

Magazine of the Peak & Northern Footpaths Society

Signpost

Number 88 - Summer 2026





From the Chair

Kathy Mclean



Welcome to our summer *Signpost*, though it is April as I write this. A busy time for nature, but also for PNFS. As the weather improves, we become motivated to spend more time outdoors, walking public rights of way. A few days ago, I was fortunate to have a dry day to reinspect the paths in the lovely parish of Shardlow and Great Wilne, a combination of urban and rural, with a long stretch beside a canal. I note that Ken Brockway has contributed an article about towpath walking to this magazine. I have also walked some good distances in the Peak District, constantly being reminded of how much we rely on footpaths being open and in good condition. In the past few days, I have sent welcome letters to nine new footpath inspectors, which is a brilliant addition to the many committed inspectors already making a massive difference. Our excellent Footpath Inspector Co-ordinator, Simon Worrall, is taking a break for a while. He has diligently handed over to a team of people who will carry on the good work; more information will follow.

Each year, usually in May, we hold our Annual General Meeting. This year we will be meeting in Manchester on Saturday, 16 May. Further details are in the Annual Report. I do hope you can join us; it is a great opportunity to meet other members and volunteers, hear how the society is progressing, including on its strategy and maybe find new ways you can take part. We are always looking for volunteers, so please let us know if you think you have skills which could contribute to PNFS.

We are seeking a secretary or administrator, a post which has been vacant for some considerable time. Please get in touch if you feel you have the right experience for this role.

Everyone who volunteers, whether a little or a great deal adds value. But sometimes you meet a person who makes a bigger impact than most. I am sure that many of you will be familiar with our Vice Chair, David Gosling. His tireless efforts on behalf of PNFS are amazing. He has been a huge support to me as Chair, always coming up with ideas, taking the actions no-one else can do or wants to do. A mine of knowledge about the society and the people who are or have been a part of it. One of the marks of great leadership is a willingness to make way for others, and David has decided to step down as a Trustee at this AGM. I know we will get a chance to thank David, but I wanted to mention it here as not everyone will be at the meeting. I am confident David will remain an active member and volunteer, but we will miss his wise counsel and energy in the management of the society. A huge thank you to David!!!

I am looking forward to meeting many of you in May. In the meantime, thank you for what you do for PNFS and enjoy getting out into our wonderful countryside, a place of calm and reflection, especially when we hear of much which is far from tranquil in the world.





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Deadline dates for copy: 15 January, 1 April, 1 July and 1 October

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Fed-up with finding paths obstructed or overgrown?

Become a Footpath Inspector for PNFS!

Monitor rights of way on behalf of the Society

- in an area you have agreed to inspect
- at your own pace
- in your own time
- find the paths on our unique database
- record your inspections
- report problems

Have the satisfaction of supporting the work of the Society and protecting our right to walk public footpaths

If you are interested contact the Society's Footpath Inspection Coordinator, Simon Worrall, by email inspection@pnfs.org.uk

Cover: Brackenfield FP16 stone squeeze stile
Photograph by Ken Brockway

Book Review: A Year On The Ethels - A Life In The Hills

Pauline Williams, Member

By Andy Christopher Miller, published independently 2025

This book is, in part, a reflection on a lifetime of walking in many parts of the world, interspersed with accounts of the author's walks over one year to climb all of 'The Ethels' in the Peak District. In doing so, Andy Miller reflects on a lifetime of outdoor adventure, which takes him as far afield as the Rockies and the Himalayas.

In 2001, the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) designated ninety-five hills in the Peak District as 'The Ethels'. The list was compiled as a tribute to Ethel Haythornthwaite, who was instrumental in setting up the CPRE in the 1920's.

The entries are in diary form, and anyone interested in completing The Ethels will find much helpful information here. The author provides background detail and honest assessments of the task undertaken. 'A little care is needed. Time to steady up and stop tripping over myself. I must calm down before peering over this black, scaly ridge onto the main road below.' (p19) This was recorded on his ascent of Ramshaw Rocks. Later, a planned day out to tackle 'Those Northern Ethels', ended when we meet a notice saying that the landowner has closed the moors and access is denied!' (p239).

Reflecting on the notion of 'wilderness', Miller insightfully notes that 'wilderness is not solely, or even primarily, a matter of geography. It is also an aspect of the soul, an awareness of the here and now, of existing beyond unnecessary distractions.' (p317/8)

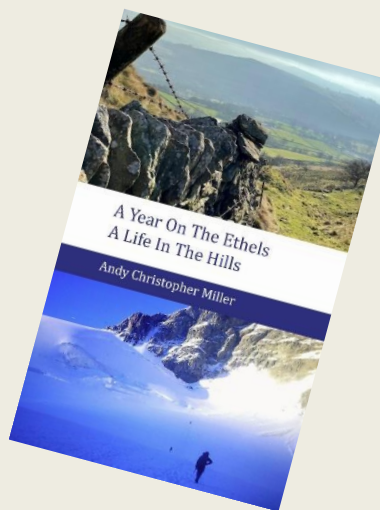
This book will allow you to escape to wild places wherever they are to be found, including in our own backyard. It's a well-written and much-needed antidote to the awful reality of what is happening across the world today.

Notes:

~ This book is available from Andy via his email address, andymillerh61@gmail.com.

~ Andy is very kindly donating all proceeds from the sale of the book to the CPRE = Peak District and South Yorkshire.

~ Further information about the Ethels can be found on Doug Colton's smartphone app 'Ethel Ready', where you can also record your own visits. 'Path Checker', another of Doug's apps, allows you to report PRoW issues to the Society and to log your walks to our signposts and other places of interest.



Comments on *The Postal Paths*

Ken Brockway, *Lost Ways*

The review of *The Postal Paths* (Signpost 86) sounds an interesting read I have yet to make. However, it did set me thinking of all those routes on early OS maps, many having now been identified by Ramblers as Lost Ways. I must admit that I had dismissed many paths to farms as labourer paths but the book reminds me that early in the last century postcards through the post were used like text messages. A complete collection of such cards can show that evenings out could be planned during a single day because there were multiple post collections and deliveries each day. Outlying farms would not be the first to be connected to the new telephones (as they were later left with poor mobile cover). The postie (not a term they would use back then) would tramp the same path every day, perhaps more than once. Looking at OS maps we can quickly see that on foot using roads and tracks would add miles to a direct field tramp between farms. The OS surveyors were offered the following guidance/instructions. I offer an edited extract of the booklet revised in 1905:

96. Except as specified below, all clearly marked and permanent footpaths (i.e., gravelled, paved, or with gates or stiles), whether public or private, should be shown. The Ordnance Survey does not concern itself with rights of way, and Survey employees are not to enquire into them.

No footpaths should be shown in private gardens or yards, except the principal ones in very large gardens. Paths leading to any well-defined object of use or interest, as to a public well, should be shown. N.B - A clearly marked track on the ground is not in itself sufficient to justify showing a path, unless it is in obvious use by the public.

Except in gardens, or where the omission is not likely to mislead, the initials F.P. should be inserted to foot-paths, with the object of avoiding the chance of their being mistaken on the plans for roads traversable by horses or wheeled traffic.

Crunch question. Does the use by the postie make the path public? Even today on open plan housing estates the postie may well cut across gardens rather than walking back down the drive along the pavement and up the next drive. So, are these Postal paths really public and should the numerous recorded footpaths that pass from farm to farm really have been added to the definitive map?

Calling armchair signpost collectors

John Harker reports that the front of one of the fourteen leaflets for the Steel Cotton Rail Trail shows PNFS's signpost 85. Go to <https://peakdistrictbytrain.org/the-steel-cotton-rail-trail/> to tick off this one.

Resurrecting signpost 311 on Baslow Edge

David Morton, Signpost Officer



*S311 in November 2006
and in November 2025*



Signpost 311 was erected just before my time in March 2006 using mild steel coach-bolts to fasten the plate to the post. By now they would be rusted solid and immovable.

17 November 2025: John Potter emailed photos showing it had rotted, fallen and been propped against a large boulder. It's a long walk from the car park to the north and a steep climb from the south, so I checked the map and wondered if it was accessible by car from Gorse Bank Farm which lies close to the sign, but at the foot of the steep escarpment. It looked like a job for a 4WD vehicle, so I set out to contact the farmer to ask for help. There were no contact details on the Signposts database and I forgot about the paper record at Taylor House, so I turned to searching the internet for Gorse Bank Farm. There were references to Derbyshire Times stories about the Highland

Cattle, which wander freely on the moor and which I've walked through on past inspections without a problem. They've since become a tourist attraction as a background for selfies and feeding them carrots, which leads to problems when the cows have calves and become protective. In one story I found a photo of the current farmer AB and his ex-farmer granddad DT. I was then able to download BT's Derby phone directory and get DT's home phone number.

Vic and David Thorp at Gorse Bank Farm





Above photographs on 2 December 2025

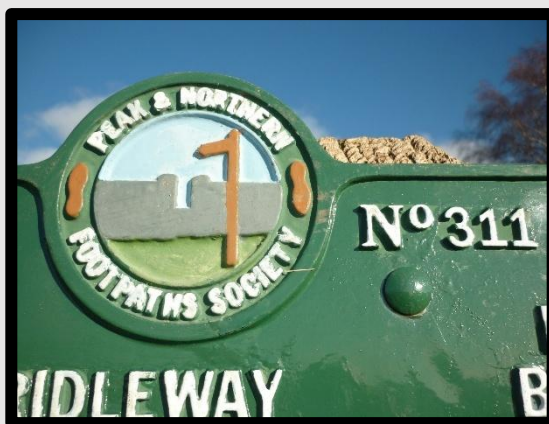
19 November: I spoke to DT, who promptly offered to run us and our equipment up the steep hill in his 4WD pickup truck, once he returned from a week-long trip. I found two or three days when the BBC forecast dry and above freezing conditions for Baslow, then phoned Vic Shannon and DT. We agreed to meet on 1 December, which was the one fine day in a week or two of rain.

30 November: The forecast for 1 December had changed to heavy rain all day, but the forecast for the day after was now fine.

2 December: Vic and I drove to the farm and transferred a wooden repair post, Postcrete, water and tools to DT's pickup and soon after, Vic was digging the hole in stone-free, sandy soil while I sawed the rotten foot off the fallen post then bolted it to the repair post, which was itself the remains of another fallen post. Its wood was so hard that my 8 mm and 18 mm drill bits both struggled to penetrate it. Vic suggested that they might be blunt and asked me how long I'd been using them and I realised that the older, 18 mm bit was 18 years old.

Several walkers passed by, including two who were "looking for the cows". The job went well with no hold-ups and for once I'd remembered to bring everything we needed. The weather was perfect and there were no hitches. Thanks to Steve Brown, the paintwork was fine (see *photo below*). I phoned DT, who came to collect us and back at the farm I was able to meet AB and get his mobile number for the benefit of future Signpost Officers who face this task after me.

3 December: I visited Taylor House and found the file on signpost 311. Fred Ogden was the Signpost Officer involved and AB's granddad DT was the farmer/landowner. The design of the plate was a bone of contention and the Mk1 version involved two plates with the heading "Public Rights of Way". After it had been installed in 2005, it was decided in 2006 to replace it with the current version, which distinguishes between the footpath and the bridleway. It stands as a memorial to Mike Hanson and was paid for by his friends.



Group inspections report

30 March led by David Gosling ~ Three volunteers attended at Kearsley Station, on Monday 30th March, to conduct a group inspection of rights of way in Kearsley, a parish in the south east corner of Bolton mostly in the Irwell Valley and a few paths in adjacent parishes, Farnworth and Little Lever.

A total of 17 rights of way were inspected. Most were in a good condition. This was partly thanks to the work of the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Society who have improved and maintained paths near the disused canal which they plan to restore. In Moses Gate Country Park, Bolton Council maintains the paths to a high standard. Paths were also good at Nob End, which as formerly a waste tip and is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest, mainly because of the orchids found there. At Giants Seat we found a lovely route through a blue bell woodland.



Both photographs show Kearsley FP21

We did find two major problems. Kearsley 16 has largely disappeared through lack of use because it is on a very steep woodland hillside overlooking the Irwell. Kearsley FP21 had two significant issues. Firstly there was dangerous barbed wire on a steep and narrow section of the path

and secondly, the surface of the path on the upper part has been completely destroyed by horses in the pasture. The result is that Kearsley 21 is nightmare of a muddy quagmire which we struggled to cross. The path is definitively 'out of repair'. Our long-standing Bolton Inspector, Jim Foster has reported these severe faults which have been acknowledged by, the Bolton Rights of Way officer, Andrew Smith.

Shirley Addy, Lancashire ~ I plan to hold a group inspection in **Wrightington**, West Lancashire in late spring. It is expected that several visits to complete this parish will be needed and can be reached by train. If you are interested in joining one of these visits, contact Shirley Addy on shirleyaddy@pnfs.org.uk.

INTERESTED?

There is plenty of scope for more group inspections, so existing Footpath Inspectors, why not consider the idea?

Maybe you want some help to cover the paths in one of your parishes, or you would like to inspect a parish where we do not have an inspector. Anyone can set up a group inspection, so you would like to do so, contact Simon Worrall or David Gosling via the email address inspections@pnfs.org.uk.

Affiliate Activities - Ashover Rights of Way and Environment Group

Karen Heywood, Secretary of Ashover Rights of Way and Environment Group

It can be a challenge to find enough enthusiastic and effective volunteers to organise and run a group well. The article that follows shows what can be achieved when a determined group of like-minded people decide to work together.

'I have been involved with the Ashover Footpaths & Bridleways Group (AF&BG) since its inception in 2005, when the Trail Riders Fellowship (off-road motor bikers) flooded the parish with its Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) claims, and concerned parishioners got together to fight the onslaught. The then local British Horse Society (BHS) volunteer Access officer (I didn't know much about the legal side of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) back then) was instrumental in helping to get the claims overturned (we ended up with just one BOAT at Marsh Green, despite two public inquiries). The aims of the Group developed to protect, maintain and improve the 50+ miles of rights of way in Ashover – the largest parish in Derbyshire.

Richard Felton (recently retired headteacher) took on the task of walking all Ashover's PRoW, recording any problems, plus working with landowners and Derbyshire County Council (DCC), which supported volunteers (those were the days!) in building steps up steep gradients, replacing inadequate stiles with picket gates, rebuilding drystone walls and general clearing work. He also initiated two local walking groups and updated the booklet 'Walks around Ashover', sold locally, with the proceeds going towards improving rights of way by installing structures like rustic benches. These were sourced from Bolsover Woodland Enterprise, which employs people with special needs. Richard's endeavours became known to PNFS as he has his name on one of the brilliant signposts, down at Butts Quarry. Richard's ill-health limits his walking and he has decided to step down as Chair of the group.



BWE rustic benches being erected at DCC owned picnic site – Highoredish. Richard Felton (the instigator!) is inspecting the work, credit Karen Haywood, 3 November 2023

After a plea for more members in 2023, (via the parish council

website and yearly Annual Report booklet sent to every household), the dwindling Group of three was swelled by the addition of four enthusiastic recruits, with two taking on roles on the Committee Management team. One new member also sits on the parish council -

a very useful conduit in relaying rights of way matters! The Group tries to meet at least three times a year, discussing path issues – erosion, obstructions, overgrowth/undergrowth clearing, illegal motorised use, etc. We have met with the DCC Head of PRoW to show him the ongoing erosion on bridleways 145 (Salters Lane) and 140 (Vernon Lane), which are on DCC's list of emergency repairs.

Thursday volunteer group (including Richard) at work on what was a very dilapidated dry-stone wall separating Ashover FP 37 from the sports field, credit Mike Thomas, 5 September 2024

As well as DCC's Annual Vegetation Clearance schedule, the Group makes full use of the Parish Council (PC) Minor Maintenance Agreement with DCC, employing a local contractor. In addition, the PC has agreed to fund professional help from the Bolsover Woodland Enterprise team to tackle heavy undergrowth/overgrowth (blackthorn and

bramble) on paths not listed on DCC's annual schedule. We have a good rapport with local landowners and contact them directly when fallen trees/branches obstruct a path. These are usually cleared within days of landowners being alerted to the problem.'

'In July 2020, Ashover Parish Council made a declaration (published in the Annual Report) to 'acknowledge that climate change is one of the largest challenges facing the world and also recognises that it is a key influencing body that can act on this. Therefore, it is essential that this Parish Council helps to proactively facilitate the protection of our local environment, heritage and natural beauty ... delivered in a way that promotes sustainability, healthy living and also prosperity within the parish'.

This led to the formation of the 10 strong Ashover Climate Change Working Group, including two parish councillors. One of the key aims is to maintain and improve biodiversity with the idea of promoting wildlife corridors where the river Amber provides a riparian corridor, running north to south through the parish. With the help of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, the parish common land has been assessed for its biodiversity and landowners (both commercial and private) are being encouraged to uphold wildlife-friendly management methods as part of Defra's Landscape Recovery initiative. Engagement with the local primary school is vitally important too, ensuring young people learn to care for the environment, and a yearly anti-litter poster competition has proved very popular, as have visits to a local organic farm under a separate initiative.'

As 5 people were members of both groups, with the usual pressures on trying to convene enough meetings throughout the year, it was decided to merge both groups in November 2025 to form the Ashover Rights of Way & Environment Group. A new constitution was drawn up, with the steering committee remaining the same as for the AFBG. The overall aim of the constitution is to follow the provision of the Environment Acts 2021/23 - restoring nature and improving the environmental quality of the air, our waters and our land. The beauty of the parish surroundings and the sense of well-being it creates are recognised by local and visitors alike. The provision of clearly signed, well-maintained routes to the countryside promotes sustainable travel as encouraged by East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). Off-road routes such as the historic cartways and packhorse trails double up as wildlife corridors, helping species to move safely, away from motorised traffic.'



Walking in Wickersley

Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector

Wickersley is a beautiful and historic parish. It has many rural aspects with two woodland areas - Wickersley Wood and Wickersley Gorse, two large recreational areas - Bob Mason Recreational Ground and Wickersley Park. The village itself has a busy shopping area along Bawtry Road where buses stop serving Rotherham and Sheffield. Winthrop Gardens, at the edge of the village, is a community and sensory Gardens and Tea Rooms run by a team of 70+ volunteers supported by the Parish Council. Most of that is taken from the Parish Council's website which has another page about two short walks. Wickersley Platinum Jubilee Walkway, launched in 2022, 7 km to mark the seven decade reign of Queen Elizabeth II. The Heart of the Village walk at 3.7 km which is more suitable for those with pushchairs or mobility issues.



Storyteller's chair, Wickersley Wood

As I passed through on my way to Maltby I was struck by how many folk were out walking. The published walks use a few of the public paths in the parish close to the village centre but residents don't restrict themselves to these short walks. Footpath 8 leaves Wood Lane into Wickersley Wood, where paths branch out in all directions, far more enjoyable than the ignored definitive route that clings to the back of houses. The woodland has a sculpture trail including the inviting storytellers chair. FP8A links First and Second Lanes both lanes maintainable at public expense but not on the definitive map.

My plan was to take FP8B the only recorded continuation from Second Lane but I noted others ignoring the invisible path across a cropped field and pressing on eastwards on a well walked track. I stick with my plan and struggle across the muddy field helped only by the track on my GPS device. Quite simply a disaster until I eventually located the motorway bridge and join Wickersley FP9.

Wickersley FP8A

Back at home I do some online investigation. The Rotherham online rights of way map has a layer of promoted routes and, surprise, it shows the track that locals were using and I should have taken for an easy link to FP9. Yet again I'm confused and disappointed that the definitive map and OS has let me down. When will we get a single comprehensive map that shows the walkable footpath network?



Walking on carpet

John Harker, Courts and Inquiries Officer, Barnsley

On a recent walk on the outskirts of Barnsley, at a place called Worsbrough, I happened to follow a path unfamiliar to me. I was actually doing a recce for a walk that I was leading for a PNFS affiliated rambling club in Sheffield. I came across a piece of old carpet on the path which had, I assumed, been fly tipped as I was on the edge of an urban area.



A short distance further on, some more carpet carefully unrolled along the length and across the width of the path. This went on for 50-100 yards along what was obviously a narrow muddy path hemmed in by brambles and shrubbery. It dawned on me that this wasn't deliberate dumping of redundant carpet, but a carefully thought out plan to facilitate easier walking.

Who had gone to this trouble to find said carpet, then carry it to the site, and then unroll it to cover the muddy path? Whoever it was, was probably local, perhaps a dog walker who used this path frequently and probably had access to large amounts of old carpet. It struck me that maybe this is the only public footpath with a surface of fitted carpet in the country, unless someone knows differently?

Maybe this is the answer to boggy messy paths nationwide? At the same time using a waste product that might otherwise be sent to landfill, or incinerated, or fly tipped at council taxpayers' expense?

Editor's note: There are some carpeted footpaths in Paythorne. Are there any more instances of the carpet being rolled out for walkers?

Walking canals

Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector

It's fairly simple to walk alongside water on canal towpaths but there are other canals, or should I say lost canals, which can be explored because the old towpath is recorded as a public footpath. In Derbyshire much of the Cromford canal has been destroyed by opencast mining where it passed through the Erewash valley. Only the northern section owned by the county council is recognisable with water alongside



the popular multi-user former towing path. It is an interesting but incomplete story as to why it was added to the definitive map. Each parish tells it's own story but when the surveys came together a common approach was taken in consultation with the then owners, the British Transport Commission.

Starvehimvalley Bridge Cromford Canal, Ripley FP146 under and FP19 over the bridge

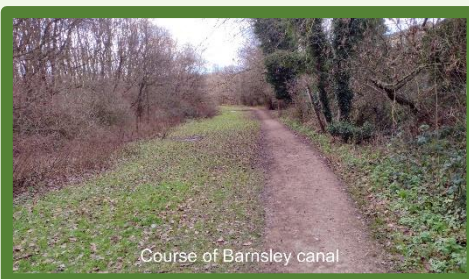
While large sections of the canal bed have vanished completely the footpath remains clearly on the maps for us to follow and view any evidence of a one time important artery of transport. There is one major change at Ambergate where the failed gas production plant was built otherwise features do remain to be discovered between Langley Mill and Cromford.

Perhaps there was a national policy to recording disused towpaths as footpaths because in Barnsley many canal routes are also preserved on the definitive map. Much of the land here has been re-profiled and will perhaps, on first sight be seen as a colliery spoil heap undulating with a covering of poor grass plus clumps of trees and bushes. Only careful inspection of the path over a larger area will show how it gently sweeps across the landscape.

Course of the Barnsley canal or Barnsley FP190

Barnsley FP94 and 152 follow the towpath of the Barnsley Branch of the Aire and Calder Navigation at Monk Bretton. FP191 was once carried on an impressive stone aqueduct over the

River Dearne. Further on it becomes part of the Dearne Way and modern maps still record 'Towing Path' and 'Canal (dis)'. The approximate route comes to a sudden end as Barnsley FP40 hits Darton parish although the recreation route diamonds continue to meet Darton FP18. Beyond that the towpath is unrecorded to the former



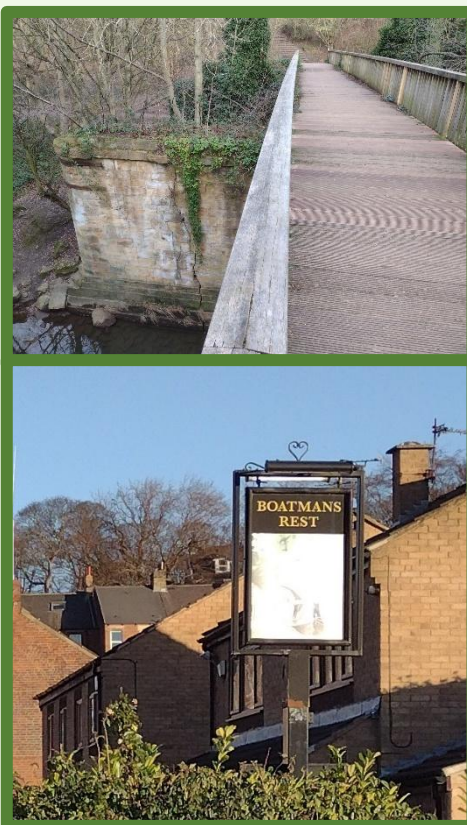
terminal basin at Barnby Bridge.

Exploration can continue from here along Cawthorne BR12, the route of a tramway, but that's another story.

Back at the aqueduct, Barnsley Canal Junction, as the maps record, FP229 follows the Dearne and Dove canal for a short distance to Pontefract Road at Hoyle Mill where development has destroyed any further investigation. The route can be picked up again at Swaithe on Worsbrough FP15 and at the south end of Worsbrough FP19 stands the Boatman's Rest Inn. The canal ended in a basin, evident by a stretch of water in the green open space south of West Street at Worsbrough Bridge. Lots to discover plus dare I also suggest the criss crossing railway routes around Barnsley many of which are now cycle tracks.

Top: Footbridge for Barnsley FP191 over the River Dearne with the piers of the demolished aqueduct alongside.

Bottom: Boatman's Rest at south end of Worsborough FP19



Seen on the path

John Harker, Courts and Inquiries Officer, Leeds



Sometimes on a walk something takes you by surprise. Walking last year on the Aire and Calder Navigation on the outskirts of Leeds I came across this. I've never seen anything like it anywhere else. Maybe one of our members has?

It's an automated duck feeder station, powered by solar panels. You pay by card for a portion of duck food and no doubt the kids, and the young at heart out for a stroll, can pass a happy few minutes feeding wildfowl which have learned to congregate in the water below.

Nudges, Coercion and Blocking

Bernard Caddy, Member

I'm a relatively new member of PDFS, and I have to admit not a serious long-distance walker, but attracted by the purpose of the society (and of course the signs, what wonderful assets). I joined after working with Ken on 'lost ways', an interesting aspect of recovering lost paths which revealed to me both the arcane complexities of legal rights of way, and the deeply frustrating inactivity of our local authority when it came to resolving issues.

Although I rarely walk far from my local area, I do try to keep an eye on what's happening to our local paths. I've come to believe that - as well as purely accidental problems - there are actions being taken by landowners and users which are intended to deter people from a specific route. I've taken to categorising these actions as nudges, coercions, and blocking.

Nudges

We have a nudge locally where the legal route goes close to farm buildings. A concessionary path has been marked out, with notices at both ends, suggesting the agreement of local ramblers to the alternate route. But it is two long sides of a triangle, rather than the direct route. Often there are a few beef steers need the buildings, which inevitably encourages people away from the direct route.

How is it another landowner only a couple of miles away in a similar situation resolved it properly? There was an application for a path order, some work done to create an alternative route away from the buildings with a decent stone surface, appropriate fencing, and a good solution for all. For the sake of a few hundred pounds it could be handled properly.

Another nudge last winter was simply removing the temporary fence that kept horses off the route of a path at the edge of a field. This allowed the horses to turn what was a reasonable surface into an impassable, boot-grabbing squelch. That made any walker go elsewhere, and that was clearly their intent as became clear when I caught up with one of the land users to discuss it.

I recall many years ago, as a stropky teenager, arguing with my uncle who had a farm in Somerset crossed by a PRoW. There was a rough sort-of-style to get over a barbed wire fence, but no protection from the electric fence that ran along the top of the style. Electric fences are just uncomfortable to touch, but when your other hand is trying to hold barbed wire out the way, that makes for a more forceful nudge to

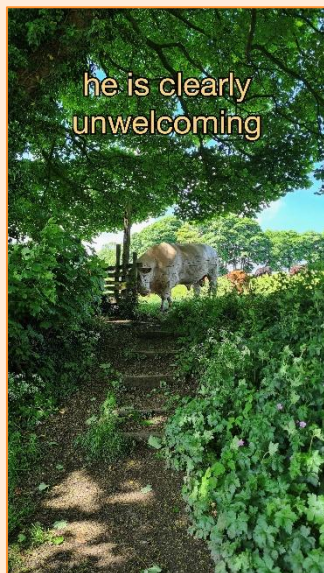


seek a different route. (I notice on the current Somerset map, that route is marked as impassable today, which I suspect my old uncle would be pleased to see.)

Perhaps one of the more inspired nudges I've encountered is the wandering sow. A local path goes through a farm yard, close to buildings. When I started using it, I was spotted, and I think I even called out a friendly greeting in my usual way to show no ill-intent. Very soon, I found that a very impressive sow was now being left to roam between a couple of gates along the route through the yard. She was a good size, and although most stock are actually quite willing to recognise the right to walk past, there was something menacing about her attitude. Seek an alternative route.

Coercion

We seem to have recently had a local blight of fence moving. Worthy of medieval tales of boundary disputes, local landowners or land users are setting fences to push walkers off the line of the public path to the edges of fields. In one case, clearly we can still walk on the old route, the correct route, to the



righthand side of the new sturdy fence; but then further along there's a strategically dumped mound of gravel, and then the inevitable locked gate to climb to get back onto the correct route. So the easier option is a narrow path at the edge of drainage ditch, clearly on the definitive map as an unmarked path not the PRoW, and clearly where the landowner is coercing us to go.

Another nearby is reasonably permanent electric fence, pushing walkers away from the correct route, onto the edge of a field, to a route less than half a metre wide which is also where runoff falls to, and so in wet weather very slippery underfoot.

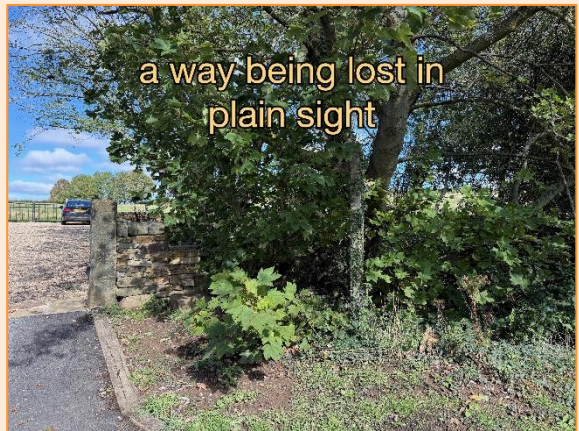
A third local coercion is a temporary electric fence pushing walkers to the edge of the field, rather than the correct route that crosses the field diagonally. A longer and more difficult route, very narrow with excessive vegetation. Yes, an inconvenience rather than a nuisance. But not right.

Blocking

Blocking is to me the most frustrating. Having spent time looking at lost ways and seeing the difficulty of restoring these to the public realm, it is all the more worrying to see actions taken now to lose further routes.

I've watched one of these cases develop over the last decade. First stage was the barn conversion, with our path clearly accessible, even marked with a finger post, crossing the old farm yard area and within a few metres of the newly converted barn. Then vehicles started to be parked on the old yard area and we'd have to walk around. As the barn conversion became increasingly gentrified, a stone wall was built across the line of the PROW. I happened to chat with someone involved at that time, pointing out they had blocked the PROW and a path order was an easy approach to formalise this. Nothing was done.

Time has passed, vegetation has been allowed to block the PROW route into to the old yard area, which is now clearly laid out as a private driveway. Even the finger post is now well hidden. Most recently there's a planning application to build a garage block that will finally close off the public footpath. We are watching a lost way being created in front of our eyes.



What to Do?

Just to re-assure you, yes I do report the problems that I see. I've used the PNFS path checker and local inspectors, and I've reported directly to the local authority, Derbyshire. Minor issues, repairs and vegetation clearance, do get resolved (I suspect often more by enthusiastic supporters than landowners). However the big issues, the things that are gradually eroding our network, removing some paths and reducing the value of others, do not get fixed. The authority merely mark them as 'in progress'. When I've approached our local county councillor, he looks sympathetic and talk about the consequences of years of 'austerity', a policy that with retrospect we see was designed to erode the public realm and the assets of common benefit.

What should we do? Engage directly with the people taking the actions to nudge, coerce, and block? Try to use the local Ombudsman or central government to get the authority to act? I don't envisage a 'direct action' wing of the society to remove barriers and restore the legal route, however tempting it might be. So what are the options? Just keep marking the issues, adding reports to the 'never to do' lists in the local Highway Authority? It is frustrating seeing this gradual degradation of our public rights of way network. What should we do?

Adopted highway

Ken Brockway, Footpath Inspector

This photograph shows an Ashbourne adopted highway. It looks like a footpath. Should we inspect and protect such paths?



Stocksbridge FP27D

John Harker, Area Officer, Sheffield

Here is a novel 'stile' on a well-used public footpath on the outskirts of Sheffield in Stocksbridge parish. The footpath connects the village of Bolsterstone (where the male voice choir comes from) to urban Stocksbridge and its facilities and bus routes.

A PNFS Lindow Moss walk discovers the history of buried bodies

Carol Moores, Member



Eight PNFS walkers met at Wilmslow Station on February 11th for a walk suggested by Ross Myddleton and led by David Gosling on a route which took them through the Carrs, across Lindow Common and Moss, via Saltersley Hall to Mobberley station.

This thought provoking walk was hugely enhanced by the company of

John Handley, Emeritus Professor in Environmental Planning University of Manchester, OBE, member of Transition Wilmslow and The Friends of Lindow Common, who shared his personal knowledge and insights into a local Nature Reserve and SSSI .

The fascinating peat Lindow landscape was created a mind boggling 18,000 years ago. It was a Celtic sacred site and became famous when, in 1984, the almost intact body of an Iron Age man was discovered – now known as ‘Lindow Man’ or, informally, as Pete Marsh. The history of the large, dark mysterious landscape, sandwiched between Wilmslow and Mobberley transformed my perspective on the area.

We were not there for a lecture from Professor Handley, but, rather, an interesting chat with a fellow walker, passionate about the environment, this special area, its history, ecology transformation and regeneration. Everyone had many questions and John was a mine of information.

The walk began under the Boddington’s decorative arch, part of the brewer’s legacy, and then headed into Carrs Park. John pointed out a large area now managed so that the naturally occurring wild flowers are returning in abundance. Avoiding muddy patches the route led upwards into woodland as we enjoyed chirpy bird song while plant, bird and tree spotting.

At the edge of the common on Racecourse Road we reached the area where travellers had created a one mile racecourse around the common. John pointed out the site of the now demolished work house and the Memorial stone of 1897

recording the purchase of the common for Wilmslow residents. Was this possibly not civic generosity but a way to control the site?

At the centre of the common is Black Lake, the Welsh name, Llyn ddu, giving the name of Lindow to the area, is now preserved for wildlife.

On the Moss, John took us back 10,000 years when shallow lakes became peat filled, and by 700BC a wetter climate promoted rapid bog growth. Historically locals cut peat by hand mainly for fuel. He referred to evidence of the 'Moss Rooms', long thin strips of land later enclosed by hedges for private agriculture. Damaging commercial peat extraction only ceased recently so that ecological reconstruction could begin, which we saw in action. The good news is that John is optimistic that the peat moss can be regenerated supporting carbon capture.

John was able to point out to us the exact area where Lindow Man, who he said has become the poster boy for the area, was discovered and also the site where a woman's remains were found. A chatty lunch was enjoyed looking back towards that site.

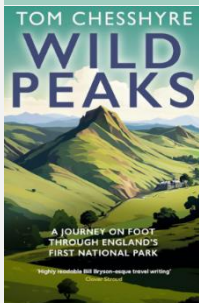
An extra plus was the walk involved virtually no road walking, and included the latest P&NFS sign No 662 in memory of Eileen Leonard. Several awkward stiles were noted and reported. We finished at The Railway Inn, Mobberley, under a memorable double rainbow.

For more information: www.discoverlindow.org gives fuller details about this extraordinary landscape and inspiration showing us what a 'ground up' led organisation is achieving there.



Book review: Wild Peaks - A Journey on Foot Through England's First National Park

Andrew Flack



By Tom Chesshyre, published by HarperNorth

To mark the anniversary of the establishment of the Peak District National Park, celebrated travel writer and journalist Tom Chesshyre hit the trails on a 364-mile 'ramble' to find out how this dramatic landscape has fared - and to celebrate this symbolic home of hiking. On a walk which criss-crosses the Park - his chosen routes are rarely straightforward - he naturally visits many of the classic sites, from Kinder Scout, to the Superfortress crash site on Bleaklow, through Edale and along the Edges, across to the Roaches, down to

Ashbourne and along Dovedale, and many points in between and beyond.

Tom takes a more relaxed approach to walk planning than PNFS members might adopt, and ends up with some unexpected diversions and variations in stage lengths, sometimes affected by his OS map reading. His longest was 23.4 miles, possibly due to using his thumb and index finger as the measuring instrument! But his tenacity and adaptability as a walker are not to be doubted, and his determination to reach his intended destinations, climbs, and diversions is to be admired. He wasn't averse either to some very early starts. And Tom's favourite fuel for his walking? It's lime and soda, served at a remarkable range of prices. But I'm pleased to say he also sampled some of our fine Peak District beers.

As is the case with Tom's other walking books, he experiences a wide range of eating and sleeping places and helpfully provides a list of these. All provide a rich cast of characters and encounters, and indeed, Tom rejoices in them as much as, perhaps even more than, the glorious landscapes. These range from pub and bed and breakfast owners and customers to shop owners (particularly bookshops), locals and park visitors, farmers, landowners, mountaineers and the park's resident aristocracy.

He gives an interesting characterisation of the Park, quite different from the Lake District (the subject of another of his books) and any other national park, with a close connection to urban life as the green lung between Sheffield and Manchester. In going on a long walk around the Peak District, he feels you are not just going on a hike, but embarking on an often esoteric education, covering geology, industry, food, the aristocracy, literature and plenty more.

Given the book is a celebration of 75 years, the part played by protest and the Mass Trespass 20 years before the Park's establishment and the hard work by people such as Tom Stephenson and Ethel Haythornthwaite is a thread running through it, marked by his participation in one of the annual Hayfield trespass gatherings. Richard Pankhurst's earlier work, leading to the formation of a footpath society that then became the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society is also recognised, as is the helpfulness of PNFS signposts. *Wild Peaks* is an engaging, enjoyable read for all of us who love the Peak District, its surrounding areas, its people and, of course, the joy of walking!

On the morning of **Friday, 22 May**, Tom will be talking about *Wild Peaks* at Derby Book Festival, interviewed by this review's author and PNFS Member, Andrew Flack. Tickets are now available - search Derby Book Festival, Events for this and many other author events.

PNFS walks

IT IS VITAL that attendees check all train times and pnfs.org.uk/walks for any updates

GROUP INSPECTIONS - See elsewhere in this issue.

Below walks are held on Wednesdays.

10 JUNE (Short) - Ken Brockway and John Kidd 07895 983857

great.english.walk@gmail.com. Tutbury and Hatton circular walk of 9 miles with about 400 feet of ascent visiting Tutbury, Rolleston and Anslow finishing at Black Country Inn for refreshments before return to the station for 16:39 return train. Either take 10:03 train from Manchester Piccadilly change Stoke on Trent or use buses from Derby or Burton on Trent to arrive at Tutbury and Hatton station at 11:23 when walk will start. DLE3 9LY.

24 JUNE (Long) - Walker leader required. Contact Ken on kensmith4rj@icloud.com if you wish to lead this walk.

8 JULY (Short) - Brian Lomas 01616 885237 rossmyd@gmail.com. Failsworth to Mossley. Meet Brian 10:00 outside Manchester Piccadilly Travelodge (former Woolworths building). Piccadilly Gardens for onward bus travel (No 76 Stand D) to Failsworth. A walk to discover the recently replaced Ash Bridge on footpath 50 and onward up to Hartshead Pike then descending to Mossley OL5 0AB. Distance 8 miles Return by train from Mossley. M60 1HX.

29 JULY (Long) - Udo Pope 07717 802468. Silverdale. Details to follow.

12 AUGUST (Short) - Walk leader required. Contact Ross on rossmyd@gmail.com if you wish to lead this walk.

26 AUGUST (Long) - Ann Haden 07766 194 900 ann.vernon-haden@virginmedia.com. Edale to Hope linear walk via the south edge of Kinder (320m), Win Hill (130m) and New Inn at Hope. 9:47 am train from Manchester Piccadilly arrives at 10:32 am. 10 miles. Walk starts 10:35. S33 7ZN.

9 SEPTEMBER (Short) - Mike Gunn 07724 155847 michaelgunn65@gmail.com Plumley circular walk 7 miles. Details to follow. Train from Manchester Piccadilly at 9:39 arriving Plumley at 10:30. WA16 9RU.



Short walk group on a sunny morning beside Macclesfield station before setting on walk led by John Fisher on 8 April 2026. Photo by Ross Myddelton