



Peak Area Newsletter

Issue 17

April 2012

The next Peak Area meeting is on Wednesday, 18 April, starting at 19:30, at the Maynard, Main Road, Grindleford, Derbyshire S32 2HE. This meeting looks set to be very interesting, with the main agenda item being a discussion about the draft bolt policy for inclusion in the new BMC Limestone Guidebook. Based on the Gower SE Wales policy, it anticipates that crag-specific policies will be stated and that related matters will be covered in the Guides; History, Access/conservation, Peak Bolt Fund, etc. There will also be an update on Stanage and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust plans for the Roaches. Dave Turnbull, Chief Executive and Cath Flitcroft, in charge of all things to do with policy, will be attending from the BMC office, so please come armed with your questions. Finally there will be an illustrated lecture (the photos are amazing) by Dave Turnbull on

'Himalaya Extreme.... for Beginners.'

Being an account of the first ascent of Gojunga (6310m), Nepal, October 2011, with Mick Fowler. As always it's all free and includes butties and chips.

The Sec speaks

By Lynn Robinson



The February meeting was an epic which started with an informative Question and Answer session with Danny Udall from the Eastern Moors Partnership and Jon Stewart from The National

Trust. The detail can be found in the notes from the meeting, or on the BMC website. The major event for many was an announcement about the BMC George Band Award. Bestowed annually, now in its second year, it is awarded to people who have given exceptional voluntary contributions working for and on behalf of the BMC. The first two recipients were Neville McMillan and George Steele. This year's Award has been given to Dave Bishop and Henry Folkard in recognition for their exceptional access work, in particular, in relation to the Peak Park Asset Review.

Congratulations to Henry Folkard and Dave Bishop - BMC George Band Award recipients, 2012.



Henry and Dave

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 the next edition is Wednesday 16 May



I asked them both how and why they got involved in volunteering work and was 'blown-away' with their responses and thought it was worth sharing.

First, Henry:

I suppose the simple answer is chance and naivety. A work based move took me from Birmingham, where I lived, to Sheffield in 1982. When early retirement was offered in 1995 I was pleased to grab the chance and considered moving house. The prospect of endless suburban streets in Sheffield drove me to distraction and I gravitated towards the Peak which I already knew well as my parents had lived in Longnor, and I had climbed there regularly since the 1960s. A green lane runs beside the home I moved to in Grindlow, and on it, most mornings, a vaguely familiar face from days on Peakland crags, was seen to pass by with his two dogs. We got into conversation. Mike Hunt, it is all your fault, and that really is the beginning and end of my 'how and why'. Who would have thought that chance encounter would have led to an agenda of Foot and Mouth, the Matlock to Buxton Railway, acquisition of Horseshoe, Longstone Edge and Backdale, the A628 campaign, the Stanage Forum and ring ouzels, BMC's Access, Conservation & Environment Group, Access and Conservation Trust, Land Management Group, the National Parks Asset Review, the Alport Project, the Kinder and High Peak Advisory Group, the Peak Local Access Forum, the Torch Trophy Trust Award, shaking hands with HRH the Prince of Wales and telling him a bit more than he already knew about the BMC and much more besides.

Dave:

Many hundreds of years ago, or so it seems now, and well into the pre-bouldering mat and chalk era, I was working at a College and my department head gave me the job of writing and organising an outdoor residential for management studies students to be based in the Buxton area. Not wanting to use any crags I hit upon the idea of using the forest at the back of Windgather, but the only problem there was that the Forestry Commission wanted to charge for the use. Being fundamentally opposed to paying for access as an individual and knowing that the BMC was also opposed, I rang Kath Pyke in Manchester, as she was the access officer at the time, to find out

what their attitude was to organisations paying for access. When we had sorted that out and had a chat about climbing in the Peak, she asked me what I knew about Baldstone. I told her that I knew it pretty well and used it, Gib Torr, and Newstones frequently for bouldering. Then she asked me if I would deal with an access problem there, as the owners, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (SWT), were intending to ban climbing permanently on account of ring ouzels. So, unable to resist, I said that I would.

Following that conversation I arranged a site meeting with SWT for the next week. That was when I met Helen Dale their Reserves Manager for the first time. We have since, many years later, been in regular contact over the Roaches transfer and I can assure members that SWT now have a positive pro-access policy so no need to get concerned over the Roaches, Gib Torr or Baldstone. Helen told me that morning, as we waited just beyond Newstones crag, that she had invited along her specialist bird warden. My heart sank. All I knew about feathered birds at that time was that they laid eggs, flew, and that gangs of men in flat hats and dark green clothes shot at them on the moors. None of this seemed to be particularly helpful to the issue of the day. However, before panic fully set in, the dreaded 'birdman' appeared along the track leading to Baldstone and all I could see as he approached was a giant pair of binoculars hanging around his neck and a determined look on his face; but as he got closer, bingo! I couldn't believe my eyes, the 'birdman' was none other than an old climbing partner of mine from the early 70's in the North Staffs Mountaineering Club. We hadn't spoken since those days and we recognised each other almost at the same time. Never mind the ring ouzels, it was 'Long-time no see', 'Are you still climbing?', 'Have you seen X or Y recently?', 'Remember that day at Tremadog?' and so on, entertaining for us but no doubt boring for Helen. Eventually we got around to the ring ouzels and decided that as they were nesting under a water trough by a public footpath and the nearest part of the crag was 75 yards away (pre metric days) then banning climbing was not at all useful or relevant. We agreed a new access route from Gib Torr to Baldstone and that was that, job done. Later when I phoned Kath she was as delighted as I was relieved,



and she asked me if I would be interested in doing more access work. Well I thought, if it's as easy as that and it gets me out onto the crags to meet old friends, and solve an access problem, why not? So I agreed to go to the next Peak meeting and stand for access rep for western grit.

OK, the truth is, it hasn't always been fun, just mostly. I've been told to 'eff off' on a couple of occasions, threatened with a Rottweiler, but hey! If that's all in 20+ years, and it is Staffordshire don't forget, then it can't be bad. The job has brought me into contact with landowners (mostly friendly), conservation organisations, local government, potential bidders for the Roaches, and National Park officials. I've met some great people in and around the BMC, in the national Access Conservation and Environment Group (ACEG) in the Access and Conservation Trust (ACT), in Peak meetings, in Whillans' Hut work, and in guidebook work, and it has added a whole new dimension to my enjoyment of climbing. Oh! and we've won a few access battles as well in the time. It's rare now to be out climbing and not meet someone I know. It's a fantastic sport and how I got into climbing and nearly didn't survive day one, is another story for another day. I have had enormous fun doing the job and it seems a bit unreal to be getting an award for something that has been so personally gratifying, but thanks anyway it's much appreciated.

The future of climbing access is definitely going to be about achieving a balance with conservation and the environment, so if you fancy doing your bit, then take a chance and volunteer. So in answer to your question Lynn, why did I get involved? In a word, serendipity and self-interest (two words!). Why have I stayed involved? It's all in the story.

Now back to the Sec..

If it wasn't for the dedication and hard work on access issues, then I'm sure we wouldn't have the access to climbing and walking in The Peak that we all take for granted. We are all forever indebted for everything Dave and Henry have done – an Award well deserved. And thanks to Dan Lane for taking the photographs.

Thank you to all those who looked us up on Facebook. As of 8 April, we've reached 84 people who 'liked' the page (up from 75 in January). Go on, you know you want to – just visit <http://www.facebook.com/bmcpeakarea>



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.

Access Notes

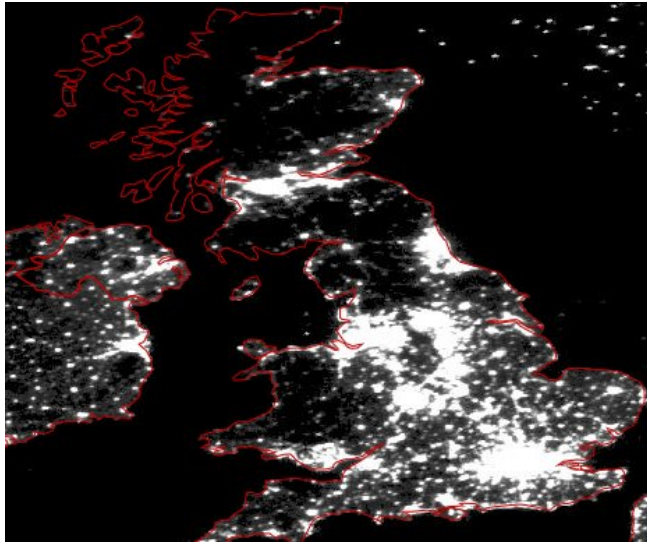
By Henry Folkard

Dateline: 31 March 2012



Sometimes change is sudden, and sometimes it seems to creep up through events which may not immediately cross our horizon. The backdrop to these notes is the way changes affecting the great outdoors, where we walk and climb, can affect freedoms we may take for granted, and practices accepted within the activity are perhaps presumed to be also acceptable outside it.

There is a picture taken from high above the earth on a clear night which shows England, Scotland and Wales (plus the odd oil rig) illuminated. It horrifies. Somewhere in the middle of this picture is a little dark oval patch surrounded by light. It is the Peak District National Park. In a sense this encapsulates all that needs to be said about access: the open county is under huge pressure from all around, and because it is varied, splendid and accessible open space everyone seeking to escape our urban society wants to be able to do their own thing in it. Again, because it is on the cusp of north south plus east west axes it



[I think Henry meant one like this, from [NOAA](#). Editor]

is self evident it also on the cusp of natural limits of the range of many plant species, and this gives it a very special species diversity. Where else can you find, in the same field, both northern and southern sub species of the mountain pansy, *viola lutea*?

What is less apparent from the night time overview is the geological contrast within the dark oval and the hugely rich cultural and archaeological heritage. It is where people live and make their livings too. It has its own communities. Lots of user and special interest groups all want to be able to have primacy of the same spaces to indulge and protect their own priorities. You would not expect it to be otherwise. As conflicting pressures grow the task of protecting and retaining precious freedoms gets ever more complex. This is why something that happened 80 years ago, here in the Peak, is as important and relevant now to our future as it was to the lives and values of those who fought for natural justice all those years ago. The mantra 'you can never take access for granted' lives on.

First off in the access notes this month therefore is an event both forward looking and celebratory **Kinder 80 Trespass to Treasure**. The launch event (by invitation but no one will be turned away) is at the Moorland Centre Edale at 10:00 80 years to the day of the actual trespass on 24 April. If you do decide to gatecrash please come by public transport

or on foot as parking will be a costly nightmare. Guest speakers will include Mike Harding as Master of Ceremonies, Fiona Reynolds, Kate Ashbrook and Stuart Maconie. Details of the full programme of talks, walks and presentations spread between Sheffield, Manchester, the Hope Valley and Kinder itself are on www.kindertrespass.com

What is happening to **North Lees**? That's the popular end of Stanage and Secret Stanage as far as the Long Causeway plus the open moorland behind. It includes land to the west around Sheepwash Bank and North Lees Hall. Anything written to meet publication deadlines for the Newsletter will need an update at the meeting. Broadly speaking the position is that we do not know what the position is. It was anticipated, and indeed publicly announced, that as the Peak District National Park Authority's Asset Review turned to consider its North Lees estate, expressions of interest from like minded organisations which might wish to take over management or ownership of the estate would be sought, and the Authority would ensure its objectives were delivered through them. Policy now is that the Authority retaining ownership of the estate itself remains an option for them. On the one hand there appears to be the view that with the very significant projected cut backs to its budget there really is no way the Authority can hope to meet the cost of retaining the estate and look after it properly, whilst on the other there is the sense that if the Authority develops the potential commercial capital of the estate they can not only keep it, but run it at a profit. Quite what that might involve can be in part imagined, but has not been spelt out.

At a meeting on 23 March the Authority's Audit, Resource and Performance Committee voted for a process which was called 'Gateway', which means that at various stages in it the Committee would decide whether or not to progress to the next stage. BMC Vice President Ed Douglas went along to the meeting with access reps Adam Long, Simon Jacques and myself when the BMC expressed its concern that in the paper before the Committee pursuit of the commercial option appeared not to be contextualised by consideration of the twin statutory purposes of the National Park and the first eleven of its twelve



Corporate Objectives. The BMC, and other speakers, expressed concern too that the Stanage Forum seemed to have been marginalised, and urged that there should be absolute transparency in matters of process. A further point regarding process was that it might allow for the Authority to capture the intellectual property of like minded organisations' proposals without revealing any of their own. A meeting of the Stanage Forum Steering Group has subsequently been called and an update will be given at the Area Meeting.

Local concern about Stanage is not, of course, just local: it is national and international. And for many that concern extends to the general tenor of Government policy as it affects the countryside through planning and other regulation, the impact of the Localism agenda, of the Red Tape Challenge, the Big Society and overall policy on publicly owned assets like forestry – and how one values them.

All is going well on the **Eastern Moors**. The tree felling work Danny Udall spoke about at the last Area Meeting has started under Curbar, very ably abetted by the Peak Climbing Club, to whom many thanks. Phase 2, which will continue the work under Froggatt, is scheduled for the back end of the year. There was extensive discussion at a recent Stakeholder Forum about progress so far and what is planned over the summer. We are likely to see concessionary routes opened up for horse riders and mountain bikers sooner rather than later, and you may just find a pay and display machine appears at the Robin Hood parking area – though of course if you belong to RSPB or National Trust free parking comes as a membership benefit. Leash Fen is a key area for environmentalists, and good progress is being made on re-wetting there, and indeed on parts of Big Moors. Work has also begun on management of the intense growth of *molinia* – the tussocky moor grass – on Stoke Flat. The delicate issue of what constitutes commercial activity was also discussed, a matter that may be of acute interest to anyone who runs climbing courses or instructs. Whilst there may be more to follow on this there are no proposals at the moment to disturb the status quo. And we did get agreement that if moorland areas have to be closed because of exceptional fire risk, climbing edges like



Curbar - tree felling {by S Jacques}

Curbar and Froggatt which are accessed by a public right of way, will remain open.

There is plenty more going on in the Dark Peak too. Good news to start with: the **Nature Improvement Area (NIA)** for the Dark Peak has won funding of around £771k for a variety of projects from Longdendale to Chatsworth. The partners are RSPB, NT, BMC, United Utilities, Moors for the Future, PDNPA, Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Wildlife Trust. The BMC's specific role will relate to access provision. Louise Hawson will be taking the lead for the BMC, with myself in support.

Next come two public consultations, one by the National Trust and one by the Sheffield Moors Partnership. BMC Peak Access Reps have attended both consultations. The National Trust's, **Your Moors, Your Ideas**, relates to the land they own in the Dark Peak – principally Kinder, Bleaklow, Alport, Upper Derwent and Longshaw. Many of the farming tenancies and shooting rights they lease are due for renewal, and the Trust is engaging in a widespread consultation with everyone who has an interest to inform their decisions on how best to manage this huge landholding. Such was Octavia Hill's vision that access is fundamental to their reason for owning the land. Those of us who attended reckoned we had never seen so many gamekeepers in the same place before. You can comment on line if you have not already done so www.high-peak-moors.co.uk. Let's put it a bit stronger than that. If you have not already commented you very definitely should because it will



affect your future enjoyment of these wonderful places, and your children's too.

The **Sheffield Moors Partnership** is a partnership of owners of land between Wyming Brook and Eastern Moors – at least that is a rough definition. For each parcel of land in this area the public sector or charitable trust owners / managers will have their own plans. The purpose of the partnership between them is to seek to agree common overarching strategic objectives for biodiversity, access and cultural heritage since in the natural environment boundaries between them are not evident.

Reuben has retreated to Arran for another season, but not before he got the latest little local difficulty at **Rowtor Rocks** calmed, with really constructive help from the local National Park Ranger. The situation there does however remain delicate and might well flare up again at any time. Whilst it does not seem apparent to us that bouldering there has an adverse affect on one local resident's chickens, the prospect of them being disturbed (as she perceives it) is of very real concern to her, and she is more than ready to draw these concerns to the attention of the landowner – who also owns Cratcliffe Tor. So if you are going to Rowtor, it is very much better if you can go in small groups only – and try somewhere else if its already crowded when you get there - make as little noise as possible and pick up any litter that people who are not climbers have left. We believe his relationship with the local community is a matter of some concern to the landowner, and the actual rights and wrongs of the situation will not necessarily be what will decide the future of concessionary access. Watch what you say too, for the lady of the chickens keeps a close eye on UKC and other web sites, including the BMC's RAD database (something I confess to never having found myself).

Warning over moorland fire risk

Signs warning to take extra care to prevent fires have gone up in the Peak District. Rangers are mounting extra patrols but want the public to also be on the lookout for fires and to ring 999 immediately if they spot any. Moorland fires undo years of hard work in managing these environments. Most fires are caused by carelessness, but some are probably deliberate. If you see someone acting suspiciously on the moors, report it to the police.

So to something that nearly was, and to which the BMC lent its support, in **Longdendale**. The National Grid power cables which keep Manchester alight run through one of the old Victorian Woodhead tunnels, to emerge at the Tintwistle end on a set of gigantic pylons. With the re-routing of the cables through one of the newer tunnels the proposal was to underground them along the line of the old railway track and do away with the pylons altogether to the great benefit of the landscape, but greatly to the chagrin of a group dedicated to their eternal protection. However, the BMC had no sooner given its support to Friends of the Peak, who were campaigning on the proposal, than it was put on hold till we do not know when. Let's hope it resurrects itself, and soon.

On the limestone the main focus of interest has been **Water cum Jolly**. Since many of the routes there were put up a lot has changed regarding ethic – chalk, bolts – environmental protection legislation and land ownership. Also the area has waned in terms of its popularity with climbers and many long established routes are overgrown. Reclaiming them looks to new owners like new development, and by and large they very much like the crags to be vegetated: the more vegetation the better. They bought the land expressly so they could achieve that ambition. After one or two incidents Kristin Clemmow, Alan James, Rob Dyer and I, backed up by Neil Foster, took a walk along the concessionary riverside path with representatives of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and the Water Bailiff. The Wildlife Trust regards this as a quiet area and really do not want any climbing at all to take place, nor does the Water Bailiff. We were however able to agree access to key areas like Jackdaw Point, the Inch Test and Ping and Pong and permitted access routes are now indicated by posts beside the river path. These will have both BMC (eventually) and DWT roundels on them. This is a very sensitive situation indeed, and even a minimum of injudicious activity can easily cost us all access. It



is in a sense crunch time when subtle changes in ownership and legislation which were largely unremarked at the time have made themselves felt on land where we perceive the crags to be ours to play on and the routes the preserve of the first ascensionist but where we have absolutely no right of access.

Upstream near the Cornice in **Chee Dale** a further section of the boardwalk that was installed last year will go in on 17 April. Last year's work was a significant success for all users, with ground re-vegetating quicker than had been expected. Once again the BMC's ACT fund is supporting this work.

The Public Inquiry into the refusal by High Peak Borough Council to grant planning permission for an industrial development in **Staden** (Cowdale) Quarry has now been set for Tuesday 19 June at the Palace Hotel, Palace Road, Buxton. It starts at 10:00. The BMC has written to the Planning Inspectorate but does not expect to be represented at the Inquiry.

On the quarrying front there are new developments on **Stanton Moor**, though details are not yet in the public domain. On **Longstone Edge** ownership of mineral rights and land ownership has changed. Whilst the Save Longstone Edge Group is actively engaged in dialogue with new owners, and with the Planning Authority, there remains a fair degree of uncertainty as to what the future holds in this long running campaign. With that uncertainty goes renewed concern. The new owners of Cavendish Mill are expected to restart fluorspar operations in the summer. Excavations will start at Tearsall, and in Mill Dam Mine.

By the time you read this **three work meets** will have taken place, two at Horseshoe courtesy of Sheffield University students (in unspeakably vile weather) and Friends of the Peak and one at Curbar, courtesy of Peak Climbing Club who were able to access some of the crag bound trees the Eastern Moors partnership teams had been unable to reach. Thanks too to Clare for looking after the CAN UK team who did some tricky tree clearance work at Aldery.

So to the final event in the National Park's celebration of its 60th anniversary year, when a number of volunteer Rangers were invited to meet HRH the Prince of Wales at Haddon Hall, courtesy of Lord Edward Manners. The National Park was kind enough to invite representatives of other organisations whose volunteers are active in the National Park, and the BMC was among those organisations so honoured. Prince Charles was interested to hear about the work of the BMC, of which he was already to an extent aware, and my conversation with him extended to explore a common interest in the genus *Helleborus*.

It has been a busy year for access reps so far, and all of us have been under pressure – some because they have to earn a living and some because its good to get a life outside BMC work. It's not a job one can pick up on a casual basis because it relies on understanding who does what in the National Park, and how they do it. That takes some getting into, and, given the sometimes difficult interface between different voluntary and statutory bodies, can be full of pitfalls. We have also been at the sharp end of trying to evolve policies which will affect BMC members well into the future. One thing that is really important for us is hearing your comments and views at Area Meetings. What you say really does make a difference. See you there.

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 in the BMC Members Handbook and on the [BMC web site](#). Access reps are 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).





No Shortcuts



by Steven Lindop
Estate Team Supervisor



The remote Alport valley set within the Dark Peak area of the Peak District National Park is an exceptional scenic landscape which includes one of the biggest natural landslips in the country, Alport Castles. Around sixty species of birds can be found here including Skylark, Spotted Flycatcher and Reed Bunting. The valley is rich in invertebrate life and is internationally important for fungi growth; conifer plantations were introduced to the valley between 1930 and 1980.

An important partnership between the National Trust and the Forestry Commission commenced in 2002 with steerage from the Alport Advisory Group; consisting of other interested organisations and the local community with the aim to achieve favourable condition of habitats.

One of the commitments of the National Trust was the complete restoration of all the major dry stone walls within the valley. Dry stone walls are one of our main historic cultural heritages spreading across northern England for hundreds of miles. They are the backbone of the countryside and provide a mosaic patchwork quilt spreading across the varied landscapes.

Building of dry stone walls was believed to have started in the 16th Century; the National Trust has records which confirm some of the dry stone walls in the Alport date from the 1630's. These are the earliest recorded dry stone walls on our land in the Peak District and are now an important archaeological feature of our past.

The National Trusts Estate Team consists of five estate workers, whose work tasks consist not just dry stone walling, but stock fencing, hedge laying,

footpath construction, chainsaw work and a wide range of moorland conservation work.

Starting in 2002 we have spent one to three months each year up to early 2012 rebuilding 16 dry stone walls which totalled 1,486 metres in length.

Each dry stone wall is built approximately 1.40 metres high. Each square metre of the wall consists of 1 tonne of stone. This means that the 1,486 metres of wall has required 2080 tonnes of stone to be taken down and rebuilt, which has taken around 300 days and approximately 9,000 man hours to complete the project. The walling has been done in all conditions, including wonderful warm summer days, driving rain, and freezing cold days with snow on the ground, where each stone has had to be forced out of the solid earth with pick axes.

The walls are still very important for the modern farmer by providing strong boundaries that contain stock in fields. They provide valuable shelter from severe weather conditions and also allow ewes to give birth with protection from the elements vital in a lamb's first few hours. It has been a memorable, enjoyable and immensely satisfying achievement to contribute to the restoration of these valuable historical features.

We are running Dry Stone Walling taster sessions at Longshaw and Ilam Park in May, June and September. Visit www.peakdistrict.nationaltrust.org.uk/whats-on for further details.

BMC Peak Area Contacts:

Peak Area Chair, Neil Foster:
neil.foster@bmcvolunteers.org.uk
Secretary Lynn Robinson:
lynn.robinson@bmcvolunteers.org.uk
Peak Area Reps (your voice on the BMC National Council): Rick Gibbon & Neil Foster
<http://community.thebmc.co.uk>
Newsletter Editors (articles, comments, threats, etc):
peakarea@gmail.com
Access Reps Co-ordinator, Henry Folkard:
henry.folkard@bmcvolunteers.org.uk