



The Great Ridge.
Photo: John Coefield.

PEAK AREA NEWSLETTER



November 2017
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Rocking Chair

Rob Greenwood



We've had some big meetings over the past few years, but this one could eclipse the lot with two major items on the agenda that are of such magnitude our format will change a little – starting at an earlier time of 6.30 (with food being served from 6 p.m. onwards).

Things kick off with a presentation from Sarah Fowler, Chief Executive of the Peak District National Park Authority. As regular attendees will be aware, Stange has been a regular feature on our agenda over the past few years, and with changes

to key personnel, the soon-to-be-enforced parking charges and a lack of management plan for the site, I suspect the presentation and Q&A that will follow will involve some lively discussion/feedback.

After this we'll have our AGM, of which the key item of interest is the voting in of our National Council representatives. Keep an eye out for each candidate's personal statement, which will be coming via email alongside the newsletter.

Next up is the single largest agenda item that has probably ever been covered at a Peak Area meeting: the results of the BMC's Organisational Review. This, with no exaggeration, could involve changes to the fabric of the BMC as we know it and your feedback as members is essential. *Cont ...*

Next meeting: Wednesday 22 November, 6.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE



Higgarr Tor.
Photo: John Coe field.

The presentation will be given by the Chair of the Organisational Review Group (ORG) Ray Wigglesworth and ORG member John Roberts. Due to the independent nature/autonomy of the group we have no idea what their report will say, but the results will be far reaching and the feedback from the areas is an essential part of the process, hence there will be plenty of time for discussion during the Q&A afterwards.

Last, but certainly not least, there's the quiz! By which time I'll be ready for a beer ... or two ... or possibly three!

Access News

Henry Folkard



The main focus since the last area meeting has been on the Eastern Moors and Burbage, Houndkirk and Hathersage Moors: Stanage will be reported on separately and at the meeting.

The first five-year plan for the **Eastern Moors** is about time expired so it's time to refresh it, along with drawing up an initial plan for **Burbage, Houndkirk and Hathersage Moors**. Consultation for both plans has taken the form of three all-day Pathfinder Workshops with stakeholders – one on conservation, one on cultural heritage and one on people. The BMC has been represented at all three, besides making written submissions earlier in the year. These remain current.

From the purely climbing and hill walking perspectives things are really pretty trouble free, which is good, for we have no major

access or activity problems. Outside the management plans, but reflected in them, the BMC does a great deal in looking after all the climbing-related information and ethic. Woodland management was addressed for Curbar and Froggatt under the old plan, thanks to Dave Brown and volunteers from the Peak Climbing Club, and will be similarly embraced for Millstone in the new Burbage plan. Gardom's sits outside the National Trust/RSPB-managed area, but the masking of the significant landscape feature of that gritstone edge by exuberant tree growth, which receives no management attention, is significant. The need for further discussion with the Chatsworth Estate in respect of the wider landscape, and indeed of the common archaeological heritage, was noted. Both will be addressed during the course of the next plan.

Wear and tear on popular paths – White Edge and the top of Burbage North are just two examples – is all too apparent. There may be scope for some help here from volunteers, possibly in partnership with Ride Sheffield volunteers, as specific proposals emerge.

The matters of concern are more general or relate to other forms of activity. These include mountain biking (bigger, faster, wider-wheeled bikes and more of them), events, raves, parking and night-time parking, vandalism, anti-social use (particularly at Shillito Wood and Curbar Gap), illegal ingress on to open moorland by motor-propelled vehicles, dogs, future of funding options as Higher Level Stewardship runs out, broader questions on direction of upland management and inter-relationship with conservation priorities, arguments about fencing and so on.

The vandalised pay and display machine at Curbar Gap has been removed and will be replaced by a card-only one.

The principle of two new concessionary

bridleways has been agreed – one across Nell Croft and one connecting Houndkirk Road with the Green Drive – though the precise line each will take has yet to be agreed.

Work to improve conditions for breeding curlew has been a particular success, and mirrors the success for ring ouzel breeding at Stanage, insofar as results for both species have bucked the national trend of declining populations.

Consultation is still open for discussion, so if you have any ideas or concerns do let me know at the meeting – or outside of it – and we can get them fed in. What is really encouraging in all these discussions has been the underlying theme of welcoming people to enjoy the Eastern Moors and Burbage, but in a way that is appropriate and sustainable. The plan will reflect and embrace the essential inter-relationship between recreation, cultural heritage and wildlife, and maintain fundamental values about keeping the Eastern Moors and Burbage open and unimpeded wild areas of easy access, accessibility and quiet enjoyment.

At **Longshaw** a major redevelopment is at the planning stage. This will include extending the tea rooms leftwards, as you face them; opening up the courtyard area behind them to create an open visitor space; improvements to the toilets; new access to the kitchen garden; and new arrangements for the estate office and machinery store. During the alterations temporary facilities will be provided in the main car parking area.

There is as yet no progress to report on access to **West Nab**, but PDNPA officers are scheduled to be visiting there before the area meeting, so there may be some update then. Unfortunately anti-social usage,

like raves, has induced a climate of opinion with some people that the more parking spaces that can be blocked off, the better. Bad behaviour costs access – and it's not just climbers' and mountain walkers' behaviour that has this effect. What to do about it? Now there is a challenge to all who enjoy the outdoors.

I have been told, but have not been able to confirm, that at least some of the 'Private Land' signs above Standing Stones have disappeared. Anyone know?

The other big threat to access is **dogs** – so nothing new there, except that there has been a lot of agitation in the press to get public rights of way closed while livestock is in a field crossed by a footpath. Again, there is a lot of sympathy for landowners in this respect as the problem for them is very real, and probably getting worse. Remember that CRow makes it illegal to take a dog on to a grouse moor at any time of year (unless it is on a public right of way, when it has to be under control). Again, it is you who will suffer even though the offending dog (or should that be dog owner) is nothing to do with you.

The year 2026 gets ever closer. This is the cut-off date for resurrecting the dormant status of **Lost Ways** – old public rights of way that have fallen into disuse and disrepair, and have probably all but disappeared on the ground. 'Once a right of way, always a right of way' goes the dictate – but not after 2026 if it is not recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement. Researching old ways, and proving they existed, is a major task, but if you know of any that you feel should be recorded do say so and I can feed your information into the relevant highway authority.

If you are in the habit of using **Derbyshire Dales District Council car parks** be aware that charges are going to rise.

Also, if you want to go to the loo you may find there isn't one any more, and if it is still there you will probably have to pay to use it. Part of the argument here is that more visitors pee in the Peak than local residents, so for local residents it won't be a problem. Over 9,000 people a week use the most popular public conveniences – the ones in Bakewell – so theoretically there is scope to offset the cost of maintaining them. But the electronic monitor which counts how many people go in and out recorded that half a person who entered has never reappeared! The problem for the council is real enough in that they really have suffered huge cuts to their budget, and have to lose another £1.7 million in the next few years.

It is perhaps timely to ask whether our national park? The pressure on it is ever increasing, and you may have seen that planning permission has been granted for a 70-bed hotel at Stoney Middleton (on the site of the business park opposite Garage Buttress), while there are plans for a 1,000-person complex at Unstone, targeted I believe to the American market. It's nice that people come and enjoy national parks, but only at a level or in a way they can sustain.

Meanwhile in our own **Peak District National Park**, a criticism of the draft Management Plan was that cultural heritage had been overlooked. My impression is that the guiding principle is now income generation, and that this looms larger than the statutory purposes of conserving and enjoying the national park's special qualities. Is this the reason for the totally naff direction our own National Park Authority seems to be taking by introducing a tartan

of its own and a mascot in the form of a woolly sheep called Mollie? For me, and I guess many other supporters of the national parks, this is crass dumbing down of a precious heritage that can only lead to sickening those who would be the parks' strongest supporters. Abandon the values which created and sustain the national parks, and you have lost the plot. We support a National Park, not a Theme Park. To quote from the postscript in that splendid book *22 Ideas that Saved the English Countryside*, produced by CPRE this year: 'If our guard is ever allowed to drop we can be sure someone will be making a very persuasive case for building on farmland or making National Parks about business instead of beauty.'

It does not have to be like that. Why not work in genuine partnership with people and organisations who cherish and respect their inheritance rather than view them as an income source for the benefit of the institution of the authority?

Let me finish on a happy, if also sad, note. I represented the BMC at the ceremony where the Lord Lieutenant awarded **Bill Gordon** his British Empire Medal. It was a really happy occasion, and most of the founding members of the Stanage Forum Steering Group were there, including Matthew Croney. Work with the BMC in looking after Stanage and its ring ouzels was acknowledged in the citation too. Sad in that this really is the end of an era as Bill is currently in the throes of moving and will be enjoying his retirement by the end of November or very early December. Fond memories: we wish him all the very best.

Bill and Flo Leaving Do

There will be a leaving do for Bill and Flo Gordon in the form of a bring and share (food and alcohol) gathering at Hathersage Memorial Hall (the Lawrence Room) on Thursday 30 November, any time between 4 and 9 p.m. No leaving presents please, but if you would like to show your appreciation for both of them then there will be a collection for Assist Sheffield on the day. This is an organisation that supports refugees and asylum seekers. There will also be a collection at the area meeting on 22 November, or you can donate online: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/BillandFlo

Below: Bill Gordon. Photo: Adam Long.





Wain Stones. Photo: Austin Knott.

Hill Walking Notes

Peter Judd and Austin Knott

Building on the walk organised earlier in the year, our hill walking representatives, Peter and Austin, supported the Moors for the Future Partnership's BogFest by organising and leading a walk on to Bleaklow's blanket bog on the Saturday of the September festival.

Starting from Old Glossop, eight walkers and one dog were expertly guided towards the trig point and aircraft wreck of B29 Over Exposed via Shelf Benches and James Thorn. This early leg gave opportunity to look at some of the heather brash work designed to reduce the effects of erosion. The chopped heather is transported in polybags by helicopter and distributed by the willing hands of volunteers. The brash also provides heather seeds and a microclimate for them to grow in as well as fungi that support moorland plants

thriving. The roots of the vegetation help to 'knit' together the soil.

But why is the work necessary? The Bleaklow blanket bog, and that on nearby Kinder Scout, has taken nine millennia to form. Globally it's rare, but if you've ever had the opportunity to yomp across the groughs and hags of Bleaklow, Kinder Scout or our other Peak peat-bog terrains you may think it more prevalent.

And you might be right as the UK has almost a sixth of the world's total area. Although a relatively remote environment, the Industrial Revolution brought the two Ps: people and pollution. Neither helped the bogs. In a relatively short period the scarred bare bogs became infamous as their health deteriorated.

This deterioration has had many impacts including greater likelihood of moorland



Visiting the wreck of B29 Over Exposed. Photo: Austin Knott.

fires, more peat run-off into reservoirs and a poorer environment for wildlife. The Moors for the Future project seeks to redress this. Not only through the heather brash work; the group also talked about control of grazing, gully blocking and sphagnum application. In a healthy state the Pennine peat bogs take in carbon from the air, an ever-greater incentive to reduce trends from the last two centuries.

From Higher Shelf Stones the group went off-piste to enjoy the groughs and hags before picking up the Pennine Way. Out of the groughs the views were good but the Kinder plateau was shrouded in cloud. The Wain Stones gave sufficient shelter from the wind for a lunch stop before following Wildboar Grain and being treated to frequent fly-bys of a helicopter undertaking some lifting work, presumably to help the restoration work.

Breaking free of the Pennine Way the group headed towards Cock Hill and the downward trip back to the start and a well-earned pint in Old Glossop.

Over the day the group saw a variety of wildlife, including mountain hares and kestrels, as well as plants typical of peatlands, identifying three heathers, plenty of mosses as well as bilberry, crowberry, cowberry and cloudberry plants.

Undoubtedly there will be more walks looking at the restoration work undertaken by Moors for the Future and hopefully at a more recently funded project in the south-west Peak. If you get chance to participate, take it. The local works are fascinating but the links to global carbon levels are even more significant.



The trig at Higher Shelf Stones. Photo: Austin Knott.

Area Volunteer Hill Walking Reps Annual Report 2017

Peter Judd and Austin Knott

Putting something back: clean-ups and other activities

One of our aims has been to signpost opportunities for hill walking members to give something back to the uplands. In May we linked up with Peak Mountaineering's well established Pick-and-Play public clean-up event. The BMC helped promote the event and in return Peak Mountaineering kindly let us promote the BMC to their participants. Around 100 people cleared a huge amount of rubbish from the hillsides and crags around both Millstone and Lawrencefield. In July, we made sure hill walkers were encouraged to join climbers in taking part in the excellent annual Outside/BMC crag-and-hill clean-up.

We ourselves did our bit with a sweep of both Rushup Edge and Great Ridge as part of this. In early November we encouraged hill walkers to join climbers in

taking part in the laurel and rhododendron clear-out at the Roaches organised by BMC Access and Conservation officer Rob Dyer for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, and an excellent turnout of members (including some hill walkers) did sterling work transforming the hillside behind the Don Whillans hut.

Area hill walks

Another aim was to offer a series of walks that would allow BMC hill walking members to get together and enjoy a walk. Our first Area hill walk of the year was a well-supported wander on to the other Burbage Edge, the one above Buxton to be precise, and on to Axe Edge. We tried an evening walk in early July, on an uncharacteristically miserable evening, when Moors for the Future Partnership staff accompanied a goodly number of BMC

members on to Bleaklow, to show and explain something of their extraordinary work in restoring the moor-top blanket bogs. This was followed in September by a further day walk, from Old Glossop – see page 6.

Other activities

We joined our access rep volunteer colleagues in making contributions to a number of consultation exercises, by bodies managing parts of the Peak District's uplands, on behalf of hill walkers this year. We have also been part of the BMC presence at the Spirit of Kinder event in Edale and were present when a tree was planted by the packhorse bridge over Burbage Brook replacing a long-lost rowan tree that once stood there, done to mark the handover, by Sheffield City Council, of the management of Burbage to the Eastern Moors Partnership.

Next year

We plan to offer more walks plus opportunities to do some practical work again next year. Furthermore, some additional effort will be focused on the BMC's second national Mend our Mountains campaign which will launch to the public next spring. The Peak District National Park has two projects standing to benefit from the campaign this time: repairs to Great Ridge and also to the Cut Gate (Langsett to Upper Derwent) bridleway – the latter in partnership with local mountain bikers who have championed this work for some time. We're also thrilled to be able to announce that Alex Roddie, ultra-lightweight backpacker, adventurous trekker, thoughtful blogger, author and presently online editor for *The Great Outdoors* magazine has agreed to come and speak at our September 2018 area meeting.



Photo: Austin Knott

On the national scene

Hill walking rep Peter Judd is presently chair of the BMC's national Hill Walking Implementation Group. While moving forward with the Strategic Plan for Hill Walking has been hampered to a degree by the financial and organisational challenges the BMC presently faces, some modest progress has been, and continues to be, made. There are plans for a BMC hill walking volunteers' weekend get-together in the New Year to inform, inspire and enthuse our volunteers plus encourage more members to come forward (part of our strategic aim to better support hill walking volunteers). There are also plans for a hill walker focused membership recruitment programme tied in with the forthcoming Mend our Mountains campaign, and finally there are discussions taking place about how the BMC might best seek to influence future government policy where it impacts on our hills and mountains (part of our strategic aim to do more for the upland environment). We hope to make much more progress in the coming year.



Liturgy, Crowden Great Quarry.
Photo: Mark Rankine.

Climbing News & Gossip

Dave Parry

Since my previous missive the clocks have well and truly gone back, the temperatures are dropping, the central heating is on. Adam Long has woken from his summer-long slumber and been coaxed from his cardboard box full of sawdust with the promise of crisp gritstone, a pint of Pedigree and a bag of Jelly Babies. It's gritstone season again. Autumn has already been fruitful for new developments, some or fewer of which I will now relay to you via the the printed word.

First up we go to a problem I tipped rubber-legged Font-8b+-flash-meister Ned Feehally off to earlier this year, and he's now made good on the deal and has left the Buckstone with a new Font 7c+ low start to the sloping shelf problem. Starting spread wide with right hand on the arête, left on the low finger jugs, and in true Ned fashion an improbable-looking left heel by your hand.

Maybe a true sit start will be possible, but for the time being this plugs one of the last obvious gaps on the boulder. Members of the mantelshelf community (and it IS a community) may also want to check out the sit start to Ned's *Mother's Ruin* problem near Mother Cap, as well as a similar new line to the left, expect a similar mantel horrorshow in the 7s.

On a larger scale, strong youth Jim Pope had what anyone would consider a good day at the crag, doing Jerry's *Renegade Master* AND Mark Leach's *Screaming Dream* at Froggatt ground up on the same day. These top-end routes of yesteryear are still high and hard even above a sea of mats; I think this really shows you what the up and coming young climbers are capable of. I doubt anyone has done both routes in the same day before, let alone ground up. Amusingly, if Jim's Twitter post is anything to go by, he didn't actually know the proper name of *The Screaming Dream* when he did it. Somebody buy that kid a BMC guidebook for Christmas. Jim has also added a Font 7c direct to the slope shelf right of *Renegade*, called *Papal Concave*. Great to see

puns remaining at the forefront of problem-naming protocol, where they belong.

No stranger to tenuous name-based wordplay, Mark 'Uptown Top' Rankine reports a Font 7a+ highball line called *Liturgy* at, of all places, Crowden Great Quarry. That's one of those crags where you assume the term 'great' is used in the size rather than quality sense, but I'm happy to be proven wrong if this highball is as good as it looks. There is apparently a circuit of other decent stuff there too. Mark has also added a direct to *For the Good of the Cause* at Curbar, weighing in at E5 or highball Font 7a+ if you can handle the precarious landing. It's near *The Art Of Japan*, as if you need telling.

At a more amenable grade and at the non-legbreaking end of the scale Nige (a.k.a. 'Golden Feet') Kershaw has been busy adding a few decent-looking bits and bobs on the eastern grit. At Higgarr, Nige (if that is his real name) added a few decent-looking things to the small tor on top of the crag, and at the Plantation a few additions which look good, not limited to the left side of *Crozzle Arête*, remarkably overlooked until now, although you will need a few pads to flatten the landing off. Another addition is a 7a traverse on the fabled Blair Witch boulder, which along with the namesake problem being cleaned it's probably a good time to visit before the winter dampness sets in. Details on ukbouldering.com, assuming you can tolerate the new colour scheme long enough to find them. I couldn't so I'm writing this from memory, hence the paucity of details.

Neil 'Old Cheese' Amos and Marc Bellingall have been busy developing new problems on Harland Edge, which is sort of south-east of the Chatsworth estate, out past Rabbit Warren. A choice pick from their work is *Fangjita*, a Font 7a prow. Details on the esoteric bouldering website:

esotericboulderingcompanion.weebly.com
– which incidentally is a treasure trove of

stuff you've probably not heard of in the south-east Peak.

On the lime, Raven Tor's resident man in black Will Smith hasn't let the fact that it's no longer summertime put him off from linking *Weedkiller Traverse* into *Fat Lip*. Reputedly Font 8b+, this is a monster link, with barely a wild wild rest to be had between the two problems. If you like hard right-leg heelhooking then this will be right up your Ali. Will clearly saw a quality line to be had here and I personally think it looks epic, but hopefully it won't be just the two of us who think so. Will has now notched up some big numbers at Raven Tor, including recent ascents of *Keen Roof* and of course *Fat Lip*, so is well on track to sit on his throne as the Prince of the Tor.

Moving to more obvious pop-culture references of a more up-to-date flavour, on the limestone Dom Lee has added a F7c+ line to the right of *Fury Road*, called *Peaky Blinder*. All the noises I'm hearing suggest this is a quality addition. One which didn't quite make it into the last newsletter is Jon Fullwood's traverse on the Upper Circle in Water-cum-Jolly. It starts 12 metres right of *The Inch Test* and works leftwards – does look quite good. Also in WCJ, Kris Clemmow has added a short new F8a+ to Lammergeyer Buttress called *Hard Torque*. Early repeat from Ru Davies at least. Also I gather there has been some development on Moat and Central buttresses, of which I have no details, so use your imagination.

Late breaking news: as I sit here typing this up two days beyond my own deadline, word has reached me that Ned has gone back once again to the *Renegade Master* boulder and dispatched his project – now named *III Behaviour* – which I understand is straight up from the start of *Renegade* with a big move for the lip. Details scarce at this stage ... bound to be a hard one.

Peak Bolt Fund Update

James Jacobs

The Peak Bolt Fund has had a good year in terms of bolting and fundraising. New faces have joined the old guard and all are doing their best to get out there and update some of the lower-quality bolts around the Peak. This means that many popular routes now have new bolts and improved lower-offs, often sporting maillon-ring combinations to reduce wear on the bolts. A number of neglected routes have also been brought back to life with new bolts and a good clean.

This work is important as there's a real mixed bag of bolts in the Peak. Many are made with substandard materials which have rusted over the years. Home-made bolts have also been used in the past. Lots are as old as the routes they protect.

The PBF exists to rebolt existing routes. We do not retro-bolt trad routes or fund the bolting of new routes. However we do have a stock of bolts that can be purchased at cost for anyone wanting to bolt a new route. We use single-piece 8-millimetre stainless steel bolts glued in with epoxy resin. Placed well and used properly these bolts should last for a long time.

To give an idea of the cost of rebolting a route, a bolt costs roughly £3, a belay bolt is £4, and it's £15 for a tube of glue – this easily adds up to over £50 even for a short Peak route. Added to this is the hundreds of pounds worth of kit – drill, drill bits, glue gun, brushes, angle grinder, batteries, etc. – that needs purchasing, maintaining and replacing over time.

The PBF has taken a more active approach to fundraising this year. Spearheaded by Seb Grieve cajoling people at the crag, and with some active posting on our Facebook page,



Bolts, old and new.
Photos: Kristian Clemmow.

we've managed to raise over £1,000. We've used this money to purchase £900 of new bolts, glue and a replacement battery for the angle grinder, and to replace various bits that broke over the year (mainly drill bits). Without the money donated this year the fund would really be struggling, so thanks to everyone who has donated; you know who you are. We still need more donations to continue the rebolting so please help if you can: google Peak Bolt Fund or empty your pockets next time you see Seb at the crag.

Recent work

Down Chee Dale some of the more popular routes at the Cornice have been re-equipped; *42, Love Amongst the Butterflies* (done by the original bolter, Seb Grieve, who reportedly had to ab in as a high river made the normal approaches impossible for

all but ducks!), *Beelzebub*, *Armistice Day* (where the awkward bolts have been repositioned) and *Egyptian Bizarre*, which has been brought out of retirement and has already become a neo-classic.

If the queues at the Cornice are getting you down, why not head round the corner to Rhubarb Buttress which plays host to a trio of refreshed routes: *Turbo-charged Monster Mouse*, *Fat Ginger Cat* and – the standout classic – *The Day of the Long Knives*. A real #hiddengem!

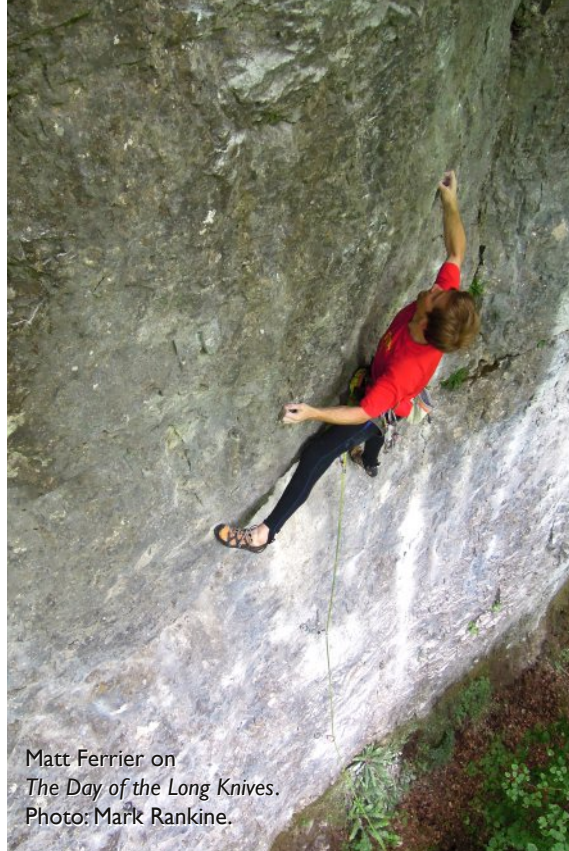
Up river at Embankment, *Beef it*, *Breamtime* and *Fishing without a Licence* have new bolts and *Beef It* even has a new finish – *Superbeef*, F7b+ (Jamie Edwards, 2017). At the Nook there are new bolts on *A Bit of Nookie* and *The Storm*.

Crossing over the river and going further upstream, one old and one new route: *A Man Called Horse*, F7b+, and *My Lovely Horse*, F7c (Mark Rankine, 2017), at Moving Buttress have also received the treatment.

Down Water-cum-Jolly, Moat Buttress continues to develop into a very good crag with an impressive list of routes being overhauled this year: *Nude Moatorcycle Girl*, *Out of the Shadows*, *Drawbridge Down*, *Over the Moorhens*, *Two Sheep to Leicester*, *Agent Provocateur* and *The Lady of the Lake*. The latter was originally bolted after the lake drained when the dam burst back in 1988. It now starts above the water, and, for those without access to a rubber dinghy, the start can be reached by a line of aid bolts. The aid line has been freed by Chris Plant creating a route at 7a+ called *Watery Bint* or *Watery Tart* depending on how accurate you want your Monty Python references to be.

On Central Buttress, *Belladonna* has been rebolted, seems to have lost a hold, and now climbs at around 7b+.

Finally, *Little Plum* at Stoney – once the



Matt Ferrier on
The Day of the Long Knives.
Photo: Mark Rankine.

hardest route in The Peak – has new bolts and lower-offs.

The BMC has also done a great job crowdfunding and organising rebolting at Horseshoe Quarry. This was a task too daunting for anyone at the PBF and would have taken us years to complete, during which time the rest of the Peak would have been neglected.

Rebolting routes is a tiring and thankless task, so I'd like to take this opportunity to say a BIG thanks for all the bolting done by the volunteers this year. In addition, I want to thank Dan Middleton for support from the BMC and for running bolting workshops.

Find out more:

thepeakboltfund@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/thepeakboltfund

www.thepeakboltfund.blogspot.co.uk



Photo: www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

Beyond the Bird Ban: the Peregrine

Luke Barley, National Trust

There can't be many bird species more familiar to climbers in this area than the peregrine falcon. Even if you've never seen one, you'll be familiar with the name as – along with ring ouzels and ravens – it's one of the typical birds for which the BMC works with conservation organisations and landowners in the Peak District to arrange climbing restrictions, or 'bird bans'.

Peregrines have evolved to nest on cliffs in response to the threat of predation from foxes and other terrestrial mammals, and also potentially to provide a better lookout in readiness for hunting trips, so there are places in the Peak where climbers cross paths with them.

If you've seen a peregrine, particularly up close, it's likely that it was a memorable encounter. I had a particularly fortunate

run-in at the top of a crag in the south-east, where a male bird sailed slowly back and forth along the cliff edge a couple of metres below me – it remains one of my most powerful wildlife experiences. They're big, muscular falcons with battleship-grey upper parts, a strongly barred chest and underwings, and the distinctive black moustache. Their fierce beak and feet are picked out in rich yellow, as well as a ring round each jet-black eye; the heavy weaponry and targeting system marked out in warning hues. When they're cruising along, gliding with barely a movement of their wings, they carry a serious air of menace and purpose (in contrast to what strikes me as an incongruously fussy, panicked flap when they need to gain height). Perhaps it's the anticipation as you know what might follow – this gentle, still ride along the wind can turn in an instant

into the most heart-in-mouth moment of drama in the bird world, the famous 'stoop'. It's a well-known pub fact that the hunting dive makes the peregrine the fastest animal on the planet, reaching speeds of up to 200 miles per hour as it tucks its wings and zeroes in on its prey.

It's a rare treat to see the full stoop, although not an altogether positive experience as the poor pigeon on the receiving end explodes in a giant puff of feathers, its neck broken instantly as the falcon smashes into it feet first. But if seeing a full hunt is uncommon, it is sometimes possible to get a glimpse of the spectacle with only a few minutes' observation; they often feign quick little forays towards jackdaws, crows and other larger birds that aren't as intimidated by them and which they'd rarely hunt, but with whom they want to chuck their weight around, controlling the airspace.

It's hard to believe that such consummate hunters need protecting, but sadly there are only 1,500 breeding pairs in the UK thanks to a relatively recent history of human influence. Peregrines were shot systematically in the Second World War as they posed a threat to pigeons carrying vital military messages, and shooting continues where gamekeepers view them as a threat to farmed game birds. In the 1960s, peregrines were one of the key species associated with an increased understanding of the effects of pesticides like DDT, which was found to critically weaken peregrine eggs, as well as directly poisoning adult birds (as discussed in conservation classic *Silent Spring* and which led to the banning of DDT). Egg collectors have also posed a typical historic threat to the species, and almost unbelievably continue to do so. More recently, peregrine eggs are also at risk of theft in order to be incubated and the

birds sold to the booming falconry market of the Gulf States ('*a peregrine for a prince*' goes the fifteenth-century verse better known for the line '*a kestrel for a knave*').

These threats to peregrines are an ongoing danger even here in the Peak District, where the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust works with the Peak District Raptor Monitoring Group, the South Peak Raptor Study Group, local Police and landowners like the National Trust to protect our peregrines from persecution and disturbance. Here in the White Peak, we're fortunate to have at least five spots on National Trust land where peregrines commonly nest; we keep them fairly low key to avoid unwanted attention, but a couple of these are on crags that see some climbing and where we work with the BMC to restrict access while the birds are nesting. As discussed in previous articles about ring ouzels, climbing restrictions are generally really successful in the Peak, so a big thank you is due to everyone who respects them. Climbers are also well-placed to help spot persecution or other detrimental behaviour, so if you see anything suspicious near a peregrine nest, do please let us know immediately.

The flipside of the restrictions is that climbers are also perfectly placed for privileged close-up sightings of these magnificent birds, and many people recount tales of awe-inspiring encounters while halfway up Peak District crags. Keep an eye open around White Peak crags and quarries in particular for one of our most charismatic predators, drawing attention to its perch with its insistent, repetitive screech, or silently patrolling its turf along the dales, a constant menace.

If you would like more information about the National Trust's work in the Peak District, please email:
peakdistrict@nationaltrust.org.uk

Peak Area Meetings

2017

22 November, 6.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford

2018

31 January, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford

4 April, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford

23 May, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford

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

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

Forthcoming Events

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

**Ape Index: Wideboyz – A Night Of Crack
Abbeylea Picture House, Sheffield
1 December, 6.30 p.m.**

Ape Index throws its doors open once again to bring you the Wideboyz for a night of wide adventure and offwidth humour. Niall Grimes will squeeze juicy stories from Pete Whittaker and Tom Randall about their life and climbs including life before the Wideboyz, doing the world's hardest roof crack and what really goes on in tom's cellar.

Find out more:

www.facebook.com/ApeIndexNights

Nicky Spinks

6 December, 7.30 p.m.

Buxton Arts Centre

Legendary hill runner Nicky Spinks has set numerous world records and won some of the most gruelling ultra-marathons in Europe. She's the next speaker at the Buxton Adventure Festival.

Find out more:

www.buxtonadventurefestival.co.uk

BMC Peak Area Contacts

Peak Area Chair: Rob Greenwood.
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Peak Area Hill Walking Reps:
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Austin Knott.
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Peak Area Newsletter Editorial:
Dave Parry and John Coefield.
peakarea@gmail.com

Next meeting: Wednesday 22 November, 6.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE