



Parkhouse Hill. Photo: Cath Lee.

PEAK AREA NEWSLETTER



September 2016
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Rocking Chair

Rob Greenwood



There are undoubtedly two words on people's lips in the lead-up to the next meeting: Climb Britain.

In the week that followed the announcement on the rebranding/renaming of the BMC there was something of an online storm: talks of an EGM, votes of no confidence, and generally discontent amongst the masses (or a vocal minority?). In the weeks that have followed I have discussed the matter with a great many people and opinions varied wildly, with

some for it, others against it, and a great many just indifferent. However, controversy aside, I expect the forthcoming meeting – which will be attended by **CEO Dave Turnbull, President Rehan Siddiqui and vice-presidents Emma Flaherty and Rupert Davies** – to encourage a 'lively' debate amongst the wider membership. The message coming from HQ is very much 'it isn't a done deal', and this meeting, which is part of a nationwide consultation process, will be the best opportunity to express your views.

That said, attention will not exclusively be directed towards the rebranding, as that is only one of the many issues here in the

Next meeting: Wednesday 14 September, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE



Derwent bouldering. Photo: John Coe field.

Peak area, with a lot going on in terms of access. This includes a major re-organisation within the Peak District National Park Authority, the future of Stanage hanging in the balance (again!), and further developments within the National Trust's proposed 'outdoor activities licensing'.

And, as if all that wasn't enough, there is to be a discussion on the future of the Peak area 'outreach' meetings. While I have always been a firm supporter of the principle, poor attendance in recent years has called that principle into question. What is best for the area as a whole? Attend and have your say.

I look forward to seeing you all there.

Access News

Henry Folkard



Stanage North Lees

Once again Stanage headlines my report, though paradoxically it is difficult to know quite what to say.

The National Park Authority (PDNPA) is in the throes of a major and fundamental reorganisation. No stakeholders have any input into this, nor of course is PDNPA under any obligation to extend to partners the common courtesy of asking what any proposed reorganisation looks like to them – from the outside looking in as it were. Since this is being treated as an internal matter only – though PDNPA funding comes from the public purse, that is to say you and me and stakeholders – staff are not at liberty to discuss anything. Roll on open government you might say, but your request would be in vain. There are ways and ways of doing things. I guess no one would deny that organisations (including the BMC?) need to restructure from time to time to meet

new – and at the moment very challenging – circumstances. Current arrangements, both internally and from the point of view of partners, may not be ideal, but neither are they all bad. They have produced good results for the environment and the public's enjoyment of it. Suffice it to say that such vibes as the BMC has been able to pick up are almost entirely negative. The name of the game seems to be to give primacy to commercial opportunity, as directed by Aldern House (Peak Park HQ), rather than the landscape, how we look after it and how we enjoy its special qualities.

We were concerned when conservation and planning were paired in one directorate, while commercial development and outreach were allocated to another. I certainly perceive the proper motivation for outreach to be more about a public duty and service than commercial opportunity, while taking conservation outside the purview of those who enjoy the special qualities of the national park would seem to be the antithesis of the approach the BMC has been championing, of inculcating a sense of shared responsibility for nurturing the precious, but expendable, resource of the landscape, its wildlife, and living together with other users. The BMC, in the interests of its members, may need to reconsider its working relationship with PDNPA.

High Peak and Derwent Moors

Three bridleways leading up to or across Derwent Edge from the Strines side – Cutthroat, Foulstone and Dukes Road – have caused a lot of concern this year, as has work on the main path along the edge.

The Cutthroat contract has very recently been let, and work will commence soon. Archaeological investigations revealed nothing of interest, so it will be easier to hold to the established line of the track. This contract includes some remedial work

on the damaged section of the Derwent Edge track that caused so much concern.

The Foulstone work will also begin soon. This will reinstate the definitive line of the bridleway to a width of four feet. Some action will be taken to restore the badly eroded desire line adjacent to the proper way. Imported materials will not in the main be used. Any that are will be sourced locally from a quarry on the estate. The design is for a long-duration solution, with minimal maintenance implications, but as with all new track work there will be some short-term adverse impact.

During a recent site visit a number of concerns were raised and addressed, and some, perhaps more about principle than the actual work, are yet to be resolved. Hopefully Natural England, which is funding the work through Higher Level Stewardship because it is seen as creating conservation gains, will be able to provide answers to questions that have been put to them. The BMC is familiar with the work of the chosen contractor from elsewhere in the country, and has every confidence in him and his team.

Work on Dukes Road is ongoing and will go as far as the paved section across Cartledge Flat. To my eye what is being done effectively changes a bridleway into a more substantial highway that is less in keeping with the landscape. It will certainly ease access for larger estate vehicles.

There is no resolution as yet on the Midhope matting – which does not follow any right of way. However we are aware of certain ongoing discussions aimed, we hope, at securing its removal.

It has been widely reported that the National Trust has terminated the shooting tenancy agreement on an area of moorland, roughly speaking between Little Hayfield and the Snake, but going across the Snake too towards Yellowslacks. This followed an incident in which Police concerned with

wildlife crime were involved, though no prosecution resulted.

Much of the clough woodland planting envisaged in the High Peak Moors Vision and Plan has been completed – if my figures are right, which they may not be, roughly 100,000 new trees planted over three years. While this has necessitated erecting seven kilometres of temporary fencing, four kilometres of old fencing has actually been removed, and more will go.

The Howden fire, on Oaken Bank, did serious damage to about 100 acres, including newly planted land, though mercifully it was a fairly cool burn. A charred barbecue tin was found amidst the ashes.

National Trust Licensing Proposals

Three Peak access and hill walking reps were joined by Rob Dyer for a meeting with the National Trust and others regarding their licensing proposals. This was a positive, open and constructive meeting. It is proposed a distinction will be drawn between what is described as ‘activity’, and what is called ‘events’ – these being larger scale and often attracting an entrance fee. Regarding activity, which is what BMC members and local instructors/guides do, there will be no change or charge, though hopefully a way to facilitate a better exchange of information between NT and providers who use their land will be devised, to each other’s mutual benefit. The word ‘licensing’ will no longer be used.

Ring Ouzel Breeding Season

Kim Leyland has been writing up the results of this year’s intensive monitoring of breeding across the Sheffield Moors Partnership area, and will additionally be putting together an evidence-based paper for the BMC to give a better focus for how to target restrictions in the future. Current feedback is that nationally ring ouzels did not have too good a breeding year (though

I have not seen any definitive figures) but the Stanage/Burbage area bucked this trend by holding its own, even though it must far and away be the breeding site most frequented by people. There will be a copy of Kim’s Eastern Moors and Burbage reports, prepared for the Eastern Moors Partnership, at the area meeting.

Mountain Biking

BMC was one of a number of organisations invited by PDNPA to a meeting following complaints of bad behaviour by mountain bikers having negative impact on the enjoyment of others. All outdoor recreation gets a bad press, and deservedly so, from bad behaviour even where this is by a small minority. Bad behaviour costs access. Ride Sheffield, to which many BMC members also belong, is abreast of the issue.

The meeting did also acknowledge that the provision of bridleways in the Peak is not good, and neither is the availability of bespoke sites, like the crowdfunded site championed by Ride Sheffield at Lady Cannings Plantation. Along with others, the BMC urged more positive action where there would seem to be scope in creating better bespoke provision, and in reviewing the status of some footpaths which might reasonably be upgraded to bridleway status.

Postscript

This report just gives an overview on selected topics, so do feel free to ask for more detail, or for more on things that have not been included, at the area meeting.

In the spirit of asking questions, here is one for the BMC: Given the apparent dearth of funding, post Brexit, for environmental imperatives and for informal recreation as enjoyed by the great majority of ordinary people, what is the BMC doing centrally to champion these concerns?



Ned Feehally on the Sharpcliffe arete project. Photo: Shauna Coxsey.

Climbing News & Gossip

Simon Lee

Alex Megos quickly put the last newsletter out of date by swiftly bagging the (FFA) First Foreign Ascent of *Hubble*. This is somewhere between the fourth and eighth ascent overall depending on who you believe (and that doesn't even include Grimer's claim). However, grading *Hubble* proved harder than climbing it for Alex. The dilemma was that if he had graded it F8c+ he would have upset his English hosts and if he had given it F9a then *Action Directe* in his homeland would be demoted to the second F9a in the world. Stuck between a bloc and a hard face he fudged and said 'For some people it is (9a) and for some it is not'. Really Alex? However, as he is a lovely lad and didn't use a kneebar we'll let him off the hook ... this time.

At the other end of the achievement spectrum Pete Bridgwood soloed 600

routes on grit in a day. I'll say that again – 600 routes! Even more impressively Pete was unsupported in this effort. Not to be outdone, Tom Randall and Pete Whittaker smashed Bridgwood's (and Andi Turner's) Staffs Nose record which comprises all 30 of Brown and Whillans's routes on western grit and includes such nasties as *Ramshaw Crack*. They completed it in an astonishing 2 hours and 44 minutes. The full details of the Staffs Nose record rules can be found here: www.tomrandallclimbing.wordpress.com

On the grit new route front Pete Whittaker added a line right of *Linden*: *Salix* (E7 6b). In a sign of the times this was streamed live on Facebook where it is still available to view. Seb Grieve finally released details of his exploits at Secret Crag Y, which turned out to be located near Yarncliffe. Here he has done several new boulder problems and routes including three characteristically bold E6s: *Too Bold to be Old* (E6 6b), *Monolo Blank* (E6 6c) and *Blank Cheque* (E6 6b). Further details in the Outside new route book.



Simon Lee on his new route *Big Cigar*.
Photo: Mike Hutton.

Turning to limestone, Gary Gibson's Horse Thief Buttress reported in the last newsletter has proved popular. Gary has also cleaned up existing routes at Staden Quarry as well as adding a further eight new routes graded between VS and E5 including the much-eyed tower right of *Liquid Courage: The Leaning Tower of Pizza* (E3 5c). Details of all of these and more can be found on his website: www.sportsclimbing.co.uk

Chee Tor has seen more action than it has done for many years thanks to some judicious cleaning, re-gearing and internet spraying by Peak Area chairman, Rob Greenwood. The crag is buzzing again and it almost feels like 1986 there, all over again.

At Water-cum-Jolly featured activist Kristian Clemmow did a great job re-gearing Lammergeyer Buttress. Of the revitalised routes, *Vindicator* (F7c) is reportedly a neo-classic as is *The Fall*, which was reclaimed by Mark Rankine after hold loss and is now F8a. Mark, along with James Jacobs, also developed a bay right of Moat Buttress to yield four good-looking boulder problems from Font 6c+ to 7c. Mark 'Zippy' Pretty also put up a short new route left of *Professor Kirk* at Rubicon, *The Terror of the Seven Seas* (F7c) before taking a ground fall at Moat Buttress which left him with broken wrists and an injured back. Mark has been one of the Peak's most active route developers and has climbed F8a or harder each year for the last 30 years. Thankfully he remains cheerful and is already walking again and we wish him a full and of course zippy recovery.

On the repeat front it was good to learn that former activist Jon Clark is back in action and on form after a multi-year lay-off. Amongst other things, he re-bolted and made the second ascent of Steve McClure's *Ape Index* (F8b+) from 2001 at the Water-cum-Jolly Cornice. The third ascent fell to Haydn Jones straight after who has also

impressively ticked two link-up F8cs in a day at Raven Tor.

At unfashionable High Tor your correspondent put up a new 80-metre counter-diagonal, *Dementia* (E5 6a, 6a, 5b), which starts as for *Lyme Cryme* and finishes past the last bolt on Bastille. I then added *Big Cigar* (F7c) which starts up *Castellan* to climb the spectacular hanging pocketed rib to its right. It was also redpointed straight after by Nick 'son of Bob' Conway.

Jon Fullwood and Ned Feehally continue to be active on the bouldering front, with the big news being that Ned has done the Sharpcliffe LGP listed in the BMC Roaches guide. Ned says, 'The Sharpcliffe arête is lovely. Good height, and, unusually for Sharpcliffe, good rock.' It climbs the arête from a stand start on the left-hand side at around Font 7b+. It has a bit of a funny landing but is apparently quite safe. No name as yet. Martin Smith also climbed the spicy wall to the left at about Font 6c.

Also in Staffordshire, Ned did two mantle problems on the back of the Staffordshire Flyer cluster of boulders. The best line, *Greenteeth*, on the left, goes at around Font 7a+ from standing – or at least it should do when it gets some attention and cleans up a bit. The right one is an obvious blunt arête/nose feature from a stand start, at about Font 6b/cish, depending on scrittle levels. The rock on that side of the boulder is a bit dirty at the moment, but it's shady and catches the wind so is a decent summer option.

Jon says the best of the new things he's done recently are two things at the south area at Laddow. *Animal Grace* is an excellent highball Font 6c arête on mint rock with a good landing; it's on the leftmost buttress described in the *Over the Moors* guide. The other one is a very overhanging prow with a highball finish: *Pugnax* (Font 7a), on a rock below *The Price is Right*, climbs the

obvious prow from a low break under a roof. Jon and Ned also climbed a few things up on Kinder. *Blobfish* (Font 7a) is particularly good, and can be found on the lone boulder at the left-hand end of The Pagoda. Involving everything – jamming, palming, smearing, crimping pebbles etc. – it’s a real tussle.

Surprise of the century! – Brexit is upon us. Prior to the referendum a poll of 4,000 members of UKClimbing and UKHillwalking indicated that 81% intended to vote Remain and only 12% intended to vote Leave, conclusively proving that the typical climber of today is a hand-wringing, latte-drinking, middle-class liberal, subservient to the directions of the ruling elite. Evidently the climbing population is completely out of step and out of touch with the rest of the country. What happened to the working-class climber and our subversive counter culture? Don Whillans is regrettably unavailable for comment.

In a similar vein, the ruling elite at the BMC was also discovered to be out of touch with its electorate and is currently undergoing an identity crisis. A Sports Council funded marketing project proposed the British Mountaineering Council change its name to Climb Britain! When the proposal was unveiled at the National Council by Dave ‘I’m just a humble bureaucrat’ Turnbull it received rapturous acclaim and was felt to represent a more modern and logical representation of what the BMC is now (compared to when Churchill was in power).

Emboldened by the National Council endorsement, Dave and his marketing manager, Alex ‘don’t shoot the’ Messenger, launched the rebrand on 25 July on an unsuspecting public. However, they were taken aback by an unexpectedly large and ferocious online and offline backlash with some members threatening to force an

EGM to reverse the decision. Hastily backtracking, the rebrand was downgraded to a ‘proposed rebrand’ and the Exec. and BMC officers are now doing a roadshow of all the area meetings to sell the merits of the rebrand before it goes back to National Council again for another vote. The issue is likely to dominate the next Peak Area meeting and in anticipation of a larger turnout the venue has been changed from the originally planned Globe in Glossop to the more spacious Maynard in Grindleford.

Word reaches me that the BMC offices have had a clear-out. No redundancies this time, but a refurbishment. Rumours that the Sports Council commissioned a firm of interior designers called ‘Ab Fab’ who recommended that the decor went fashionably ‘Moroccan’ are unfounded. However, during the clear-out a frozen Japanese alpinist was discovered in the basement clutching a perfectly preserved copy of the old 1987 BMC *Peak Limestone South* guide, or should I say *current BMC Peak Limestone South* guide lest we (or they) forget.

Finally, on a sad note, Ken Wilson, one of our great characters, has died aged 75. He was the man behind *Mountain* magazine, *Hard Rock*, *Extreme Rock* and *Games Climbers Play*, which inspired a generation of climbers.

He argued noisily against the advent of bolting, notably taking a stand in the Peak at Harpur Hill. His life was commemorated at an event organised by the Climbers’ Club and the BMC in Sheffield.

Get in touch

Send your Peak area news, gossip or article ideas to me at: [**peakarea@gmail.com**](mailto:peakarea@gmail.com)



Photo: John Coe field.

Grieving for BST

Mark Warwicker

So that's it, all gone then.
It seems appropriate that as I watched the sun set, it started to rain.
A last hour's bouldering after work, until next year.
Until April probably.

An essential part of bouldering for me,
is simply to take a break and to look around.
And see.
And feel.
And breathe the outdoors.

To smell the moors,
or the characteristic aroma of chalk on grit stained hands.
To listen to the breeze, or hear a startled grouse.
To feel the wind, watch how it moves grass and clouds alike.
And me.

There's always weekends, but they're different.
Still special, but without the sense of time stolen back,
pinched from under the very nose of approaching darkness.
And climbing walls: enjoyable and essential,
but for me they lack the one element to be complete.

Time to go down now; it's starting to rain quite hard.
I'm going to miss it – hugely.
Till next year.



Looking across Kinder reservoir to the Downfall.
Photo: Peter Judd.

Hill Walking Notes

Peter Judd

The plan to change our name to Climb Britain took the BMC's Hill Walking Working Group (HWWG) by about as much surprise as it did everyone else. But, after a little reflection, I'm broadly for it and here's why. We were told just after the name had been approved by both National Council and the Exec. and just days before it went fully public. We had one advantage over most: when we were told we were also given a little briefing. That briefing, which gave context and showed some of the research that had led up to the choice, explained that, when used as a verb, the word 'climb' can better link together the many and diverse activities that our organisation represents than pretty much any other.

From a hill walker's point of view the existing name is not without its problems.

Early HWWG meetings didn't see the name British Mountaineering Council as much of an asset for us at all. We noted that while more experienced hill walkers, such as ourselves, already well versed in mountain literature and traditions, may well see our adventures in the hills as 'mountaineering', few recent initiates are familiar with the term. Of those that are, few would, I suggest, consider using it to describe their early trips into the hills. Contrast that with the word 'climb'. Most hill walkers, even those new to the activity, will have said something along the lines of 'I climbed Mam Tor yesterday, then wandered along the ridge to climb to the top of Lose Hill too', at one time or another. So I think hill walkers will see that the name Climb Britain is inclusive of them, just as much as it is of the climbers, boulderers, winter mountaineers and alpinists that make up our organisation's family of activities. In that respect it is certainly no worse for hill walkers than our existing name and probably, I would argue, a little better! I'd certainly struggle to suggest

an alternative that is as broadly inclusive and descriptive of what we all do.

My major concern, expressed at the HWWG, was about the wording and imagery that would be used to accompany the new name. It is vital that hill walking features prominently and clearly in this regard if we are to carry hill walkers with us in making the change – and so far, so good! So I hope you will join me in looking at this change as an opportunity, an opportunity to re-assert our organisation's commitment to properly representing all its constituent interest groups and to get that message out to a wider body of potential Climb Britain members than ever before.

What really matters to me as a hill walker, much more than any name change, is what the organisation actually does. Our last HWWG meeting had more than just the proposed name change to think about. As we near the end of our two-year life span we've been thinking hard about what comes next. We are in the early stages of producing a document, for National Council and Exec., setting out what we see as the strategic path for hill walking support going forward. An initial skeleton document was tabled and discussed in July. As a result of those discussions, and further thought since, I expect a more developed document will be tabled for discussion at our next meeting in October.

To my mind one of the most important issues to address is how we ensure the voice of hill walkers is clearly heard amongst the senior decision-making bodies of our organisation. There is no doubt that National Council and Exec. presently have few voices with hill walking as their primary interest, a representation level far below that of hill walking amongst the membership in general. Having voices speaking up for hill walking, alongside those of the other interest areas, is the only way that recent



Photo: Cath Lee.

improvements in support will be sustained for the longer term and further developments encouraged.

From a local perspective, supporting and developing the work of hill walking volunteers in areas remains important and requires continued support from the centre too. For this and other reasons I believe continued dedicated officer support for hill walkers remains vital. Much has been achieved in the last two years but there is still a great deal more to do if we are to properly become a 'natural home for hill walkers' in the same way that we are already the natural home for climbers.



Kristian on Tollbar, Stoney. Photo: Keith Sharples.

Activist Profile: Kristian Clemmow

Age?

42.

Where do you live?

Sheffield.

Occupation?

At the moment I am a domestic slave doing the usual home chores, DIY and the school run. But I have been and will again soon be an electrician. I originally trained as an outdoor activity instructor and did that in my early twenties..

Where did you grow up?

I was born in Kenya but from three years old I was shuffled around between Hampshire and Somerset. No real base.

What type of climber are you?

Peak captive new-router. I am getting a bit

bored with it all now and would love to get away and just climb different stuff. Locally I have little interest in bouldering and have never been bothered about the grit. But I mustn't grumble because I am very fortunate in life outside climbing.

Who do you climb with currently?

Mark Pretty is my most regular partner. Who else would be out on the limestone mid-winter excavating the rubble! He is currently broken but will be back, in time. Get well soon!

Describe what you did when you last went out?

Went down Chee Dale with Chris Plant and got rained off Plum Buttress, sunned off the Embankment and then crossed the river in spate to find cool, dry rock. Not the best day out.

When and how did you start climbing?

About 1987 I would say. More of a progression from hill walking and abseiling really. The school would run trips to Swanage and Snowdonia. I detested the bog trots through the wind and rain so the move to rock was made. I started climbing independently at Chudleigh and that is where I learnt the craft.

Who were your early influences?

Sir Chris and, most of all, Reinhold Messner. I didn't do any work at school I just smuggled books like *All 14 Eight-thousanders* into class and gazed at the pictures over and over when no one was looking. I haven't got the GCSE to prove it!

What is your hardest route and boulder problem and how important are grades to you?

Mecca (F8b+), climbed properly may I add, and my own 8b+, 32. On boulders I did the Parisella's Cave classic *Lou Ferrino* (second ascent) back in 1997, and *Tsunami* at Rubicon.

Grades are obviously important but the route needs to be good and enjoyable for me to put the effort in. That's my excuse for not pushing my grade in the Peak and instead directing my energies to new routes.

What were your first new routes and/or boulder problems in the Peak?

That must have been *Snatch* (F8b) on the Cornice, followed by my free variation of *The Spider*.

What are your favourite routes and crags and places in the Peak?

I would have said something down Chee Dale, but it is getting over-familiar now. Walking through the long grass and wildflowers above the Jolly dale reminds

me of Austria. Leafy dales have always appealed far more than the grim dark and barren moors.

What are your best new routes and/or problems in the Peak District?

I was most proud of the Great Roof at the Cornice, *Gran Techo* (F8b), but *Bricktop* (F8b), 32 (F8b+) and *Snatch* (F8b) seem to be popular with the punters. A lot of blood and sweat was spilt creating those routes so they mean a lot more to me than some long-forgotten Welsh E8 I may have done.

What type of climbing do you enjoy most and why?

Given the chance I would love to get embroiled in some Euro monster cave pitch of around F8c, but I would probably most enjoy some never-ending, never-too-hard colossal pitch somewhere beautiful, i.e. exactly what won't be found in the Peak.

What do you think of the BMC?

The 'Mountaineering Council' has been good to me. I was lucky enough to go on an organised trip to Iran and then on to a comp in Kuala Lumpur 15 years ago. The better bolt fund that ran for a few years has really made a massive improvement to crag safety nationally. But of course it is the access teams that work hard to fight our corner that is the most important function of the organisation. Quite how it is going to represent everything from indoor speed climbing to bog trotting up grassy mounds is anyone's guess.

Grit or Lime?

Limestone, stuck back on with resin of course!



Remnant ravine woodland amongst the crags at Tissington Spires. Photo: NT Images.

Prehistoric Trees of the White Peak

The National Trust provides an insight into some of the fascinating habitats of the Peak District

Luke Barley

We live on a small island, and unlike the vast expanses of some of the iconic national parks elsewhere in the world, the Peak District doesn't have much true 'wilderness'. The majority of our landscape has been heavily managed by people since the Bronze Age, with extensive open areas cleared for grazing, and woodlands managed intensively for timber, charcoal, and other products. The Peak District we know today is the result of thousands of years of human intervention.

But tucked away in the Derbyshire Dales there are scraps of wooded wilderness, and climbers are probably the best-placed people to get in amongst them. These remnants of the pre-historic landscape persist in the steepest ravines, and on the most inaccessible crags, where it's been too much trouble – or simply impossible – for

anyone to clear them for grazing, or manage them as working woods. They're known as 'ravine woodlands', and the Peak District examples are almost unique in Britain, with only a handful of similar examples in the other Wye Valley, which similarly cuts through limestone. Ravine woodlands are at the heart of the Derbyshire Dales' major European designation as a Special Area of Conservation – they're some of Europe's most important broadleaved woods. It's also important to say that although we sometimes call all the woodland in the steep dales 'ravine woodland', much of the ash-dominated areas have in the past been cleared for grazing and then re-colonised. These areas are known as secondary woodland, in contrast to the 'ancient woodland' of the core remnant woods.

Stand in a good ravine woodland and you just know it's special. Most of the tree

species have light canopies, so they're less shady than, say, an oak wood, and on a good summer's day they have a magical quality with sunlight glitter-balling through the canopy. Spires and crags of limestone rise through the trees, and everything – rock, trees, fallen wood, scree – is blanketed with moss and festooned with ferns. The lighter canopy, the limestone geology, and the great variety of different niches caused by the complex terrain combine to create one of the richest habitats in the UK. In spring, the woodland floor is covered with wildflowers, and particularly rare species of flower, as well as lichens and bryophytes, can be found on the limestone crags.

As an unashamed tree geek, though, the most exciting bits for me are the trees themselves. In stark contrast to the more extensive areas of secondary woodland which are dominated by ash, the core areas are incredibly diverse, with elm, field maple, yew, rock whitebeam, and – most exciting of all (nerd alert) – the two native limes. In the best ravine woodlands, like those beneath High Tor in Matlock Bath, these species co-exist, with a canopy of lime and ash, an intermediate level of maple and elm, and a rich understorey of yew with guelder rose, dogwood, hazel, hawthorn, and more. In places that have been more meddled with and modified, like Dovedale, yew and rock whitebeam cling on to inaccessible crags, where the intrepid climber will come face to face with them on some of the iconic sport routes – and might even use them as a belay.

Occasional limes persist throughout the woods; large-leaved lime is a rare tree in Britain, and small-leaved lime, although slightly more common, is perhaps the most powerful and evocative link to the pre-human landscape, thanks to its remarkable ecology. Before we started managing the landscape, the limes would have been some of the most common trees in Britain – in

the past few hundred years, though, they've been useless to us and woodsmen grubbed them out to make way for species that provided things we needed. Small-leaved lime seeds need hot summer sun to become viable and for hundreds (if not thousands) of years our climate has only rarely enabled this, meaning the tree hasn't been able to reproduce or re-colonise areas from which it's missing.

Small-leaved lime has a remarkable ability, however; to reproduce vegetatively – branches which droop to the ground may root and become new trees; or where a tree falls over, the side branches become a new thicket of individual trees. Where we find small-leaved lime in our ravine woodlands today, they're the same trees in genetic terms that have been there for hundreds or thousands of years – laying down new growth from low branches or by falling, walking slowly and relentlessly through the landscape.

Britain's foremost woodland historian, Oliver Rackham, called lime 'a living link with the Mesolithic wildwood', and to stand under one of the characterful limes of the White Peak, limbs cast asunder across the scree, is to feel a connection with a time before humans, when aurochs (wild ancestors to cows) browsed their heart-shaped leaves and wolves might have laid up in their shade.

Ash dieback is a real threat to the health of these remarkable ecosystems, but is also an opportunity for us to manage them well and ensure they're diverse in species and structure, and subsequently resilient for the future. The National Trust works in close partnership with Natural England, the National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts, county councils and others to ensure we're doing the best we can for this remarkable habitat on a landscape scale.

2016 Peak Area Meetings

14 September, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford

16 November, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford

Forthcoming Events

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/peak>

Walk and Picnic: Celebrating the back of Backdale

Bring your sarnies and join the **Friends of the Peak District** for a celebration walk and picnic held jointly with the **Save Longstone Edge Group** on Sunday 25 September at 11 a.m.

Email julie@friendsofthepeak.org.uk if you're planning to attend.

An Evening of Mountain Poetry and Music

Performers and audience members are welcome to join Dennis Gray for an evening of mountain poetry and music at **Outside** in Hathersage on **Wednesday 12 October**.

Poets/readers and musicians/singers are encouraged to take part. The only requisite is that their contribution must have a mountain/climbing theme. The event is being organised on behalf of the Alpine Club. All are welcome to attend, whether performing or not. Anyone wishing to take part should contact Dennis Gray at ddgray27@hotmail.com (in order that a programme can be put together).

BMC Peak Area Contacts

Peak Area Chair: Rob Greenwood.
robgreenwood@bmcvolunteers.org.uk

Secretary: Becky Hammond.
becky@bmcvolunteers.org.uk

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

Access Reps Co-ordinator:
Henry Folkard.
henry.folkard@bmcvolunteers.org.uk

Peak Area Hill Walking Reps:
Peter Judd.
Peak10roam-bmc@yahoo.co.uk
Cath Lee.
Cath.lee@peakwalking.com

Peak Area Newsletter Editorial:
Simon Lee and John Coefield.
peakarea@gmail.com

Next meeting: Wednesday 14 September, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE