

# SIGNPOST

The newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

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

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mail@peakandnorthern.org.uk

www.peakandnorthern.org.uk

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## From the Chairman

### **BENNY ROTHMAN, THE PEAK & NORTHERN AND THE KINDER TRESPASS**

On the 23rd January 2002 died, aged 90, Bernard (Benny) Rothman, "The Patron Saint of the British Outdoor Community", said The Guardian. In 1932 this was not an opinion universally held. Now, 70 years after his leadership of that momentous demonstration of public feeling, perhaps our Society could look again at the circumstances of the Mass Trespass and its outcome.

Should the Peak & Northern erect a signpost, preferably on Kinder, dedicated to Benny's memory? A few members have made this suggestion but I detect an undercurrent of opposition, antagonism caused by profound differences in approach to the solving of problems of access between the two schools of thought. Interwoven were the themes of class warfare, age v. youth, wealth v. poverty and unemployment, the meaning of freedom and even law v. apparent anarchy.

Our Society (we were then The Peak District and Northern Counties Footpath Preservation Society) was totally opposed to the idea of Mass Trespassing and advised against it in the press. The attitude is unsurprising on examination of the background. By 1932, in the 38 years of its existence, the Society had made solid progress in its avowed objects of protecting public rights of way, particularly in the Peak District. Its achievements in the face of strong and continuing opposition from the landowners are too numerous to list here. These achievements were the results of the dogged pursuit of strictly legal means. (cont on page 2).

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How could they be otherwise? Our Vice Presidents in 1932 included two knights and a JP. The Chairman was the revered Colonel

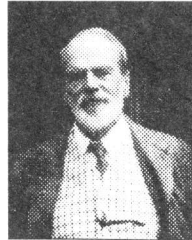
Crook JP and the Secretary was a practising solicitor. Over the years its Council had comprised many of the great and the good of Manchester. Few people today realise that, until his death in 1926, one of those Vice Presidents was James Watts, cotton magnate, of Abney Hall, Cheadle and OWNER of much of Kinder Scout. A Water authority held the rest, but Watts owned the summit plateau.

James Watts was a man of his time, an example of the best type of Victorian entrepreneur. He was a philanthropist who supported countless worthy causes, sat on many public committees. The employees at his Manchester warehouse were treated in an exemplary fashion and were the first in Manchester to be given Saturday afternoons off. The fact that he was shown in the note we printed in the last edition of *Signpost* to be willing to provide "a pickaxe and spade to be collected from my gamekeeper's cottage" for the PNFS party preparing to put up a post on Kinder shows that he was not adamantly anti-walker. He seems to have had a rooted objection to allowing people on to the summit. Theoretically, it was possible if you

applied for written permission from Mr Watts but in fact this was not easy. There were two separate episodes in 1922 when solo walkers perished in bad weather near the Downfall and the resultant search parties, hundreds strong, tramped all over the grouse moor until the

bodies were found. Thereafter, gamekeeper numbers and vigilance were stepped up, leading to more confrontations and greater frustration among the walking fraternity. Watts tried to sell the moors to the War Department and when turned down, offered them at cost to Manchester Corporation but was again refused, this time because the Corporation had a bylaw stating that all land owned by them had to be fenced -a daunting prospect!

When James Watts died he was succeeded by his son, another James,



**Top left:** Benny Rothman speaking at the Hayfield Quarry at the 50th Anniversary 1982.

**Top right:** James Watts snr (1845-1926). Owner of Kinder Scout Summit and Vice President of the Peak and Northern.

**Lower right:** James Watts jnr (1878-1957)

who inherited all the access/trespass problems which finally boiled over when a party from the British Workers Sports Federation were turned back by a group of (abusive) keepers when attempting to go on to Bleaklow.

Clashes of this kind inflamed the tempers of the walkers from Manchester and Sheffield, among whom was Benny Rothman, 20 years old and like most of his friends, impatient with the slow progress, as they saw it, made by the older clubs and societies. The fact that he was a communist in a socialist sports group jarred the sensibilities of the members of the traditionally non political world of rambling. It could be said that Benny and his compatriots were more wide awake to the way fascism was going and in the depths of the depression were incensed by the inequalities they saw around them.

The group of youngsters decided to make a dignified protest, a non-violent mass trespass of perhaps 200 people. To this end they, quite openly, in leaflets and press reports, announced their intentions and asked for support. Thus the authorities had plenty of time to arrange their counter-measures. The establishment took the matter seriously, as the number of police deployed to contain the trespassers showed. Only seven months before had been the Invergordon Mutiny when sailors in 15 ships of the Atlantic Fleet protested against cuts in pay. A run on the pound ensued and Britain came off the gold

standard. No doubt the Mass Trespass was seen as another example of communist agitation.

On the day, some 500 turned up (Benny's estimate). In the quarry at Hayfield he urged the crowd to keep it disciplined, quiet and orderly and off they went alongside Kinder Reservoir and up William Clough until they met the waiting keepers near Sandy Heys. There was a brief scuffle, some keepers using their sticks and some walkers retaliating. The Manchester party met the group from Sheffield, reached the edge of the plateau, then returned in a body to Hayfield "not dispersed like a band of criminals", to be met by the police.

The outcome was that Benny and 5 companions were charged with riotous assembly before a grand jury packed with landowners and military men. Five of the ringleaders were sent to prison, six months for John Anderson, four for Benny. The walking fraternity was outraged and the sense of injustice reached national consciousness. Martyrs have a greater emotional impact than lawyers in moving public opinion though the Ramblers Federation and the PDNCFs were still not convinced. A mass protest at the sentences was held at the Winnats Pass, Castleton. Tom Stephenson, the originator of the Pennine Way, wrote "Many who thought the enthusiasm of those youngsters misplaced, deeply deplored the savage sentences inflicted on the ringleaders. It must be said, though, that there have been

exaggerated and distorted accounts of the events of what was only a minor disturbance in a hundred years of an unfinished war" and "The Trespass was soon forgotten" But here we are, 70 years later, about to celebrate the anniversary with the Peak Park officers.

The long-serving, widely-experienced PDNCFS Signpost officer, Harold Wild, said privately that after the trespass, negotiations with landowners came to a dead halt. Probably the most surprising aspect of the affair is that the Peak and Northern Annual Report for 1932 makes not a single mention of the trespass, the bubbling resentment before it or the outrage after. So far, I have been unable to locate the Society's Council Minutes for that year which might shed some light on the discussions between officers. The Report shows that business went on as usual. Progress had been made on 20 different paths from Slaidburn to Shutlingslow. The Report for 1933 begins, without further explanation, "As was naturally to be expected, the past year has shown an increase in the number of obstructions of public rights of way" and goes on "The Society has at all times endeavoured to be reasonable and if only landowners will be prepared to act in a similar manner there is no reason why the (Rights of Way) Act should not be applied for the benefit of the public and owners alike". Some hope. The struggle continued with limited success until the National Parks and Countryside Act of 1949 set up ten National Parks. I wonder

how many of those determined young trespassers survived the war to see that day? By 1954, the mountain and its owner's house at Farlands, Hayfield, had been incorporated into Britain's first National Park. The fight for access to open country still goes on, of course, but now with more hope of fulfillment.

Can breaking the law be justified in the pursuit of an ideal? One person who thought it could was, surprise, surprise, James Watts senior. Thirty years before, Watts, a staunch Nonconformist, took exception to the new Education Act which incorporated Church of England schools into the National Education system. He objected to his business rates helping to fund CofE schools and withheld £460, his calculation of the proportion from his payment. In due course, the Bailiff arrived at S&J Watts' warehouse in Manchester, took away a load of bolts of cloth and sold them by auction at the Police Station. There, the auctioneer permitted the Rev Dr Clifford to make a speech to the large crowd. Praising Mr Watts (and a colleague who went to Knutsford Gaol for six months), he congratulated Manchester on having citizens of such intelligence and high social position with such pluck and determination to follow the dictates of conscience.

This clash of men of principle which personifies the fight for access and the

protection of rights of way makes a fascinating study.

Twenty years ago, Benny Rothman had the grace to admit his lack of recognition of this Society's principles. Is it not time for the Peak and Northern to recognise the profound effect his sacrifice had on the national consciousness, thus preparing the ground for the later, more liberal legislation?

Let's lay the past to rest and put up that memorial signpost to mark the 70th anniversary.

**Derek Seddon.**

## LATEST NEWS

We are delighted to report that the Officers' Meeting of 8th March approved the proposal to erect a signpost in memory of Benny Rothman. The location is to be decided later.

## YHA Compensation

Last May, Hartington Hall (Derbyshire, built in 1611) Youth Hostel reopened after a one million pound refit, only to close almost immediately in response to the Foot and Mouth epidemic. It reopened again on February 5th 2002 and the YHA are being granted half a million pounds nationally in part compensation for its losses.

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED

David Frith has decided not to stand for re-election as SIGNPOST OFFICER (Admin) so from April we will be looking for a replacement in this responsible post, vital to the Society. Is there a member out there who feels he could take it on? The job entails working in conjunction with Bill Johnson, the Signpost Officer, who handles the actual construction and installation of the posts. His Admin companion will need to contact the societies or relatives who offer to donate the cost of posts, then liaise with landowners on whose properties they will be installed. There will also be some correspondence with the suppliers of posts and plaques. Advice and assistance will, of course, be given by Taylor House. All offers gratefully received. And many thanks to David for his dedication over the past year.

Two other loyal workers have recently announced their retirement. Our thanks are due to SUE DAVIES and JACK CATLOW for their hard work in the past. But now we need a replacement for Sue's patch at TURTON, Bolton and for Jack's more complex area of Abram, Atherton, Golborne, Leigh and Tyldesley in WIGAN. Would any local member care to help us out by casting a watchful eye as an Inspector for either of these localities? Please contact

Adrian Littleton at Taylor House if the spirit moves you.

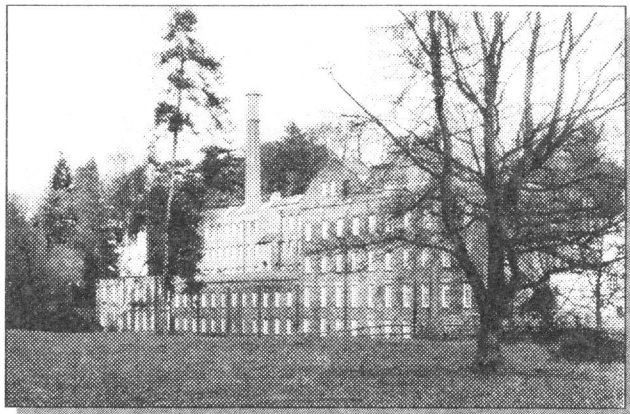
**THE MANY FRIENDS OF DEREK TAYLOR**, our late, respected Hon Secretary for 22 years, will be pleased to note that we will be dedicating a special signpost to his memory on Sunday 12th May 2002.

The site is 1½ miles NE of Rivington, Grid Ref: 644161 facing Anglezarke Moor. Car park near Wilcock's Farm. Please contact **KEN WEST** for further information on 01204 430 168 (Home) or 01204 840201 ext 161 (Work) or Derek Seddon at Taylor House.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

**Saturday 27th April  
at 2pm, Freemasons Hall,  
Bridge St, Manchester**

Extraordinary General Meeting to approve the new, revised Constitution. This will be followed by the **Annual**



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**General Meeting** of the Society, after which there will be an opportunity to join in a Guided Tour of the District or visit Manchester's Air and Space Museum, about 5 minutes walk away. And then, of course, there are always the shops on Deansgate.

Re-assemble in the Bar at the Freemasons at 6pm for the **ANNUAL DINNER** which starts at 6.30. The cost is £10 and tickets are available from Charles Peers, 228 Bramhall Lane South, Bramhall SK7 4AA. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

**Friday 21st June,  
Quarry Bank Mill, Styal,  
Cheshire**

**FOOTPATH PRACTITIONERS' CONFERENCE.**

All Agents, Inspectors and partners invited.

**Below:** Quarry Bank Mill in its Country Park setting.

## Truly Rural

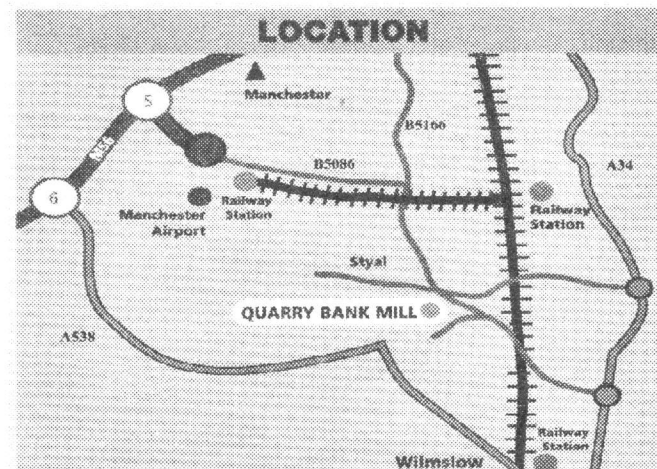
is the setting of Quarry Bank Mill, venue for our Footpath Practitioners' Conference on Friday 21st June. Perched on the bank of the River Bollin in 300 acres of Country Park, this wonderfully preserved water mill is still operated by the world's most powerful working water wheel. Built in 1784, it retains near by its original Apprentice House where the child employees lived and were given a rudimentary education (Samuel Greg, the owner, was a humanitarian in his day). Demonstrations and tours are arranged daily. Half a mile away is the almost unaltered village of Styal, built by Greg to house his workers in rural harmony. There is a charge to visit the mill and house but both are free to National Trust members.

**Footpath Practitioners' Conference  
Quarry Bank Mill  
Styal  
Friday 21st June 2002**

About thirty people – including, I am delighted to report, numerous long serving stalwarts – have indicated an interest in attending this Conference on 21st June. We reckon that we can accommodate all these and another dozen: so if you have not yet applied, and are interested, please do so – by letter or e-mail to me at Taylor House, or telephone me at my home on 01625 528256.

When final details of the programme are settled, I shall send them to each applicant.

**Adrian Littleton**



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## IN MEMORIAM

January and February were bitter months in the losses of old friends and stalwarts of the Footpath movement. It is with respect and deep regret that we record the passing of the following:

**Margaret (Peggy) Bellhouse**, Member for 24 years and Honorary Life Member.



**Harold Brimelow**, Retired industrial chemist, Member since 1981. Assessor for many years and particularly remembered for his invaluable work on indexing our collection of maps.

**Ken Holt**, (74) Retired Police Sergeant Former Peak & Northern Signpost Officer, Rambles Secretary of Buxton Rambling Club.

**Bert Platt-Chance**, Chairman, Stockport Rambling & Social Club and Delegate to PNFS. Vice President of Stockport Field Club.

**Phyllis Potts**, widow of Joe Potts, member for 25 years and Hon Life Member since 1993.

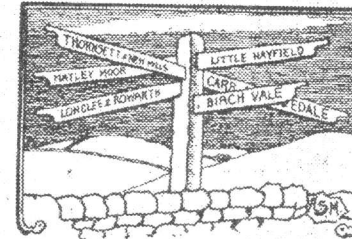
**Benny (Bernard) Rothman** (90), Leader of the Kinder Mass Trespass, 1932 and veteran of many other access campaigns. Member of PNFS for 10 years.

**Bert Williams**, Long-serving Chairman of the Manchester & District Rambling Club for the Blind.

## From the High Peak Reporter 22nd September 1944

### A Sign of <sup>H.P.R.</sup> 22.9.44 Good Omen

Here is the sketch of a signpost that points to many ways and by-ways leading to gorgeous mountain scenery, especially now when the purple heather is at the full. If you should wish to behold Kinder Scout, Monarch of the Peak, looking most majestic in his rich robe of royal purple, take the lead from the finger posts that point to Carr Meadows and Edale, or to Little Hayfield, and you will be well rewarded with the most splendid views in the district. Again, if you would seek the peace and tranquillity of Rowarth, the way is pointed by the picturesque old farm of Longlee. The old road to Thornsett, and the almost obliterated path to Birch Vale, almost encircle Lantern Pike, where on any day, you can be assured of some healthy and invigorating breeze, as you can if you take the old road over Matley Moor towards Cown Edge.



The way to Edale from this signpost is most enchanting at this time of the year, going as it does to give you close-up views of the Chunal and Park Hall moors, which is the most colourful side of Kinder at this period. When you get over by Kinder Low to drop into Edale, you come more on the green tufted and shaggy moor grass side of the Scout.

Though pointing the ways to such loveliness and peace on these sunny days, this signpost must have been the centre of the storm and deluge of Whit-Monday, when it's gruesome fingers would be pointing in the black clouds to the raging torrents that were tearing down the valleys to cause so much devastation in their fury.

In earlier days of the war, this signpost was taken down like most others, but instead of being taken away, it was just put over the wall, "so that the Germans should not see it."

ALLEN GRO.

## TROUBLE AT TURNER'S MILL

Amidst the moors, woods and reservoirs near Belmont is Charles Turner and Company's huge paper mill, established there 168 years ago. Through it runs a public footpath, most of which was put on the Definitive Map in 1998 - thanks largely to the diligence of our member, Ken West. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council promptly closed it via the first of several temporary orders, on the ground that the operational parts of the Mill were unsafe for walkers.

In 2001 the Council made permanent closure and diversion orders, which send the public around the mill on a vast meandering loop which drops steeply down to the Eagley Brook and then climbs back to high ground. Scenically it is more pleasant than the shorter route through the Mill; but it is arduous to walk and none but adventurous and energetic walkers will enjoy the inclines and steps; some treads being glutinous mud.

At the public inquiry held on 26-28 February there were 58 objectors, including this Society and the R.A.

An exasperating feature of the preceding two years was the Council's refusal to describe the hazards of the Mill yard more clearly than "inherently unsafe". At the inquiry the Managing Director and the Personnel Director alleged that vehicle activity

was high on parts of the definitive path and dangerous chemicals were stored nearby. Only 'authorised' employees have access to these areas. The Directors were anxious that walkers - especially smokers, undisciplined children and people with dogs off lead - should not be at risk.

My response to this evidence was that if a public footpath ran through industrial premises it was up to the owners to protect path users. The Orders had been made for the benefit of the public: not the Mill owners .

We await the Inspector's verdict with interest. Although the Managing Director insisted that no better diversion route exists, I suspect that one will be found if confirmation of the Orders is refused; in which case the MD's spectre of 200 jobs lost (because no other means exist of eliminating risk to walkers) will not come to pass.

Ken West's stubborn refusal to be carborunded by one of PNFS's least walker-friendly highway authorities is a triumph of the human spirit.

**Adrian Littleton**  
Secretary

-oo-

## MID- WEEK WALK (JANUARY)

**lead by Janet Cuff**

Despite the fact that it was raining at the start of the day and that the weather forecast did not give much hope of better things to come, thirty dedicated walkers/?masochists turned up at New Mills Central Station for our linear walk from New Mills to Glossop.

Our route out of New Mills took us north via Whitle, Briargrove Farm and Newbarn to emerge onto Shiloh road at - guess where - the Moorfield Arms pub. Although I had planned to take this route, I had not planned to go in the pub, but in view of the fact that we had been constantly drizzled on, if not rained on, up till then, I decided it would be a good idea to offer the party an early lunch stop; the offer was readily accepted. It meant that those of us who wanted a drink, could go inside for a warm up whilst those who didn't could still, with the landlord's permission, have a comfortable picnic table outside to eat their sandwiches at, and we could all make use of the pub's facilities.

Suitably refreshed, we proceeded northwards again via Pistol Farm and Moorside, making for what is marked as "Works" on the map, just south of Charlesworth. This is still an operating concern, but I'm not sure what they

make there; perhaps someone can tell me. Up to then, we had had boggy ground, but only what could have been expected, given the conditions. However, it was then that the fun started. Approaching "Works" we had to ford a very minor stream , which is normally no problem for well-shod walkers, but on this occasion the rain had made the steep path down, on either side, extremely treacherous and we all had to hang on to branches and each other as best we could to avoid slipping. After "Works" we had another stream to ford but although this was wider, it proved to be less tricky, as the banks were not so steep. I shall be reporting these problems to the Peak and Northern, (and also several very difficult stiles we encountered) as Derbyshire County Council need to know that these paths need attention. Hopefully bridges can be installed at these points, which is what is really needed.

Thinking that the excitement was over for the day, we began the gentle climb up to Boggard Lane , only to come across a sheep that had got its leg trapped in a fence! Preliminary efforts to free it failed, so I set off for Boggard Lane to try and borrow some wire cutters from a house or farm. I returned empty handed but fortunately, by then, the combined efforts of three men in the party had succeeded in releasing the animal which, although lame, had limped off on three legs to munch grass.

We then braced ourselves for the steep climb up Coomb's Edge and were rewarded with some good views as, although it was still raining, the visibility was not too bad. Then, after a brief tea stop, it was time to make our way down into Glossop for the train/bus home.

Despite the difficulties, several people told me they had enjoyed the walk, as it covered some paths they had not previously walked. And I think everyone thought it was a walk to remember!

We were all public transport users for this walk, most of us on the train, I think. Trains are having a bad press at the moment, but I have to say that on this occasion they served us well, taking us out, and bringing us back, very nearly on time.

-oo-

## MIDWEEK WALK February

**Middlewood to Prestbury,**

**Lead by Jeff Lewis,  
About 9½ miles**

20 people out on a lovely, bright sunny day. Part of the walk was along the Macclesfield Canal towpath which, it should be borne in mind is a Public Right of Way. (The majority of canal towpaths are concessionary).

There were a couple of stretches where I had to use roads or a bit of the Middlewood Way which is not a public footpath in our senses of the words, in order to spare the party too much mud. There was not really anything to report in the way of obstructions or problems, (except that all the pubs were closed) though one item is worth a comment:

Where the footpath meets the road outside West Park Gate in Lyme Park, the right of way comes out opposite a farmhouse. From the point of view of road safety, a much better path meets the road at an angle 20 yards further on, indicated only by a Waymark. I suggest it would be better if this latter path were adopted as the PRoW. What do other members think?

### For Sale

**Surplus to PNFS requirements**

**Suzuki Generator SE500A**

**Petrol operated.**

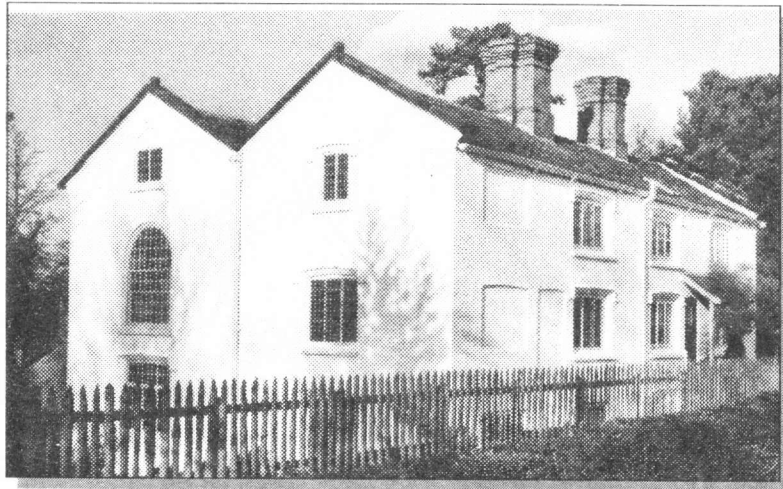
**Weight 20kg (42lbs)**

**Size 14" x 10" x 12½"**

**240V 1.4 amp output**

**As new £75**

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**Above:** The Apprentice House and Garden at Styal where the child workers lived. (see page 7)