



Peak Area Newsletter

April 2014

The next Peak Area meeting is on Wednesday, 9 April, starting at 1930, at the Maynard, Main Road, Grindleford, Derbyshire S32 2HE. Free food, great company and interesting conversation from a variety of speakers on a range of topics.

The Sec speaks



By Lynn Robinson

Many thanks to everyone who attended the last meeting, that was held in February and to all who contributed to the question and answer session with Mary Bagley from The Peak District National Park Authority. Let's hope the open dialogue continues for the benefit of all who love the Stanage North Lees Estate.

Dates for your diaries – BMC Peak Area Meetings this year:

June 4:

The Winking Man Pub, Staffordshire.

September 10:

Glossop – pub TBC.

November 19:

AGM and quiz – The Maynard, Grindleford.

The next meeting starts at 1930 on Wednesday, 9 April, at The Maynard, Grindleford. On our agenda this time:

Will Harris, newly appointed BMC Regional Development Officer (East), will be attending to explain his role and what his plans are for the future. An important event he already has in the pipeline is **The BMC Stanage Festival** which is taking place 28-29 June. Events planned so far include climbing master classes delivered by BMC Ambassadors, a chance to discuss access issues, a barbecue on the Saturday afternoon, and a lecture in the Outside store café on the Saturday evening. Camping for the weekend will be available at the North Lees Campsite.

If you're reading this from a printout, the hyperlinks won't show up (in some cases we do print them). To obtain an electronic version in which the hyperlinks will work, go to the BMC website (www.thebmc.co.uk). Members can have it emailed to them by contacting the BMC office: 0161 445 6111, office@thebmc.co.uk

**Deadline for contributions to the next Newsletter is 21 May
- send to peakarea@gmail.com**



Will is very keen for local BMC members to be involved in shaping the event. If you have any thoughts about what the festival should feature, or would like to be involved in any way, then please contact: will@thebmc.co.uk

An update from the BMC Guidebook Committee (chaired by Ian Carr, but both Neil and I are also members) and in particular an update on the forthcoming Peak Area Limestone Guidebook.

Mina Leslie-Wujastyk, will be commenting on her nomination as a Vice-President for the BMC and will be open to questions. After the break (free butties and chips provided by the BMC) Mina will be presenting a fascinating talk:

'Self Efficacy in Climbing and Mental Strategies for Success.'

I first saw Mina give this 'lecture' at Kendal, and I was absolutely captivated by it. I'm really excited that Mina has agreed to come to our meeting, and at the prospect of hearing her talk again – we're in for a real treat.

.....and if that's not enough, Mina will be showing a short film on her climbing Unfamiliar, at Stanage, which will have been premièred only a few days before our meeting. Hope to see you all on the 9 April, Lynn

Spirit of Kinder Day - Sheffield Town Hall at 1430 on Saturday April 26. Free Admission. Speakers will be John Mothersole, Chief Executive of Sheffield City Council and Kate Ashbrook of the Open Spaces Society, and the Ramblers. See www.kindertrespas.com for details.

Access Notes

By Henry Folkard



Dateline: 26 March 2014

Since the last Area Meeting, which does not seem that long ago, there is not a huge amount to report – which is in itself good news. Two important events, a meeting of the Stanage Forum and an Eastern Moors stakeholder group meeting, fall between the print deadline for this newsletter and the Area Meeting. An update will be given on both at the meeting.

Another massive planning application has been lodged for **Staden / Cowdale Quarry**, for the construction of a water bottling plant. We understand the proposal this time is for a tunnel to be dug from the A6, below the site of the old Egyptian style buildings, into the quarry area, which will be dug out to a greater depth to accommodate the new structure. Various lagoons and water channels will also be constructed. During construction access to the site will be gained from the narrow road through Cowdale.

At the moment the application is scheduled to be considered by the relevant Committee in early April, so any representation the BMC makes will have to be completed before the Area Meeting. We made a written submission to the Public Inquiry which followed the rejection of



the last proposal, and at the moment we are likely to state our case again.

That said the land is privately owned. We have no right to access it except by the landowner's permission. Perceptions of economic benefit which might accrue from an industrial development are likely to prevail over anything we might say about landscape and recreation. That was certainly what came over from the last Public Inquiry which only held back from overturning the unanimous decision of two Committees to reject the last lot of proposals because of the presence of the group of Egyptian style buildings. We will have a difficult case to argue.

Elsewhere on limestone Rob Dyer and I met with Natural England (NE) at **Ravensdale** because the ravens have nested again on Via Vita. The meeting was attended by Officers from the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) because the crag is on open access land, and they are the relevant Access Authority. We agreed a temporary restriction from Malpossessed rightwards including Raven Buttress plus descent.

A climbing trial was agreed, and at the time of writing has just taken place, to establish how

close climbers could get to the nest before disturbing the birds. This was a great success and provided evidence that the birds would not be disturbed until climbers got onto Raven Buttress itself. This fairly revolutionary approach to agreeing nesting restrictions has not been tried before so all credit to NE for agreeing to try it. This is a great move forward for climbing and conservation and hopefully it will provide a great case study for other tricky to agree restrictions elsewhere in the future.

At **Aldery** fly tippers have been active again, this time leaving us with a load of white asbestos. We are at a loss to know what to do for the best. In the past we reacted to fly tipping by locking the gate, but that did nothing for climbers who wanted to park there – and cost us a gate when the locked one was broken down. So now we leave it open, but with the result it gets abused. Any bright ideas?

Its more of a pity because the site is looking pretty good now, compared to what it was like a few years ago. The landscaping and stabilisation work is near completion. Thanks to those stalwart volunteers for all their hard work. Nonetheless if you go there do remember it is an old quarry and some – or even most – of the rock is intrinsically unstable. Further rock fall would not be surprising. Also, where trees on the crag have been cut back to prevent further destabilisation some of the stumps have been treated with something to kill the roots off. It is not a good idea to use any of these stumps for abseil points.

The BMC's Regional Access Database (RAD) has up to date information on all crags in England and Wales. Otherwise access rep contact details are on the [BMC web site](#). Access reps attend most Area Meetings if there are any points you want to raise with them, or you can phone Henry Folkard on 01298 871 849 or the BMC office on 0161 445 6111 (office@thebmc.co.uk).



A new Director for Derbyshire Wildlife Trust has been appointed – her name is Jo Smith – and she moves from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to take up post at the end of May. At some point when she has got her feet under the desk we will seek a meeting with her to review current arrangements in **Cheedale, Water cum Jolly, Deepdale** and anywhere else that is topical.

On **Longstone Edge** a Public Inquiry is scheduled – no date yet – concerning the PDNPA's Prohibition Order action for Deep Rake (Longstone Edge East). The Matters for Consideration all relate to what seem like technicalities on the process of issuing the order, so anything regarding landscape or impact on the National Park would likely not be relevant. The BMC has asked PDNPA, when they have consulted with their Counsel, to advise how the BMC might most usefully make representation. There would be nothing to be gained in saying anything which fell outside the terms of reference of the Public Inquiry. We are currently awaiting their feedback.

BMC ACT has funded the part-time officer working to the Quarries Working Group after a productive first year. The All Party Parliamentary Group has been briefed on this

Please send articles, letters, photos, notices and so forth, to peakarea@gmail.com All topics considered, the only requirement is that it is relevant to the mountaineers, walkers and climbers in the Peak Area. Summit magazine is the place for the national stuff. Any length up to 600 words; if you want to go longer, best to call us first. **We particularly welcome material from clubs.** Deadline for material is two weeks before the meeting.

initiative – essentially how to make extant and old hard rock quarries available and suitable for recreation, conservation and amenity – and agreed to assist by drawing specific proposals, when these emerge, to the attention of relevant local MPs.

ACT has also given continued support to the Avon Gorge Climbing Regeneration Project where a group of dedicated volunteers are doing a sterling job re-equipping and tidying up Avon Gorge. It has become neglected in recent years. Besides doing the actual work on the crag the project has involved a huge amount of time working with Bristol City Council, Natural England and a stack of other people who need to be involved.

Remember that any BMC member can suggest a suitable project for ACT funding, or indeed part funding. It is often the case that getting even a fairly small grant from ACT can unlock matching funding from other sources for climbing / access / landscape related projects. So if you have a proposal, do mention it at the Area Meeting.

Work on the 42 (I think) projects funded through the **Dark Peak Nature Improvement Area (the NIA)** is up to schedule – which is as well because the funding expires next year and there can be no carry over. Woodland management at the Stanage, Jubilee and Dennis Knoll Plantations which you may have noticed is a case in point. Work for the removal of the Great Britain Plantation in the Burbage Valley has now got all the permissions necessary and the trackway is scheduled to go in August, with felling to follow.



The final phase of the NIA will be overseen by Moors for the Future as the co-ordinator employed by RSPB, Ross Frazer, has landed himself another job. Best wishes to him and thanks for a really good job he has done for the NIA.

Suggestions on how best to proceed with the **Alport Project** are due in April from a company called Alaska which is famed for innovative solutions in environmentally sensitive areas. A lot has been achieved there already, but the steep slopes on the west side present particular problems. Perhaps though the biggest potential problem is the extent to which sitka spruce are seeding themselves all over the High Peak Moors. Controlling them will become a very major problem indeed if the seed base is not cut off.

East of Sheffield Rob Dyer and Mike Adams had a constructive meeting with Natural England (NE) with regard to current climbing and future development at **Sprotborough Gorge**. A fair bit of cleaning work has taken place around Mo's Boulder and the nearby faces by enthusiastic locals in the last year or so. Whilst what has been done has not had a detrimental effect on the SSSI and NE are happy for the current low usage by climbers to continue, there should not be any further cleaning or vegetation removal. The best quality areas of rock have already been developed and anything else would require extensive digging out and potential damage to SSSI features. Further information can be found in the Sprotborough Gorge RAD page.

At **Rivelin** a tawny owl is nesting on Roof Route. Beware. Give it a wide birth, because it is

difficult to think of any bird that has better claws or is more aggressive in guarding its nest. They can cause serious injury.

Thanks once again to Dave and his volunteers from Peak Climbing Club who had another successful day working on woodland management **below Froggatt and Curbar**. Their task there is pretty much completed now, and a huge difference it makes too. Millstone will probably be their autumn destination.

It's **Bird Restriction** time of year again, so checking RAD is no bad thing – actually for anywhere in the country - particularly if you are planning on visiting a crag where there have been restrictions in the past. Ravensdale is mentioned above; Ring Ouzels are back at **Stanage** (where signage on site is the best guide); peregrines are about in the **Dovestones area** and **Roaches / Hen Cloud** too.

We all rely on **open access** in England for walking and climbing. It is too easy to take it for granted, and the distinction between what is a right under CROW and what is a concession or specially negotiated is not always apparent on the ground. Long experience tells us that you can never take access for granted, and always have to be on guard to preserve existing rights and agreements. For example, fifty years before the 1932 Mass Trespass on Kinder it was pretty much open access, but that changed with the coming of the grouse barons and water companies and it took decades, not just through the Trespass but also through patient negotiation by people like Bert Ward and Tom Stephenson, to win back what had been lost.



The bigger picture for access, and indeed for the preservation of open country, is pretty grim at the moment, with a conglomeration of threats converging on what we can too easily take for granted.

For private landowners, legislation regarding Occupiers' Liability remains a significant problem, even if the issue is more one of perception than reality. Then there remain conflicts between conservation and recreation in various hot spots. Because conservation is important it does not follow that recreation has no value, and finding a balance is never easy.

Behaviour is another major factor, and there are plenty of examples where perceptions of bad behaviour have cost access. This is something common to other sports, like mountain biking, off roading and parapenting. Bad behaviour never helps, even if it is only by a minority who have the capacity to spoil things for everyone else.

Behaviour by dogs comes under this category. Where there is livestock about, or ground nesting birds, it really is a major problem. Places like the Burbage Valley are favourite places for dog owners to let their dogs run free, but it provides major difficulty for access negotiations, for farmers and for the ewes that get savaged and killed there every year. Remember too that dogs are banned from grouse moors all year round, and whatever you think about shooting grouse that interest has been instrumental in preserving huge tracts of moorland from conquest by serried ranks of conifers.

Much of the solution has come in peer group awareness and a helpful word here or there. There is a real sense in which it is everyone's responsibility to do their little bit to help. But on top of this a whole new layer of potential threats is converging to create a potentially very serious problem. Cutbacks in central government funding have impinged on maintenance of public rights of way and in staff posts dedicated to keeping this fundamental network in good shape. It is doubtful any rights of way work that is not identified as a priority in Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs) will attract central government or local authority funding in the foreseeable future. The time spent behind the scenes by access representatives from the BMC and Ramblers on ROWIPs has been well spent.

Changes in planning regulations threaten another layer of impact, be it the pressure on land for house building, or economic development, or energy generation and associated infrastructure (wind farms and fracking and the like). What can be seen as relaxation of safeguards within planning regulations have generally had adverse impact on the value attached to landscape, environment and freedom from man-made intrusion. Economic dogma prevails over all else as never before. The problem with this is that it misses the point that the rural economy relies on landscape and environment and freedom from intrusion. Recreation and tourism is what keeps rural communities viable, and what offers opportunity for diversification. Agriculture is no longer the mainstay of local economies, particularly in upland areas. It is supported by



public subsidy. The legacy of the Mass Trespass and patient negotiations over access is in fact the birth of a whole rural economy that quite simply did not exist before freedom of access was won.

Looming over us in a couple of years' time too is the potential killer: reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. This may seem a far cry from the bread and butter of BMC Area Meetings, but the stark reality is that whereas much concessionary access, conservation and land management work has been funded through various environmental stewardship schemes, like Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), there is virtually no such provision within the successor programme called New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) unless it can be regarded as scientific or educational.

However the BMC is having some success in infiltrating Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to ensure that tourism and the infrastructure that supports this is on their agenda (and money can be spent on this) and are pleased that access / recreation and tourism are currently in both the draft Labour and Liberal Democrat manifestos.

It's a paradox that some of the best work the BMC does for its members is the least visible. This is the intensive lobbying, with others, of government in respect of a legislative programme which seems to mitigate against all we value as climbers and walkers, and what is integral to our continued enjoyment of open spaces. This work is absolutely fundamental to our enjoyment and to the quality of life but gets little space devoted to it because it does not

come over as being as newsworthy as a desperate new route or problem here or there, inaccessible though it will always be to the vast majority of members who are not super stars, nor to participation numbers, however artificial their genesis.

So a big thanks to Cath Flitcroft and the work she does in Head Office for all of us, and indeed to those access reps who spend time shut in meetings about ROWIPs, or in Local Access Forum meetings or sessions on arcane policy documents. What everyone can do to support this work is, first, to keep up your membership if ever you wonder what you get for your money, and, if there is something you can contribute more specifically and you can make time available for regular commitment, have a word with Neil or Lynn or me at the Area Meeting.

More and more pressure will come on all of us who enjoy the outdoors to pay for, one way or another, what we currently are perceived to get for free. That we do not get it for free, because we pay taxes, is overlooked, as is the huge voluntary effort we already make in terms of information, safeguarding ethic, litter picks, crag maintenance and so on. **Visitor PayBack** schemes are flavour of the month, but how best to implement them is a difficult and thorny problem. Charging for events is high on the agenda, and this is pretty usual now in the South Downs National Park, but that will only be a start.



High Neb buttress; Kyros Rossidis and Guy Chater. photos by Dan Jones. 'Perfect weather and a day away from studying in the library.'

So once again, if you have any thoughts on this topic, want to know more about it, or have views on the principles which should govern such schemes, do raise them before someone else's solution is forced upon you. And that's it for now.

Stop Press: Stanage Forum

On Saturday 29 March, a public meeting was held in Hathersage by the PDNPA to 'help refresh the vision for the estate'. They wanted to 'hear why it is important to people, what issues they think the estate will face over the next ten years, and how we can work together to sustain the estate environmentally, recreationally and financially to give it the best possible future'. One cannot help thinking that, after 63 years of existence, the PDNPA really should know this already. Wisely they had obtained the services of an external facilitator; the lack of trust drifted around the Hall like a bad smell.

Considerably fewer people attended than were at the BMC Peak Area meeting a few months ago, when Mary Bagley spoke for the PDNPA. For the many who didn't attend but would like to contribute the PDNPA has set up a survey on a website at

www.surveymonkey.com/s/Stanage-Vision

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Peak Area Reps (your voice on the BMC National Council): <http://community.thebmc.co.uk/peak>

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