

SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the PEAK & Northern Footpaths Society

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4

From the Chairman



I may have said it before and I shall certainly say it again before long, but life is never dull at Taylor House. Trying to keep in control of the switchback ride there is a full time job and one not always successfully handled, though we keep trying. The latest shock to our system was the news that our Treasurer, Keith Wykes was suffering from a serious debilitating illness, contracted while on a visit to Canada. We wish him a rapid recovery back to full health. Treasurers are, after all to be, well... treasured. They are not easy to come by. Which is why we are particularly grateful that a volunteer has offered his services as Assistant. He is David Dearing, whom we welcome with open arms.

Windfall

This makes a change from wind farms. It is a special pleasure to be able to report our recent good fortune. By the bequest of the late Don and Ruth Hoyle of Stockport the Society is now £16,000 better off. What a wonderful surprise! We will ensure that we put it to good use.



Suggestions Wanted

Even before the Hoyle bequest came to us we had been looking at where the PNFS is heading. What should the Society be doing? What projects should we be taking on to benefit our members and further the causes embodied in our Constitution? Please give the matter some thought and contact me at Taylor House with any brain waves.

The Constitution, incidentally, has been the subject of much heated, intricate discussion within a special sub-committee. Adrian Littleton has drawn all the various threads together and will unveil our proposals at the next Council meeting. These will be revised as members think necessary ready for voting on at an EGM next April 27th.

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I was invited to join the mature but cheerful members of the Manchester CHA on a very wet Wednesday at the dedication of the signpost commemorating the club's 80th anniversary. It's on a crossing of the ways up Whitley Nab out of Charlestown, Glossop. The CHA have now paid for 6 such signposts in the Peak District and their long-standing cooperation with the PNFS is much appreciated.

People

Anita Armstrong Lee, our Inspector for Alderley Edge etc etc (nine parishes in all) is retiring after many years of dedicated work for the Peak and Northern. She is renowned as a persistent chaser of Local Authority dilatoriness. She continues as secretary of the Alderley Edge and Wilmslow Footpath Society.

Goodbye Yellow Chip Road

Our interest was drawn last month to a shock! horror! story about an unthinking council which had spread bright yellow stone chips on a refurbished footpath in Ashford-in-the Water, Derbyshire. Local residents wanted them removed at once, but as anyone who has walked up to Tegg's Nose Country Park could tell you, yellow chips don't stay primrose for ever. Within a few months they change to a light khaki and then an innocuous brown. Patience, residents and be glad the council is maintaining the path.

A Date for your Diary

Saturday 27th April 2002 Extraordinary General Meeting (to approve the new Constitution) followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting which in turn will be followed by the Annual Dinner. At the Freemason's Hall, Mount Street, Manchester.

Inspectors' Day

Several of our Footpath Inspectors have asked for a get-together so that they can meet one another and the Officers to discuss common problems and the tackling thereof. Some have asked for guidance or instruction sessions. This we hope to provide early next year. Watch this space.

Also scheduled for next spring will be the dedication of the memorial signpost commemorating the 22 years service of Derek Taylor as Hon. Secretary. The site is on the Anglezarke moors near Chorley. Details later.

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Publicity Leaflet Updated.

The Society's Publicity Leaflet has been updated to reflect the way the Society operates today. It now includes a specific reference to the need to claim/reclaim/create as many footpaths as possible before 2026. The Society is indebted to John Houfe, one of our Vice Presidents, Anita Armstrong Lee, our stalwart supporter and an Inspector in Alderley Edge and her son Matt for their hard work in creating this revision in a very short time. This will help us enormously in our drive for greater publicity of the Society's work.

Readers are asked to help the Society by distributing copies of the updated Publicity Leaflet to information centres, libraries, walking centres and their local walking groups. Copies of the Publicity leaflet which incorporates a membership form, can be obtained from any of the Society's Officers or by contacting June Mabon at the Taylor House address or telephone number or fax number or via her personal email address june.hilltop@zetnet.co.uk.

Peak and Northern approaches the Internet Age

Under the guidance of our immediate past Chairman, Norman Edwards, the Society started to think about bringing the benefits of the Internet to bear on the work of the PNFS. This initiative has gathered momentum in the last few months and as the edition of

"*Signpost*" goes to press, Taylor House is being given Internet facilities so that Inspectors and Assessors can view the draft maps of Open Access areas that the Countryside Agency is publishing for comment. This will be the first of several developments which include the Society publicising its activities via the "web" and allowing the websites of similar minded bodies to link to the PNFS via the internet and vice versa. These new developments will supplement the Society's extensive archives and will give volunteers an optional, additional tool in their work to preserve and enhance the footpath network in the counties where we have a presence.

The Officers are very grateful for the professional expertise that Graham Sencicle, Bob Dumbarton and Peter Rhodes are providing freely and generously to the Society and for the support and enthusiasm that Assessor Charles Peers, Inspector Eileen Leonard and the "Monday team" at Taylor House are giving. Most similar societies make use of the Internet in their work. The PNFS wants to be able to offer its Inspectors and other volunteers these facilities and in doing so help to attract and retain the next generation of members and volunteers. "*Signpost*" will keep you informed as the Society "gets wired"!

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Jigsaw enthusiasts needed!

The Society's filing system is like an ancient, well-loved garden, created by the diverse logic of generations of workers.

There are boxes of correspondence, mostly 1940-1965, whose creators seem to have opened a new file whenever a letter came in. There are thousands of more recent files identified by numbers like 038 113. When consultations about planning applications became numerous, pigeon holes became cluttered with 'Planning' files. Then someone decided to store 'urban' papers in yet more pigeon

holes. Finally we acquired about 6000 of the late Derek Taylor's meticulous folders of obstruction reports.

About a year ago we began converting this medley of systems into a Highway Authority/ parish/path number – based scheme.

All the papers for a path are clipped together – e g the 1999 planning application to build stables across the path, 1990 and 1955 obstruction reports and 1975 diversion order. The clip is filed according to (i) the highway authority, (ii) the town and (iii) the path number. Thus if you seek the papers on Kearsley 45 (in Bolton Metropolitan Borough) you go to the Bolton shelf, find folders for numbered Kearsley paths (in numerical order) and pick out 45.

This system reduces the need to refer to index cards - only necessary in this example if the searcher doesn't know which highway authority Kearsley is in. It eliminates the need to consult a second set of cards to ascertain whether there is an obstruction or fault report and sift through Bolton planning applications and 'urban' files.

It also enables footpath inspectors and other researchers interested in the paths in a particular town or parish to lift out the folders for that locality and browse through them.

So far work is largely completed on Barnsley, Blackburn & Darwen, Blackpool, Bolton, Bradford, Bury, Calderdale, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside and Trafford. Substantial progress has been made on Stockport and Wigan. Cheshire papers come next.

Stalwart – and much appreciated – work is being done by Peter Crofts and Reg Boot.

This note has three functions:-

1. To inform all our members of this enterprise.

2. To invite footpath inspectors to come to Taylor House and look at the files for their towns and parishes – if these are listed above.

3. To urge any reader who enjoys jigsaw puzzles and has a few hours to spare every week (preferably on Tuesdays) to come and help. If you like assembling thirty square inches of unvaried blue sky on a 3000 piecer, you'll revel in arranging the 1950s papers for Ashley, in Cheshire.

If you'd like to examine files in the new system and/or enjoy the unique sense of fulfillment gained from sorting out Rixton with Glazebrook or Stoke-on-Trent, ring me on 01625 528256.

Adrian Littleton - Secretary PNFS

Midweek WALK (August) led by Peter Crofts

Although the primary activity of the Peak and Northern is guardianship of the footpath system, we also help the Manchester Area of the Ramblers' Association with their programme of midweek walks. These start and finish at points accessible by public transport and are held every Wednesday, with the P & N providing a leader for the last one in each month. I was asked to lead one of these and chose the last Wednesday in August. Since I live in Marple, I decided on a walk of between seven and eight miles starting and finishing at Marple Station. Having checked with the Stockport MBC Footpath Officers that all Marple footpaths were free of foot and mouth restrictions, the only uncertainties were the weather and the number of walkers. The morning was fine and sunny and I found several who had come by car already waiting for me at the station. Their numbers rapidly increased and by the time

the train arrived the party numbered about fifty-one. I was never quite certain of the accuracy of my count; other estimates ranged between forty-eight and fifty-six, but it was certainly much the largest group which I have ever led. However, all went well: with the help of the recently published 1 :10000 Mellor Walking Map, which shows definitive path numbers and will be most useful in reporting faults and obstructions (of which we found none). We went via Bottom's Hall to Mellor Church. After a coffee stop, we continued by bridleway 102 to Shiloh Road and thence to Pole Lane, on the New Mills boundary for our lunch and comfort stop (something of a logistical problem in view of our numbers). Our return route took us past the Cross on Cobden Edge, over the golf course by a short section of the Cown Edge way, over the Roman Bridge, where we discussed the current unwelcome proposal to change its status to a bridleway, up to the Peak Forest Canal, and along it to Marple locks. Here we split up: some went into Marple in search of refreshment, others continued along the canal to Station Road and down the hill to the station. I did not manage a final count but I think it unlikely that we lost anyone. The weather stayed bright and warm throughout. In spite of its size the party kept well together and stopped to regroup at each junction. I look forward to leading another walk in due course and to meeting some of my fifty new friends again.

Midweek WALK (September) led by Bob Dumbarton

26th September and autumn was clearly with us. The morning had started bright & sunny which was somewhat unusual for this particular month. Peter Rhodes & I had travelled to Macclesfield to lead the R.A. walk on behalf of Peak & Northern, and as neither of us had even attended one of the previous walks, we both felt like tenderfoots. By 10.30, the walking party had assembled outside Macclesfield Station and we had accumulated 25 people in total. The group was a mix of ages and abilities and included one

gentleman with hip and knee replacements! I gave a short welcoming speech, which gave details of the route and handed out a number of maps. It was also the opportunity to advertise Peak & Northern by distributing our new pamphlet. With Peter acting as sweeper, we followed the Buxton Road to the Canal & then joined the towpath north towards Bollington. Several narrow boats were still using the canal and provided interest as they chugged past. Following a coffee stop, we headed away from the canal towards Kerridge across the fields and through some interesting (and tight) stiles. A brief stop at the Redway Tavern allowed use of the facilities (beer & toilets) and then onward around the northerly end of the Saddle of Kerridge. I had already decided not to climb to White Nancy because of its steepness, and therefore continued around the edge, which at least provided a glimpse of the monument. Lunch was taken in the warm sunshine overlooking Rainow before we continued to Kerridge-end & Calrofold. The path past Cliff Hill starts by using the driveway & front gardens of a couple of houses, which always provides a feeling of intrusion but fortunately there was no problem from the natives. At the highest point on the hill, we took the opportunity to take in the sights of the Hurdsfield Industrial Estate(!), Alderley Edge, Manchester Airport and the Cheshire Plain. After leaving Cliff Hill, we walked down the B5470 to the canal and back to Macclesfield Station for the completion of our eight mile walk. It had been a very pleasant day and gave Peter & myself the opportunity to meet the Wednesday walkers and to discuss Peak & Northern with those who were unaware of its work.

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Book Reviews

Rocky Rambles in the Peak District – geology beneath your feet

Fred Broadhurst
ISBN 1-85058-750-7
Sigma Press, Wilmslow
£7.95

Dr. Broadhurst has worked as an academic geologist in the Manchester area for much of his life and has an intimate knowledge of the north Derbyshire in particular. He is also very well placed to bring to life sometimes difficult geological ideas and to show the impact of these on the landscape.

Following a general introduction to the Peak District and its geology, he describes eighteen walks covering many parts of the area and varying in length from four to fourteen miles. Most of these focus on particular geological or landscape features which are well exemplified in the chosen area, such as the landslips on the Mam Tor – Lose Hill ridge; faulting and folding at Cown Edge. Others are less thematic and describe a variety of features at a succession of locations on the route. Each route comes with a clear sketch map indicating the locations referred to in the text, together with many line drawings of features which greatly assist their field identification and explanation.

Dr. Broadhurst is particularly good when dealing with topics he knows best - the formation of rocks, the environments in which they formed, the changes that have occurred to them over aeons of time

and their pivotal influence on the scenery we see today. He is sometimes on less firm ground when explaining landscape features so that his account of the shaping of gritstone outcrops on Kinder owes everything to wind action and admits nothing to chemical weathering. More seriously, his account of meltwater channels in Lyme Park as *overspill* channels from supposed lakes serves only to reiterate an explanation of these features (important all along the west Pennine margin) which was abandoned forty years ago.

However, this little book is packed with interest and clearly reveals the infectious enthusiasm for geology which Dr. Broadhurst would share with fellow walkers. Buy it, study it a little before you go out – even buy the Castleton geological map: it will add immensely to the enjoyment of your walks. Very soon you will want to know more; perhaps time for an evening class?

Keith Williams

Macc and the Art of Long Distance Walking (Hardback)

**by Graham Wilson, Pub. by Millrace, 2a Leafield Rd, Disley, Chesh.
SK12 2JF**

**£12.95 or £10 post free, quoting that you are a member of
PNFS.**

Macc, of course, is Macclesfield, where the author lives and whose hinterland he explores as the start point for this idiosyncratic, argumentative ramble.

Five walks in the Macclesfield area are described, ranging from 15 to 50 miles, after which things get really serious as he moves to the Derwent Watershed, Welsh 3000ers and Bob Graham round in the

Lake District. Each is accompanied by a useful sketch map and a fair helping of forthright and humorous views on any aspect of both the physical and philosophic approach to walking. Local history and a true appreciation of the achievements of past giants of the extreme end of the sport also come into his thought provoking essays. An excellent Christmas present for the keen or armchair Rambler. Both would be stimulated and given pause for thought many times on their way through this little pocket sized volume.

Derek Seddon

Rambles Round Oldham (Paperback)

**by Oldham Group RA, pub by Oldham Chronicle Bookshop
£3.50 or £4 inc post from Alan Forster, 682 Ripponden Rd,
Oldham OL4 2LP. Cheques to Oldham Ramblers. Proceeds will
go to Oldham Mountain Rescue.**

Exactly what it says on the label - 20 different walks around the borough and Saddleworth, all between 5 and 10 miles distance with route maps and descriptions.

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STOP PRESS

The society can now be contacted by e-mail at:

mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk