

MID LANCASHIRE AREA

NEWS – MID 2016



Members Day

This was held in mid-February at the premises of the Bowland Mountain Rescue in Garstang. In the morning members had the choice of either attending a training session organised by the Mountain Rescue or a walk in the Garstang Area. This was enjoyed by the members who attended the event.

In the afternoon the AGM was held, which mainly contained the usual items including a short address from Jeremy Kenyon who is a member of the Board of Trustees. Kevin Matthews stated that he would like this to be his last year as the Chair of the Area.

Tony Clarkson resigned from Area type matters after over four decades of service to the Area. I first met Tony in the mid 70s on the Rail Ramblers when I realised that he did a lot of work for the Ramblers. At various times he was the Area Secretary, Area Chairman and Area Membership Secretary. For many years he wrote and published the Area Newsletter. For over 40 years he compiled the Area Walks Programme, which was for the most part done manually, using submissions supplied by the groups, frequently supplied using different formats. Tony was also for a period the Chairman of South Ribble Group.

Pathwatch

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/big-pathwatch.aspx>

This ran in 2015 from July to December, during which period users were requested to adopt grid squares, then walk the footpaths in that square and then report on what they had observed. The items to be noted included both good aspects (e.g. woodland, views) and the negative aspects (e.g. missing waymarks, broken stiles).

The summary pages of Pathwatch indicate that on the 11th Jan that in Mid Lancs Area 654 out of 1,425 grid squares had been completed – 46%. For Pathwatch as a whole 48% (England) of grid squares have been completed. A report is expected to be published soon by staff based at Central Office about Pathwatch.

In early Jan the Pathwatch project was closed, but the web site remains open for further updates. Plans are being made to enhance this web site so that comments can be included. For example, a photograph of a wobbly stile can look as though the stile is normal, so a comment of explanation is needed.

Ideally footpath reports in Lancashire should go via the group footpath secretary so that a log number can be inserted. The advantage of this is that the RA will then receive updates as to the progress being made or not as the case may be. It is acknowledged that this can perhaps be a bureaucratic process.

Reports made through Pathwatch web site ('Find and Share' option) have the advantage of being quick and simple to do. Another advantage is that Lancashire County Council will then receive the report including a photograph, for a good photograph can save an initial site visit. The disadvantage of reports made through Pathwatch is that the Ramblers will receive no feedback for Pathwatch reports.

The disadvantages of making reports through Lancashire County Councils web sites are that it is not easy to associate a photograph and that the Ramblers will have no record of the report.

The above was edited by David Kelly. Any items for inclusion in the next Area News should be with me by the end of July.

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Spitlers Edge

About twenty years ago the northern section of Spitlers Edge was flagged, which was partly funded for using EU monies. These flags have stood the test of time, with only a small number sinking into the mud. The laying of flag stones is expensive, but it allows the vegetation to recover and the walkers benefit by being able to avoid the mud.

The expectation at that time was that the southern section of Spitlers Edge would be progressed the following year, but this was a time when the EU was being enlarged, which meant that the grant system was changed, with the result that this source of funding was no longer available for projects in Northern England.

Applications were made to several potential sources of funds were made over the subsequent years, but they did not seem to tick the right boxes. A now retired Lancashire County Council Ranger estimated a few years ago that to improve the southern section of Spitlers Edge and to correct the few flag stones that are sinking on the northern section would cost just over £100k.

Recently a grant from the Lancashire Environmental Fund plus some money from United Utilities have allowed for some work to be done, but officially no figure for the money now being spent has been stated, but is understood to be significantly less than the figure previously quoted.

The normal wisdom is that on deep peat that flag stones are laid, whilst on shallow peat soil inversion techniques are to be used. The latter has the considerable advantage of being relatively cheap to do. Some flag stones have been provided, which has allowed for part of the southern section of Spitlers Edge to be flagged (photograph below), which will no doubt give decades of good service. On other parts of the path soil inversion methods are to be used. Only time will tell if this was a good decision or not.

This work was originally scheduled to be completed by March, but the effects of the wet winter weather means that the work is not now expected to be completed till May. A letter will then be sent expressing thanks for the work that has been done. No money was available to make repairs on the northern section of Spitlers Edge.

