

SIGNPOST

Newsletter of the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society

Number 22

October 2006

Chairman's Report

I begin by paying tribute on behalf of everyone in the PNFS to **Ernest Sutton** for his most valued contribution these last 12 years as our Membership Secretary and who has had to retire from the position due to increasing ill health. Ernest has always been meticulous and most conscientious in his work and a great support to me since becoming Chairman. Josie, his wife, is to be thanked likewise for her good works in the assistant (unpaid) role! One great team. Thank you both.

Step forward **Reg Boot** who has now been appointed Membership Secretary and is kicking off with letters to those who have yet to renew. The current total membership stands now at an encouraging 1080.

In November we have our biennial Inspectors and Agents Conference run by **Roy Spoors** which should have an outcome of fundamental change to the way we do our footpath work. Accordingly the Half Year meeting has to come later so that the membership can be timely appraised of developments and it will take place at the Acton Court Hotel (A6 Stockport) on the morning of Saturday November 25th—details on page 6. I very much hope you will be able to attend and to meet you there.

An aspect I like in the PNFS is having a number of members who can be approached to undertake one off missions—one such was when I was asked if we had “someone” who could run a stall at the Offerton Health and Environment Fair. And sure enough the horse for the course is **Peter Coughlin** who will be there to sell the PNFS and use whatever tactics are legal and necessary to enlist the public. Much previous good work for the Society was undertaken by **Peter Ritman**, a computer specialist, and I am very sad to tell you that Peter is now seriously ill. We send Peter and his family our kindest regards.

Our Walks programmes continue to flourish—**Clarke Rogerson** who has kindly volunteered to lead the short walks had a good turnout for his August walk which was only the second in the series—report on p9. The January *Signpost* will carry details of the 2007 offerings so I would like to hear from anyone prepared to lead a short (5-7 miler) or a long (10 miler).



On the financial front we are most grateful to the estates of three past members for legacies received or advised of. The three are **William Howard, Frank Higgins** and **Eric Burgum** and it is their generous decisions and actions of yesteryear that are benefiting the Society today.

Our brand spanking new website at www.peakandnorthern.org.uk is up and running and already being used by visitors to offer to take on volunteer duties, report FP faults and make membership applications. All credit to **Roy Spoors** for driving the project and **Geoff Errington** our Webmaster and AP-art design who constructed the new site.



The dedication of Signpost 310

Fred Ogden and I represented the Society on Wednesday 26 July at Baslow for the dedication of SP 310 in memory of **Harold and Marjorie Hetherington**. The event as part of a walk organized by Stockport Walkers was very well attended by family and friends on a glorious day with many speakers paying tribute—it was a fitting and moving ceremony.

We will both be present to represent the Society on Sat 30th September when another of our signs SP309 is dedicated to **John Stirling** during a walk out of Buxton organized by the Manchester and High Peak RA.

And finally your Chairman as backstop proof reader of *Signpost* managed to allow not one but two misspelt surnames to go forward in the last issue—corrected they are **Judith Halman** and **Emma Bowen**—sorry ladies!

David Bratt

New Website Goes Live on Time

You may remember that a completely new website for the Society has been under development throughout this year. Well it went live in July, bang on time!! If you have not visited the new site yet please do as there are many new features to enjoy and more are planned to be added.

As well as emailing the Society you can now also report both footpath faults and tell us of any missing or damaged signposts also by email. If you would prefer to email direct then the Society has also provided some new, direct email addresses,

assessors@peakandnorthern.org.uk
faults@peakandnorthern.org.uk
signposts@peakandnorthern.org.uk

It is intended to try and keep the new website regularly updated not just with news items but also new signpost plantings and bridges locations so that they can be viewed by 'Google Earth'. Also introduced for the first time is '*Friends of PNFS*' which allows people from outside our areas to support the Society by a donation of their choice. The visits to the new site has kept up at quite a high level and emails are being regularly received and we have even had our first few new members apply from the website.

Roy Spoors.

The screenshot shows the website for the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society (PNFS). The header includes the society's name and the tagline 'Protecting Footpaths and Helping Walkers'. A navigation menu on the left lists: Home, About Us, Membership, Volunteers, Walks Programme, Footpath Faults, Signposts, PNFS Publications, Agents/Inspectors, Useful links, Photo album, and Contact us. The main content area features a 'Welcome to PNFS' section with a paragraph about the society's mission and a 'Latest News Items' section with three items: updates on obstructions, the next half-year meeting, and a survey for Stockport. On the right, there are sections for 'Members and Friends' with a map of the region and 'Volunteers' with a call to action and a list of roles.

The new website at www.peakandnorthern.org.uk

Agents/Inspectors Conference in November

The next conference has been arranged for the 15th November 2006, at the Britannia Hotel, Stockport, starting at 10.00hrs.

The whole of the day has been given over to 'New Ways of Working' and a very productive and interesting day is in prospect.

Already there are over 40 confirmed delegates so if you have not yet booked your place let Taylor House know as soon as possible. Also although all of our existing Agents and Inspectors have been invited it is an ideal opportunity for anybody interested in this type of work to come along and find out more.

This conference will be very important for the future working of the Society as it is intended to look at the way we are organised and to make some far reaching and quite fundamental changes. These changes will result in the Society being more effective and our Agents and Inspectors getting more satisfaction out of their personal contributions. Please come along and help to steer us in the right direction.

Roy Spoors.



Inspectors hard at work at the 2004 Conference

Public Inquires– New policy amendment

Recently there have been a number of local Public Inquiries that have been needlessly postponed by purely technical objections that have been tabled at the start of the Inquiry. This has meant that often more than fifty people have been inconvenienced by the Inquiry being postponed and nothing achieved other than another date having to be set for the reconvened Inquiry. Often these tactics cause annoyance and can bring the movement into disrepute.

For these reasons the Officers reviewed the Society's policy and have agreed to make an amendment to our policy covering 'Changes to the Footpath Network'. The actual amendment is:-
"When considering any changes to the footpath network one overriding principle that will be adopted by the Society is one of reasonableness. While it may be reasonable to use technicalities and point out issues of omission (regarding requirements and schedules to legislation) at the early stages of the process, it is not reasonable to use such tactics at local Public Inquiries or at other methods of determining 'opposed orders'.

The Society will not proceed to a determination of an opposed order on the grounds of a pure technicality, it is in the public interest that the arguments be heard at a properly called Inquiry and it is counter productive to be seen to be arguing for something that merely postpones the Inquiry and the whole process. This is a waste of time, money and effort and would bring the Society into disrepute. Also, this extends to not supporting other Societies, bodies or individuals who adopt such tactics."

This change makes it clear that the Society will not adopt nor support the use of these technical tactics merely to postpone and thereby inconvenience interested parties who have attended in order for the substantive arguments to be heard and for the matter to be determined.

Roy Spoors.

A Day in the Life of the Signpost Team

Thursday 11th of May was a typical day for the Signpost Team. Two tasks had been lined up in the Staffordshire Moorlands area for the attention of our contractor **Brian Taylor** and his gang of Volunteers.

Our first meeting place was north of Wetton Hill where we were going to plant Signpost 313, donated by our Inspectors **Frank and Brenda Wetton** in gratitude for 50 years of happy walking in

the Peak District. A technical fault was discovered and it was not possible to complete the planting on that day, but has since been rectified. We then had our lunch at Alstonefield, refreshed by liquid from The George, then processed to Ilam where we installed a replacement for Signpost 123, which had been damaged by animals over the last 50 years. We have received requests for several more signposts, which will take us, when completed, up to No 318. These are receiving attention. The Signpost team has now taken delivery of a **CAT Scanner** (no, we don't know what the initials mean) but it's a kind of elaborate metal detector which will tell the operator when he is about to drive his spade into gas, electric or telephone services when fixing a post on the side of the road, providing greater safety for our workers.

Tubular Posts - September 2006

I am very pleased to report that four of the tubular posts which were in very poor condition have now been removed. They have been replaced by new wooden posts with traditional plates (Signposts 161, 176, and 177 & 178). This is very much thanks to **Ted Wolfe** and his team who erected the posts at the end of July. The signs are near Jenkin Chapel and Kettlethulme. Jenkin Chapel must surely qualify as the greatest concentration of Peak & Northern signs in the country, with three signs within 50 yards.

There are four plates in Taylor House which have been painted by **Bill Johnson** and will soon be attached to posts. These will be planted in due course. Another four plates have been finalised and are on order from the foundry, so they, too, will be rolled-out in due course. This leaves me with the task of visiting the remaining four or five signs that I know are tubular posts, together with visits to any other tubular posts that are reported by our members. **Neil Collie**



SP 177

..old and new..



The PNFS
HALF-YEAR MEETING
will be held at the
ACTON COURT HOTEL, Davenport, Stockport
on
SATURDAY NOVEMBER 25th 2006
Programme
9:00am Assemble Tea/coffee biscuits
9:30am Start of business
12:30pm Buffet Lunch (free to members)

To reserve your place please book with Eric Kime
0161 427 1082
as soon as possible but no later than 18th November

Buses run from Mersey Square and Hazel Grove passed the Acton
Court (opposite Stockport Grammar School).
The 192 bus runs every few minutes

For Outsiders Everywhere

'For Outsiders Everywhere' is the dedication on Signpost 201 at Holcombe Moor. This signpost, near Ramsbottom, is an old tubular post due for replacement. Apparently this signpost, and signpost 202 at Arnfield, was adopted in 1985 by the BBC Radio Manchester programme 'The Outsiders'.

The Peak & Northern 1986 Annual Report states: 'We received some very welcome and useful publicity when **Clive Price** of "The Outsiders" programme on BBC Radio Manchester visited us whilst we were erecting their posts on the Arnfield site and made a recording which was later broadcast.'

Neil Collie would be interested to hear from any member who remembers this event or the programme. Please contact Neil through Taylor House.

The SCOUT MOOR (Bury/Rochdale) WIND FARM, opposed by the PNFS but granted planning permission, was in the news again recently.

Professor David Bellamy returned to lead a walk over the proposed site to the summit of Knowl Hill, three years after his last visit. His opinion remains the same: "Wind Farms on land are just not needed and cause huge environmental damage". The alternative is **Tidal Power**, generated by turbines beneath the sea, working 24 hours a day. On the west coast of Britain, with its vast tidal differences, we could generate enough electricity to more than supply the needs of this country." The campaign to save Scout Moor, which has held up progress on the wind farm for two years suffered a severe setback when a change in the law in favour of the developers, Peel Holdings, was passed in

July. **Edward Smethurst**, a local solicitor, had fought a battle for a judicial review to prevent the plans going ahead, on the grounds that the area is common land, protected as open space. But a new law, included in the Commons Act 2006, allows the Dept of the Environment to overturn objections and remove farmers' property rights. Peel Holdings have offered alternative land in exchange. Mr **Smethurst** has now withdrawn, faced with the probability of crippling legal costs if he were to continue. Work has now restarted on the site and the earth movers are back. The powers contained within this new act are disturbing.

TEGG'S NOSE, Macclesfield. Volunteers wanted to help the disabled.

Cheshire County Council has asked for our help in running a new scheme to help disabled people to get about in the Tegg's Nose Country Park. The Council hopes to buy two off road mobility scooters, known as 'Trampers' for use by the handicapped to explore a trail round the old quarry in the park. The new scooters are able to cope with difficult terrain impassable for wheelchairs., but the trail will be developed sensitively so as not to spoil its attractions for other users. Volunteers are wanted to assist with manning the booking system from the Rangers' office. Further information can be obtained from **Amy Rushton**, Countryside Access Development Officer on 01646 541 804.

A LONELY CYCLIST

Wandering across the Derwent moors, heading for Lost Lad, we came across **Colin Wenham**, Peak Park Warden, with what appeared to be a unicycle but was a track measuring device known as a trundle wheel. He, and other Wardens, was working for a new organisation called **Moors for the Future**, a 4.7 million pound project funded by Lottery Heritage money with the aim of restoring the Peak District moors after the effects of fire, pollution and erosion - the biggest upland conservation project in Britain. Colin was making accurate measurements of the various paths in the area prior to the start of the Maintenance and restoration programme. You can learn more about them on their website, www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk.

The First Wallaby Walking Festival will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday 24th & 25th October 2006. There will be 5 organised walks, ranging from a 5-miler round Rudyard Lake or another round Tittesworth Reservoir to the more serious Three Shires Head (Three Shire Heads??—OS uses both) walk of 25 miles. Registration Fees, payable in advance, range from £2.50 (children £1.50) to £8.50 and are aimed at raising funds for Cancer Research. Contact Leek Tourist Information Centre, Tel 01538 483741

PNFS PEOPLE

We are sorry to have to record the death of **Frank Higgins** on 22nd July, aged 84. Frank was born in Stockport and lived here all his life. He was active with the PNFS for many years and served as an Inspector for us as well as being a Peak Park Warden. He used to organise the Warden Guides Hot Pot at the Swan, New Mills, and his further services to his fellow walkers included walks and coach organiser and leader for Manchester RA and the Manchester Associates Rambling Club. The PNFS Signpost No 288, near Combs, was put up during his lifetime as a mark of respect for his services to those two clubs. Another loss to the Society was the death of **Maureen Clapham**, a member with her husband, for 35 years.



Colin and his trundle

Roy Standing, a dedicated worker for the Society, has resigned as our inspector for Hazel Grove and Bramhall. The post is still vacant and we would welcome any member/s who feel able to take on the job. Please apply to **Hilda Bowler** at Taylor House.

Frank Wetton has resigned as inspector for Macc Forest, Wilboarelough etc, after much success in improving the footpaths in his area. His place is being filled by **Brian and Hazel Ellison**, who have already taken over. Grateful thanks to you all.

The brand new NORTH CHESHIRE WAY was opened for business at its eastern end in Lyme Park by the Mayors of Stockport and Macclesfield on Saturday 23rd September. This complex piece of exploration followed by even more tricky negotiation with the landowners



The North Cheshire Way
 - a slice of Cheshire -
 - 70 miles of walking
 from Wirral to the Peak
 - in easy stages - for all abilities -

is a credit to the Mid-Cheshire Footpath Society who have worked on it over the last three years. The Way leads for 70 miles from Disley Station to the Wirral, looping near to centres of population, says the Chairman, **Mike Harris**, so that people will be encouraged by the ease of access to try out a section themselves.

A well-produced, illustrated guidebook (112 pages and part-sponsored by the PNFS) is available at £8.95.

Adrian Littleton has been browsing in the files and found this:

PRESSING ON REGARDLESS BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY

Extracts from an inspection report by **Sam Hackney** to the late **Derek Taylor**

"In my report on **Bradnop (Staffs) 16** on 10 June 1990 I said that the farmyard was ankle deep in wall to wall slurry. On 1 May 1992 I reported to you that the mud/slurry was much worse. I thought it would be prudent to wear Wellingtons without realising that they had developed splits. Consequently I was really in the s*** and had to drive home sockless. These were only fit for the dustbin.

After the recent hard frosts I thought today (10 February 1999) would be good for a return visit but I ended up driving home trouserless !!!!! Upon entering the farmyard my feet went through the ice into standing water which was over ankle deep so straight off both feet wet again. (No wellies this time). This caused a lapse in concentration so instead of bearing south west on leaving the farmyard I carried on straight ahead, went over the fence, started to walk across what appeared to be level ground with a light covering of snow and went in to the top of the leg. As I tried to extract this leg the other one went in to the same depth. The place was deserted and I have to admit to momentarily

experiencing some panic. Anyway at that point I rather lost interest in carrying out any further inspection and could only think of a nice hot shower.

I had gone into what is presumably some kind of settling area for water/effluent. I must obviously check this out. Hopefully I shall manage to walk the full length of the path later in the year. "

The file does not record any further inspections of "Staffordshire Moorlands' most awful farmyard". If PNFS awarded a selfless determination medal, this inspector should surely have got it.

A P.S. from SAM. (2006)

I thought it would be reasonably safe to carry out a re-inspection after the recent dry spell. How wrong can one be? I found about 95% of the farmyard to be covered in water of sufficient depth to provide swimming for some ducks. Exit from the yard is through a gate into an enclosure with free range pigs. Not the most pleasant of walking routes. There is nothing to indicate the direction of the path.

WALK REPORTS

An apology to our conscientious Walk Leaders: it is only after much heart-searching and with severe regret that I have been forced to curtail the reports supplied. It's simply a matter of oversupply of riches. Your efforts are valued and all help towards a brighter 'Signpost'. Please keep sending them in. Editor



Northwich, 28th June, Leader Neil Collie

11 members out exploring the enormous area of reclaimed land which is now Northwich Community Woodland, with its paths, cycle tracks and bird-watching facilities. Morning break was at the edge of Budworth Mere, then on to Marbury Country Park. The leader cleared a path through 6 foot high nettles to reach the Trent & Mersey Canal and on to the River Weaver and the Anderton Boat lift (coffee on the terrace). Dragon flies and herons among a profusion of wild flowers, plus a fascinating historical background.

Chapel-en-le Frith Circular, 26th July, Leader Paula Mead.

10 miles. An interesting, walk with lots of wild flowers. The wildlife included rabbits and a heron. A farmyard hen followed the group for some way across a field. Did it want to join the PNFS? We had no membership forms so couldn't sign her up. Seven members were out on a hot, sunny day for a pleasant waterside ramble. Combs reservoir was very low.

Walkers reach Barnton Tunnel Trent & Mersey Canal

Greenfield Circular (6 1/2 miles) 9th August, Leader Clarke Rogerson

11 people out on a rain-free cloudy day. Some potential members? The party introduced themselves as they made their way alongside the Huddersfield Narrow Canal, then up Running Hill Head. Going over several stiles and finding 3 of them bordering on dangerous, these were logged, photographed and will be followed up with Oldham Council. Lunch at St Chad's Church with the opportunity to investigate the

grave of **William (Bill o' Jacks)** and **Tom Bradbury**, murdered at the Moorcock Inn.

Chelford, 3rd August, Leader **Peter Bowler**

11 miles, flat, easy going. Seven members out, including four inspectors. Showers, clearing by lunch time. Over farmland, through cattle (escorted by a kindly farmer) and past bushes loaded with soft fruit, to Marthall with its ambitious stream clearing. Lunch in the sunshine alongside a large pond provided for the benefit of fishermen. Back via Ollerton Hall, Colshaw Hall to Over Peover and return to Chelford.

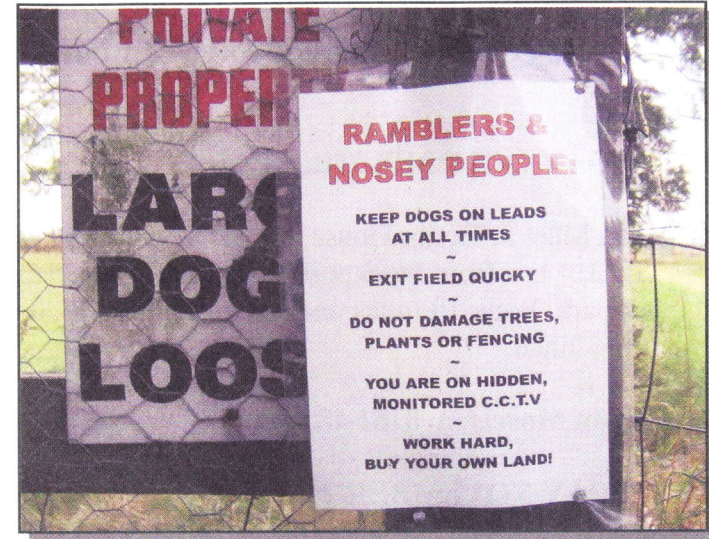


A waterside break on the Chelford Walk

Putting on the stiles

Frank Wetton, Inspector for Macclesfield Forest etc has been rewarded with a well-deserved success in his campaign to have two damaged stiles replaced. The stiles in question being at the ends of two concessionary paths across the neck of land between the A537 (Cat & Fiddle Road, but about 4 miles west of the pub and half a mile east of Walker Barn) and the minor road 300 yards to the south, now part of Cheshire Cycle Way.

Frank noted over the years the deterioration of the stiles and the eventual disappearance of one. He plugged away at all possible authorities over a period of months without even a hint of success until he stuck lucky with a contact with **Amy Rushton** and Cheshire's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The plan is new and the County Council's favourite ewe lamb and Frank's appeal was just the sort of thing it was set up for. A wait of a few more months and lo! both stiles have been replaced, plus information boards alongside. Well done all concerned (but especially Frank).



"There'll be a welcome in the hillsides"

Harry Scott sent us this picture of a footpath sign near Lichfield



An Act of God blocks Culheth & Glazebury FP138

Walks programme October to December 2006

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 25th

Stockport . Meet at Taylor House for coffee at 10.00. Can access via 314 bus from Stockport bus station or use Taylor House car park. Walk 10 miles undulating starts at 10.30am. Please bring lunch.

Leader **Brian Morrison 0161 483 8957**

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 29th

Buxton Manchester Piccadilly 09.37. Walk 10 miles hilly starts from Buxton station at 10.30am, Please bring lunch.

Leader **David Stearne 01928 735809**

WEDNESDAY DEC 27th

Cheadle Hulme Manchester Piccadilly approx 09.50. Walk 10 miles starts at 10.15 from Cheadle Hulme station. Please bring lunch.

Leader **Jeff Lewis 0161 766 4683**

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