £5,050 (£4,395 in 1997) is still well short of a minimum £10,000 needed to fund a more proactive Defence Fund role. Accordingly please consider the Defence Fund once again as your 1999 No. 1 donation destination priority.

Grateful thanks are accorded to all **donors** and **testators**.

Increases in Investment Values have again been taken to reserves (ie Funds) and the **General Fund** has benefitted from realisation and maturity gains of some £3,000.

Covenanting subscriptions and donations

As in 1997, taxpayers should note that subscription membership and donations may be covenanted to the Society in which case the Society may claim a 30% addition to your payment from the Inland Revenue – at no cost to yourself.

If you are considering covenanting or gift-aiding subscription membership and/or donations, please contact me at Turncroft Lane on Tuesdays or ☎ 01625 618164 at other times.

Due to unforeseen circumstances beyond my control, I was unable to contact some members who expressed interest in covenanting; I am already remedying that position.

BALANCE SHEET as at 31 December 1998

	1998	1997
ASSETS	£	£
Fixed		
Freehold property at cost and valuation	60,153	-
Furniture, fixtures and fittings	2,107	-
Computer equipment	1,230	-
	63,490	-
Investments		
Long Term (at market value)		
Government Stock	19,061	46,061
UK equities - Woolwich plc	3,077	2,722
	22,138	48,783
Short Term		
Hampshire Trust 12 month Deposit Account	54,717	24,143
Cafcash Deposit Fund	11,176	35,798
Royal Bank of Scotland: Business High Interest	893	3,028
Skipton BS Matured Instant Access Account	500	500
Royal Bank of Scotland: Current	150	150
Leeds & Holbeck BS Charity Account	100	527
Cash and postages floats	41	85
	67,577	64,231
Badge stock on hand	144	155
Debtors	112	10,999
1999 income accrued to 1998	-	566
	153,461	124,734
LIABILITIES		
Funds of the Society	146,919	117,634
Ten year membership suspense	5,191	5,965
Five year membership suspense	903	621
Advance Subscriptions 2000	45	-
	153,058	124,220
Creditors: Development Fund DL covenants	119	285
Five year membership DL covenants	48	140
Expenses claimant	236	89
	403	514
	153,461	124,734

Signed *K. D. Wykes* Honorary Treasurer

4 February 1999

The year-end General Fund balance (that is the Society's Reserves for general purposes use) was £121,065 having benefitted from the full value of the Turncroft Lane freehold premises taken to the Balance Sheet. Memorial funds remained at the 1997 level of £447.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE for the year ended 31 December 1998

INCOME	1998	1997	EXPENDITURE	1998	1997
	£	£		£	£
Subscriptions			Secretariat	1,259	1,267
Ordinary	770	840	Travel	1,193	1,131
Joint	656	752	Turncroft Lane:		
10 year transfers	1,316	1,300	Running costs	741	
5 year transfers	311	207	Depreciation	286	-
Junior	6	8	Annual Report (net)	867	713
Affiliations	780	872	Postages	835	860
Total subscriptions	3,839	3,979	Telephones	445	445
			Printing & stationery	308	299
Investment income	7,117	7,805	Equipment maintenance	250	61
			Photocopying	213	212
Other income			Subscriptions & donations	154	115
Advertising revenue	710	410	Sundries	87	40
Affiliation service	105	90	Insurances	30	30
Sundries	207	67	Maps	27	23
Total other income	1,022	567	Computer consumables	18	158
			Total expenditure	6,713	5,354
			transferred to General Funds	5,265	6,997
Total income	11,978	12,351		11,978	12,351

Notes

- Income has declined by 3% to £11,978 (£12,351 in 1997)
- Expenditure has risen by 25% to £6,713 (£5,354 in 1997)
- The Turncroft Lane related costhead arises for the first time this year; these are partial year charges only as completion took place in mid-year
- Subscription Income is marginally lower at £3,839 (£3,979 in 1997)
- Other Income has risen substantially due in the main to increased Annual Report advert fees of £710 (£410 in 1997) and Sundry Income
- Postages costs are marginally lower than in 1997; most other cost heads have increased, some substantially so.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

ERNEST SUTTON

Members will see from the following figures that I am again having to report a decrease in membership this year.

The losses of annual members would have been greater but for the fact that we had a good influx of new members (20 singles and 8 joint), to some extent compensating for those not renewing. Likewise with the 10 year members, quite a number changed to five year or annual. These changes have largely been responsible for the good increase in the five year figures. Our juniors and affiliated societies remain the same with the latter having lost and gained two.

May I be forgiven for repeating my remarks of last year when I said that the passing of time can and does have a damaging affect on organisations such as ours, having a largely older membership. With this in mind we deeply regret having lost by death, three honorary life members along with other long serving members.

May I humbly suggest to all our members that they take every possible opportunity to 'spread the word' about our Society amongst any of their friends and associates who, like them, have a love of the countryside and value the freedom to walk on our hills and in our dales ... a freedom which has not been easily won.

I would conclude by again offering sincere thanks to all individual members and affiliated societies for their most generous and welcome contributions 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	1997	1998
Annual	429	391	360	339
10 year	612	616	607	571
5 year	-	18	49	79
Honorary life	13	13	13	10
Juniors	2	2	4	4
total	1056	1040	1033	1003
Affiliated societies	94	91	89	89

AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 Alderley Edge, Wilmslow & District Footpaths Society | 33 Hayfield Civic Trust | 63 Ramblers' Association: East Cheshire Area |
| 2 Altrincham & District Rambling Club | 34 Hazel Grove District Scout Council | 64 Ramblers' Association: Manchester Area |
| 3 Barlborough Parish Council | 35 HF – Bolton Group | 65 Ramblers' Association: New Mills Group |
| 4 Barnsley Mountaineering Club | 36 HF – Bury Group | 66 Ramblers' Association: North & Mid Cheshire Area |
| 5 Blackbrook Conservation Society | 37 HF – Manchester Group | 67 Ramblers' Association: Oldham Group |
| 6 Brookdale Ramblers | 38 HF – Nottingham Group | 68 Ramblers' Association: Sheffield Group |
| 7 Buxton Field Club | 39 HF – Warrington Rambling Club | 69 Ramblers' Association: SYNED Area |
| 8 Buxton Rambling Club | 40 High Lane Residents Association | 70 Ramblers' Association: Stockport Group |
| 9 CAE | 41 ITT Rambling Club | 71 RSPB – High Peak Group |
| 10 CHA – Bolton | 42 Knutsford Civic Society | 72 Rucksack Club |
| 11 CHA – Bury & District | 43 Leek Footpath Rambling Club | 73 Sheffield Clarion Ramblers |
| 12 CHA – Eccles | 44 Littleborough Civic Trust | 74 Sheffield Co-op Party Rambling Club |
| 13 CHA – Manchester Rambling Club | 45 Longendale & Glossopdale Footpath Preservation Society | 75 Sheffield U3A Walking Group 'A' |
| 14 CHA – Mansfield | 46 Macclesfield Rambling Club | 76 Shirland & Higham Parish Council |
| 15 CHA – Nottingham Rambling Club | 47 Macclesfield & District Field Club | 77 St Catherine's Rambling Club |
| 16 CHA – Oldham & District Rambling Club | 48 Manchester & District Retired Teachers Association | 78 Stockport & District Federation of TWGs |
| 17 CHA – Rochdale | 49 Manchester Associates Rambling Club | 79 Stockport East Area Bridleways Association |
| 18 CHA – Sheffield: Section B | 50 Manchester Fellowship Rambling Club Independent | 80 Stockport Field Club |
| 19 CHA – Stockport | 51 Manchester Field Club | 81 Stockport Social & Rambling Club |
| 20 CHA/HF – Ashton-under-Lyne | 52 Manchester Pedestrian Club | 82 Sunday Rambling Club |
| 21 Cheadle Hulme & Bramhall Natural History Society | 53 Manchester Rambling Club | 83 Sutton in Ashfield Rambling Club |
| 22 Cheshire County Scout Council | 54 Marple & District Rambling Club | 84 The Wayfarers Rambling Club |
| 23 Cheshire Tally Ho | 55 Marple Community Council | 85 Toc H |
| 24 Christian Endeavour Holiday Homes: Manchester Section | 56 Marple Naturalists | 86 West Lancashire Footpath Group |
| 25 Crescent Ramblers | 57 Mellor Society | 87 YHA – Central Region |
| 26 Dane Bank Residents Association | 58 Mid Cheshire Footpath Society | 88 YHA – Stockport |
| 27 Derby Nomad Ramblers | 59 North Western Naturalists Union | 89 Zeneca Social Centre Hiking & Rambling Section |
| 28 Derbyshire Footpaths Preservation Society | 60 Poynton Rambling Club | |
| 29 Derbyshire Pennine Club | 61 Ramblers' Association: Bolton Group | |
| 30 Eyam Village Society | 62 Ramblers' Association: Congleton Group | |
| 31 Geriatrics Group | | |
| 32 Hanliensian Rambling Club | | |

Ode to the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society ...

A Society so long in existence.
Years in which much has been
written and said.
But what a Society with so much propriety.
It hadn't a roof over its head.

When scratchy old pens wrote out letters,
To secure pathways so we could all roam.
The brave headed letters disguised from
our betters,
We hadn't a place to call home.

A spare corner in somebody's parlour.
Perhaps just the odd pigeonhole,
Was all one could ask to continue the task.
So little for such a great goal.

The pen and ink came old fashioned.
Ball points came to the fore.
And what could be brighter we got a
typewriter.
How could we ask for much more?

The members worked on unceasing.
As maps and records grew on apace.
Our rights to rove were in Hazel Grove.
But we couldn't stay forever in that place.

As time went along so we progressed.
We obtained computers and copiers too.
In this efficiency boom we hadn't the room.
It was a quandary. What could we do?.

Ah! the Society never wanted for brains.
We had members with heads screwed on
tight.
They looked around and, what was it they
found?

A palace on just the right site.

Together they surveyed the buildings.
'Now here we could put down our roots.
It would be a great pity, we'd enough in
the kitty'
They had brains in their heads not just in
boots.

The brains then had a great meeting.
They discussed how to make the next move.
What was it they did? They put in a bid.
A bid each one there did approve.

This bid was gratefully accepted,
We needed to search never more.
A movement so grand we'd come to our
promised land.
And our name could go over the door.

The day arrived for the great loading.
Each one struggled with might and main.
The caravan started, from Hazel Grove we
parted
To our permanent address, Turncroft Lane.

So now we survey our own mansion.
We have our own permanent address.
Of course you'll want to know so, it's
written here below§.
One couldn't finish with anything less.

§see page 2

John Harrop, the author of the above poem, commented – *No one would claim these verses are anything but slightly amusing doggerel and in consequence one may fail to see that in each case they refer to efforts put in by some of the members over the years. Written lightheartedly, these verses hardly do them justice for their work and diligence. Our debt and that of many others who possibly do not even know of the Society is enormous. Their names? Well, you'll find them in pages 2 & 3 of this Annual Report.*

As many members will be aware, John died on the 6th October 1998. His poetical contributions to the annual report and his work with the Cosa Unit will be greatly missed. At the October meeting of Council, the President paid tribute to John and his contributions to the Society.