



Torchlit Great Ridge.
Photo: Tom McNally.

PEAK AREA NEWSLETTER



September 2018
peakarea@gmail.com

Rocking Chair

Rob Greenwood



This introduction is the first I've written after a meeting has taken place, which makes for a refreshing change of pace, not least because it's far easier to write about what actually happened rather than hypothesise what might!

And what is happening? A lot! In the coming weeks/months we've got the beginning of the Mend Our Mountains Crowdfunder Campaign (10 September), the South Peak Limestone Festival (14–16 September), the Stanage Forum Open Meeting (13 October) and finally the first ever BMC Hill Walking Symposium (24–25 November).

Last night's meeting felt like something of a watershed moment. After a great many meetings taken over by the motion of no confidence, the organisational review and the implementation group, access and other matters were back at the top of the agenda. I'm still not sure whether it was that or Alex Roddie's excellent talk which brought the attendance back up to its usual level, but it was great to see so many people there (and so many people asking questions).

The next meeting is the last of the year, and plays host to our annual quiz. There'll be something for everyone, including – if rumours are to be believed – a general knowledge round, so brush up on your soap operas. It will also be our AGM, so if you want to get involved please get in touch.

Next meeting: Wednesday 21 November, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE



Wool Packs.
Photo: Austin Knott.

Access News

Henry Folkard

It has been a summer of activity on the access front with both general and crag-specific goings-on. Some are resolved, others are not – yet. Few access issues get resolved overnight.

The **Ravensdale** restriction on walkers and climbers imposed by Natural England (NE) was without justification, and in my personal view is an abuse of its authority. The National Park Authority had no option but to comply with the imposition.

The given reason for it was that peregrines had been seen in the area and were believed to be nesting there – but where? No evidence of nesting has been provided to date, though young have also been seen more recently, as indeed they have in many other parts of the national park too. NE is euphoric about this and is claiming total vindication for their actions and huge credit – all without any actual



evidence of any nest at Ravensdale.

The original imposition was completely over the top: it was so wet you could not even get to the crag if you wanted to, and for the first time ever it applied to walkers as well as climbers. Despite constant observation, nothing more specific than a peregrine flying around was ever cited. The restriction was eventually lifted, but then imposed again after a report from a climber of young peregrines in cracks on Medusa. This seemed unlikely since peregrines don't nest in cracks. It was checked out after careful observation (during which there was a probable sighting of a peregrine flying straight down the dale nowhere near the crag), and no sign of any nest or chicks was found beyond the corpse of one jackdaw chick that clearly had not been taken by a raptor. Still the restriction remained.

The BMC is, of course, keen to protect all wildlife and flora on crags where our activity could be problematic. In any nesting season there are at least 70 bird restrictions operational around the country – and they

work. Birds breed and climbers are content because the restrictions are evidentially based. Stanage is one obvious example. In the past there has been pressure for precautionary restrictions, but where this has been mooted in the Peak it has always been shown that attempts to second-guess where a bird is going to nest have been wrong. The BMC does not agree precautionary restrictions.

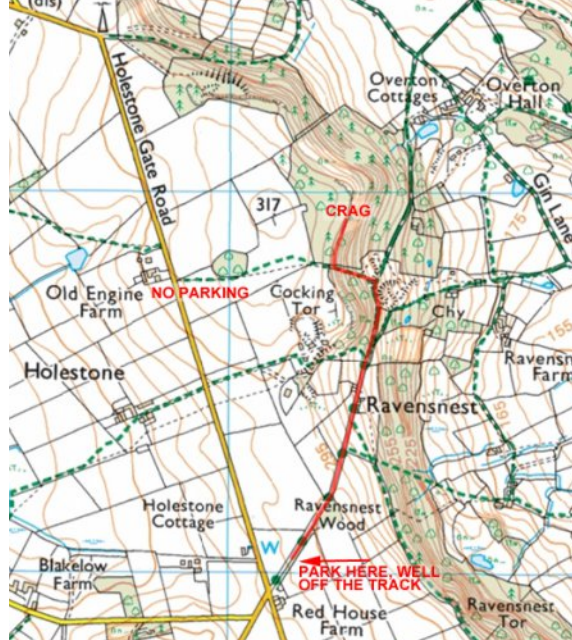
Sometimes peregrines do return year after year to the same site, which becomes a traditional site, but they also frequently nest elsewhere in the vicinity, presumably within their territory. On the basis of a peregrine having nested once before on Ravensdale, it could not be regarded as a traditional site.

A meeting is in prospect between the BMC, the national park and NE, but no date has yet been fixed – on more than one occasion when a date has been fixed NE has cancelled.

What logic is there in NE's mindset? Is its objective more about restricting access than protecting nesting birds? On the one hand it is apparently happy to sanction green matting to aid vehicular access across Midhope Moor direct to some grouse butts – and peregrines are known to be absent from many grouse moors – while elsewhere people enjoying outdoor recreation who would be its natural allies are effectively demonised.

Again, the BMC has been under pressure, and still can be, to agree climbing restrictions because of nesting ravens (Ravensdale is a case in point) while elsewhere NE approves the mass culling of ravens on grouse moors.

In the **Amber Valley** the guidebook description for access and ownership at **Turning Stone Edge** is no longer current as ownership has changed. New arrangements



have been negotiated for climbers with the new landowners thanks largely to a lot of effort by Steve Wright – so thanks, Steve.

The essentials are: never ever park now on the roadside or on the verge by the footpath off Holystone Gate Road opposite Old Engine Farm. There is now no access to Turning Stone Edge from here. It is, however, permitted to access the edge from Coffin Lane and via Cocking Tor, and for climbers to ignore the *Private Land No Access* sign where a direct track leads to the top of Turning Stone through the private woodland. Access is for small numbers only, and group activity, whether a club meet or commercial group, must be by prior agreement with the owners at Old Engine Farm. See map above.

The owners have problems with anti-social behaviour, raves and the like, on their land, and it even appears as a good location for such activity nationally through social media outlets. It's not the first time climbing access has been threatened by other activity, but when something reaches a point where landowners say 'enough is enough' and put the shutters up across the piece, there is nothing much the access team can do

about it. So, keep a low profile if you go there with your mate and be really, really careful about parking, which is probably OK for a couple of cars, but no more, at the top of Coffin Lane.

Elsewhere on the crag scene, a lot of holds on a traverse at **Pleasley Vale** have been covered in red paint, and there are strange goings on at **Masson Lees**. The traverse at Pleasley is still doable and it's probably best to let the paint wash off naturally. As regards Masson, we have not got to the bottom of what is going on just yet, but may know more by the time of the meeting.

The draft **Management Plan for Eastern Moors and Burbage** is a substantive document – from memory about 150 pages – with a lot of detail in it. I spent an afternoon with the Eastern Moors' Danny Udall going through it, or at least some of it, and as I understand it the RSPB is mulling it over at the moment. Another much shorter and more straightforward document is indicated, but there may be a more substantive issue lurking as an unwritten text. Some of the architects of the original vision for the management of the Eastern Moors have moved on and the extent to which their vision for partnership is shared by those who have followed them needs clarification. Adam Long (access rep.) and I, who were there at the start of it all, are still about though, and our position remains that the Eastern Moors is not just a bird reserve but, more than that, a public open space supported by public funding. There is legitimacy in the public interest and for the cherished sense of place engendered by its cultural and social history.

Big Moor hit the national news recently over the matter of using Larsen traps to catch crows. The RSPB took the commendable view that though this might

be controversial (and it was), it was right to be transparent. The Eastern Moors is a living landscape, and has long been managed, though much of that management approach now is to make it feel like it's a wild open space that is not managed. One current conflict is between retaining the breeding population of curlew, which is nationally in decline and threatened, or sustaining an increasing population of crows at the curlews' expense; hence limited use of Larsen traps. Like everything else on the Eastern Moors, what is being done in this respect is evidentially based and decisions are only made after careful observation and analysis.

A suggestion has been to make the informal track at **Burbage** alongside Burbage Brook a public right of way. Personally, I do not see the advantage of this, as it's all open access land and you can walk where you want anyhow.

The original vision document for the **Sheffield Moors Partnership (SMP)** has about run its course and is in the process of being refreshed. The purpose of SMP was essentially to address things which were on a landscape scale across the different parcels of land which make up the Eastern Edges and the Golden Frame. How successful it has been at doing this is a moot point, as perhaps is the question of where it's going in the future.

The **National Trust's** theme for next year had the working title Radical Landscapes, but is now called Peoples' Landscapes – unearthing passion and protest. Four NT properties associated with this are Kinder, Peterloo, Tolpuddle and the north-east coast. An artist will be involved, and perhaps an underlying theme is how urban communities have wanted to enjoy the countryside – their birthright – and how that involvement

can be sustained and enjoyed. There is a suggestion to dovetail an event majoring on the Kinder element with a Spirit of Kinder event, perhaps with a rally in Winnats Pass, following on from the rallies there, attended it is said by 10,000 people, around the time of the Kinder Mass Trespass, which were instrumental in bringing about the 1949 Act that led to the establishment of national parks. The suggestion may or may not become a reality in April 2019.

NT has also made two major purchases in the Peak, of farms with great hay meadows. One is round the top of Dowel Dale and the other between Coombs Dale and the Stoney to Cavendish Mill road.

The BMC has commented on proposals regarding plans for the **A628**: I hesitate to use the word 'improvements'. There will doubtless be different views on this, though there can be no doubt that there is a real problem. One view is that a well-engineered upgraded road will improve traffic flow and make life easier for everyone, while another is that you don't resolve a problem of heavy use and congestion by making it easier to accommodate more traffic, and that national parks were chosen because of the integrity of a special landscape and quiet enjoyment. One point the BMC made was regarding provision for lay-bys and access points at all of the many points where north-south walks cross the A628, and that there are rather more of these than just the Pennine Way.

Rick Gibbon has kindly agreed to stand in for us while Mark Warwicker looks after his wife, who sadly is ill. I am sure there could be no one better to look after her: best wishes from all of us, Mark. Apparently a rambler who went to protest with a well-known local farmer in the forgotten north got his response in the form of a smack on the head, and had to retreat, hastily and hurt. Access work is not always a bundle of fun.

Press reports say the bad fire at the **Roaches** was started by a camp fire in the pines below the crag. It has certainly caused extensive damage. Another, actually near to Turning Stone Edge, was found and extinguished by a climber even as it was starting to spread. There were several more too spotted before they got out of control, one ironically on the point of devastating the place where hen harriers subsequently raised four young. On a recent visit to Horseshoe I noticed more fire rings than there used to be too. The message here is self-evident!

The Planning Committee for the national park voted unanimously that the green matting on **Midhope Moor**, about which the BMC (along with 186 others) protested, should be removed and enforcement action to make sure this happens instigated at once. Natural England, who supported the matting, was asked to attend the Planning Committee to explain why, but did not show up.

And today, right on the deadline for newsletter contributions, the BMC and others accompanied Angela Smith MP on a walk to the section of **Cut Gate** due to be repaired with the help of **Mend Our Mountains** funding. That bit of Cut Gate is in her constituency. By the time you read this MOM will be having another boost through a crowdfunding initiative. The target sum is getting closer, but there is a way to go yet.

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/mendourmountains

By way of a tailpiece, a comment from the BMC's Rob Dyer on his return from a trip to Squamish. The access problems there seem to be caused by inconsiderate parking, and some bad behaviour. Now where have I heard that before?

Hill Walking News

Peter Judd and Austin Knott

National Hill Walking Update

The BMC's Hill Walking Implementation Group was delighted to have both BMC CEO Dave Turnbull and new president Lynn Robinson attend our last meeting where we discussed progress and future funding prospects. We have also resubmitted the Strategic Plan for Hill Walking, endorsed by National Council over 18 months ago, to the new board.

The period since we first presented the plan has seen some extraordinary and serious distractions, however we believe that now, when the board is reassessing immediate strategic priorities, is the right moment to ask the board members to engage more energetically with the recommendations that the plan contains. We look forward, hopefully, to their response.

BMC National Hill Walking Symposium – in the Peak!

The BMC will be holding its first symposium for those interested in the organisation's work for hill walkers and those wishing to explore ways of getting more involved, at Losehill Hall YHA in Castleton, over the weekend of 24–25 November. There will be a set of talks and workshops most likely including: walking and conservation, leading walks, engaging underrepresented groups, protecting and celebrating the uplands, and access legislation beyond the CROW Act. There'll hopefully be a guest speaker too after dinner on the Saturday night. On Sunday we'll have a variety of walks and activities on offer for participants. Fancy coming? We're really looking forward to it! I had hoped to be able to give details of how to sign-up here (there'll be a small charge to cover overnight accommodation and the dinner) but at the time of writing I've not been given that information. Keep a close eye on the BMC website, social media, email

newsletters and our own Peak Area Facebook page for announcements.

Mend Our Mountains Update

The next phase of Mend Our Mountains is the big public crowdfunding campaign which is now live. This promises to be far bigger and better than that which formed the bedrock of the 2016 Mend Our Mountains campaign and which raised £103k. The new target is a whopping £150k, and it's our best opportunity to show Mend Our Mountains to the widest possible outdoor audience. So, make sure you donate, share and tell your friends. We don't just want to raise cash – we want to inspire a more considerate and responsible kind of outdoor user!

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/mendourmountains

Peak Area White Peak Hill Walk – Sunday 16 September

As part of the Peak Area's South Peak Limestone Festival weekend your area hill walking reps, Peter and Austin, will be taking a 9.5-mile walk through the dales and over hills from Wetton, taking in some of the fine features of these limestone dales, including spires and caves (plus an optional two-mile extension to the fine Thor's Cave at the end). If you're not setting out for the crags then please come and join us, it'll be a great opportunity to meet other BMC hill walkers and enjoy some fine views! Meet outside the Royal Oak Inn, Wetton, Derbyshire, DE6 2AF (Grid Ref: SK 109 553) at 9.50 a.m. prompt for a 10 a.m. start. Come suitably clothed and shod for a day walk over sometimes rough, slippery and precipitous paths, with food and drink to last the day. Under 18s welcome if under the close supervision of an adult taking responsibility for them, and dogs too, if kept on short fixed leads. See you there? Drop Peter an email to let him know if you are coming.

Climbing News & Gossip

Dave Parry

Well, I don't think any of us expected a summer like that did we? Depending on your point of view, this summer was one of two things. Option 1: a glorious, endless long-overdue summer of perpetual dry rock, suntans, cold beers on long evenings, a suitable reward to make up for a long, cold, wet winter. Option 2: an unnaturally parched abomination, a stark warning and glance at the future post-global-warming wasteland that we will be leaving future generations and which we as a global community should be utterly ashamed and embarrassed about. But still, decent connies down the Dale, amirite? #banter

Despite the soaring temperatures, desiccated moors and wildfires, a few hardy souls have still been active on the more esoteric gritstone and searching out unsung gems. Dan Cheetham, often to be found creating unique short climbing films with his Super-8 cine camera, has made a rare repeat of Johnny Dawes' classic E7 wall climb *Dharma*. This rarely repeated route at Duke's Quarry down Matlock way sports a few old pegs and a lengthy run-out at the crux, and comes highly recommended – not least at the moment as it will still be clean, so if you've ever fancied a pop, now is the time. Reputedly about French 7c climbing, there's a video for beta on Dan's Vimeo page: what are you waiting for?

At a more amenable grade, Joe Harding has reported some new problems up on Back Tor on Derwent. All in the Font 4 to 6c grade range, and at the far left end of the crag, facing north-east. You'll find full details and a topo on ukbouldering dot com, the best problems likely to be *Cripple Slab* at 6a

and *Baby Back Rib* at 6b. For anyone who's not been up to Back Tor it's a sure bet for manageable conditions in a warm summer and is easy to combine with a trip to the problems on Dovestones Tor and/or Howshaw. The walk-in from Strines isn't really that bad either. It also goes to show that you've not got to be operating in the grade stratosphere to turn up new problems, just gotta get out there with an open mind and open eyes.

One predictable side effect of the ridiculously dry and warm summer is that once again the Cheedale Cornice has been dry and offering some respite from the heat, being tucked away in the shade of the valley. As you would expect it's been fairly popular with fans of dusty undercuts making the most of a dry summer. Well, Crag X has been quiet so that's where I assume everyone has been. As you may know the Cornice is like catnip to Peak sport climbers who, like Scottish winter climbers, are prepared to drop everything at a moment's notice when news circulates that conditions are 'in'. I have even heard rumours of Cornice devotees driving everywhere in Land Rovers in second gear with flat tyres in order to maximise their carbon footprint and hasten global warming, just to increase the likelihood of decent Cornice seasons in future. It would be a shameful legacy to leave your children, but I suspect having kids is off the agenda for anyone spending all their summer evenings at the crag.

Back to factual events, one big piece of news to emerge is Steve McClure's 1999 F8c route *Dreadnought* has had its first repeat at the hands – or more likely thighs – of everyone's favourite lanky kneebar whipping boy Alex Barrows. Once described as the 'hardest roof climb in the Peak', and quite possibly the longest a Peak 8c has gone between first and second ascents. If you know otherwise, good for you.

Moving merely inches to the right there was an old project breaking out right from *Dreadnought* to the *RoofWarrior* lower-off. Another present future problem no longer in the past, Haydn 'appropriately doesn't have dreads any more' Jones has done the deed, giving us *Dreadnot* at F8b+. If you like burly undercutting above a roof then it looks right up your strasse. Video online, somewhere.

Back on the subject of carbon footprints, there are still a few remaining Peak District boulderers who selflessly shun the current trend for jetting off every summer to Rocklands in search of holiday grades and proud eye-popping lines. Quite the opposite, they prefer to be immersed in the world of dusty local crags and harsh grades. And where would we be without them? Getting sunstroke on sweaty gritstone, that's where. So, in the spirit of celebrating the peculiar charms of Peak limestone bouldering, I report that we have some new problems at a crag known as The Keep (and unfortunately due to potential access issues I can't tell you where it is, or I'll have to kill you). Some or fewer of the problems were done a few years back by Dawid 'Polish Dave' Skoczylas and Robin 'Lancashire Lowballs' Mueller. More recently Mark 'Uptown Top' Rankine and the irrepressible Hadyn 'doesn't really have a nickname' Jones have been busy developing and documenting the crag. Currently the buttress sports a few good looking up-problems in the Font 7a to 7b range, and two low-level 7c traverses (a quintessentially Peak limestone phenomenon, if ever there was one) to keep the repeat visitor amused. Haydn also has a video up on YouTube although good luck finding it since he's spelt 'buttress' wrong in the title. As mentioned above, the access situation is uncertain and potentially problematic, so if you do locate it via word of mouth the advice is to stick to weekday

evenings. See you there.

Mark 'insert nickname here' Rankine also reports a few developments from Watercum-Jolly Dale, a valley that I can still scarcely believe bears that name without being a fictional destination in a Carry On film (Perhaps Carry On Crimping?). Some benevolent soul has visited the often-overlooked Waterfall Buttress – over the bridge from Rubicon – and re-equipped *In The Flesh* (F7a) and *Rapture* (F7b). Jack Gould has also added a very bouldery route at F7c+ called *Looking For Diversion*. Back over at Rubicon *The Angler* has had its old pegs replaced with bolts, while remaining a little spicy.

In other Haydn-related news the aforementioned ex-dreadlocked Raven-Tor-obsessed limestone journeyman has done a real gem of a problem for the steel-fingered collectors – a Font 8a+ traverse reversing *Ben's Roof*, up the *Cave Problem* sitter then finishing along *Weedkiller Traverse* in reverse. Sounds good until you realise he's named it *Jerry's Roof*, which for any number of obvious reasons is a name which, if there's any sense left in this crazy messed-up world, won't make it into the guidebook. A more sane suggestion would be *Haydn's Traverse*. Suggestions gladly welcomed to the usual address – keep 'em clean, though, kids could be reading this.

Regular readers will at this point be wondering how I have got to the penultimate paragraph without mention of Ned Feehally, maker of beasts, hooker of heels, severer of own fingers. Well Ned reports a couple of new 7c+ problems at that bouldering crag just off the A6 known for some obscure reason as Lee's Bottom (another potential Carry On film name). They both are at the left-hand end, left of Mr Creosote, same sit start from pinches to a dusty sloper, then one finished straight up, the other bears right. Named *The Only Way* is

A6, and A6 Girls, respectively. Ned's also done *Neil's Wall RH* at Beginner's Wall without recourse to the original distant toehold around the right arete, instead using a high heelhook – now there's a surprise. Grade estimated at Font 8a+ and unlike the original sequence may be more amenable to strong short-arses.

Finally, making the news just as the press rolled, Polish Dave has linked a sit start into *Sean's Roof* in Blackwell Dale. You may remember Sean's Roof as the scene of Mark Leach's 'hardest solo in the world' back in the day, and an excellent crag if savagely steep roadside climbing above a sea of litter, discarded truckers' pornography and dirty babies' nappies floats your boat. These days Sean's Roof can be tackled as a boulder problem with pads, although Dave still opted to use a rope. Not that it stopped him decking out a few times. The new link-up is named *Mortal Immortal*, and graded Font 8b+, although noted to be probably more like 8b if you use the full complement of kneebars available. The breakdown is as follows, 8a boulder problem into *Sean's Roof*, itself considered 8a+. Debate ongoing whether a sit start into a bolt route that you still hit the floor on from the last hard move even with a rope is best graded with a sport grade or bouldering grade. If you want to email into to the usual address with your opinions on this matter I will delete them. And on that bombshell, I bid ye good day.

Get in touch

Send your Peak area news, gossip or article ideas to me at: peakarea@gmail.com



Haydn Jones on *Monumental Fingerblaster*.
Photo: Mark Rankine.

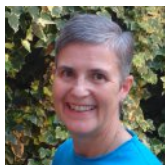


Bleaklow, above Yellowslacks Clough.
Photo: Austin Knott.

BMC President's Update: August 2018

Lynn Robinson

At the time of writing this, it is just seven weeks since the BMC's historic 2018 AGM. Thank you to all of you that voted and what an amazing result. I know I've said it before, but I also want to say it again: thank you to all the BMC staff and key volunteers and those of our trusts, affiliated clubs and partner organisations. Everyone worked incredibly hard leading up to the AGM, and the result has given us the mandate to get on and implement the recommendations from the Organisational Review Group (ORG).



Immediately following the AGM, the next morning in fact, Simon McCalla, our Senior Independent Director, became the Interim Chair of the Board of Directors. This role has been split off from the president's role

following the 2018 AGM vote. My new role is to represent the membership, hold the board to account and to chair National Council. We were also able to formally welcome Amanda Parshall as a newly ratified Independent Director, and John Roberts, our newly elected vice-president, on to the board.

Lots has been happening since then, either by teleconference, over email, or our first full-length board meeting on 19 July. After each meeting, Simon has produced summaries which have been published on the BMC website. Have a read and let me know what you think:

www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-board-june-meeting

www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-board-of-directors-july-2018-meeting-summary

I'm not going to repeat what's in these summaries, but just want to highlight a few things:

The **Nominations Committee** has now been formed. Mick Green was elected by National Council members to represent them. The committee's first task is to recruit to the position of Chair of the Board. A (volunteer) job role for Chair has been finalised and will shortly be advertised on the BMC website and further afield – please keep a look out for this exciting and important role.

The **Implementation Group** of the Phase II ORG recommendations has been formed and work streams have been identified. John Roberts is chairing the IG and is working alongside myself and BMC CEO Dave Turnbull. Fiona Sanders and Andy Syme have been elected from National Council, and Amanda Parshall is the Independent Director on the group.

Other roles will soon be recruited to, for example, some independent BMC members. Please keep a look out on the BMC website and on social media. We're also recruiting a part-time paid project manager to support the Implementation Group and the CEO.

Implementing the ORG recommendations is a huge piece of work for the BMC and will take a period of one to three years to fully carry through. We'll be ensuring that we report on progress to members throughout the implementation, and we're really keen that volunteer members get involved, using their skills and experience in the many different areas we're working on, whether it's corporate structure, communications or policy development.

BMC Strategy: a key priority for the BMC is to develop the BMC's strategy and business plans. This is being worked on by the CEO and me, in partnership with the board and the Implementation Group. BMC members will be consulted and will be able

to have influence over this, so please do comment and contribute to its development over the coming months.

As well as being involved in board, Implementation Group and BMC office work, I have also spent the last few months getting out and about, including:

- Being a judge at the Junior British Bouldering Competition. I was super impressed with the up-and-coming talent that we have.

- Attending the Hill Walking Working Group and meeting the hill walking reps and getting an update on the Mend Our Mountains campaign.

- Going to the Women's Trad Festival. This was truly inspirational, watching women lead their first route outdoors, in a supportive and conscientious environment, despite the high temperatures. The festival had been incredibly well thought-out, with a zero waste and low impact policy – thank you to all the volunteer organisers.

I plan to go to as many area meetings and various other BMC-related events as possible, meeting as many BMC members as I can, over the next year. If you are holding a BMC-related event, I'd be interested to hear about it.

It's exciting times ahead, please do get involved – it is, after all, your BMC.

lynn.robinson@bmcvolunteers.org.uk

Follow me on Twitter and Instagram:
[@bmc_lynn](#)



Dave Parry on Hell Gate Crack, Wharnccliffe.
Photo: John Coefield.

About being a ‘body’

Peter Judd

I'd almost fallen asleep, curled up on the ground, one warm evening earlier in the summer, lying comfortably amongst the leaves under big a tree in Wharnccliffe Wood. I'd been there a while – and very peaceful it was too – when a patter of feet broke the silence and a snuffling wet nose arrived beside me – my first meeting with Scout, a Border collie and trainee rescue dog. Scout didn't stay long, quickly heading off again, retracing his circuitous route of arrival, disappearing back into the woods. I remained perfectly still until, a few minutes later, Scout returned bringing Paul, his handler, with him. Only once Scout had brought Paul all the way to me and been congratulated for making his 'find' was I allowed to come alive, bring a ball-on-a-rope from under my coat so that a vigorous game of tug of war could begin – Scout's all-important reward!

This was my first experience of being a 'body', an essential component in search practice. Paul (Besley – writer and author of Cicerone's excellent *Dark Peak Walks* guidebook, and @paulbesleywrite on Twitter) and Scout are in the latter stages of the Search and Rescue Dog Association's (SARDA England) training scheme and are close to becoming fully operational.

Scout had one last 'find' of the evening to make: Paul's regular practise 'body', another Paul, who had already hidden himself away elsewhere in the wood. And I had the privilege of watching Scout and Paul at work at close hand.

Paul sent Scout out to search. As search dogs like Scout use air scent not ground scent to seek out a human body, Paul's job is to continuously monitor local wind conditions and plan a search route that ensures he can sweep Scout back and forth perpendicular to the breeze to give maximum opportunity for Scout to catch a whiff of any human scent that might be around. Paul must make sure they 'clear the area' (make an effective search),

a difficult challenge in hard terrain with complex air currents.

An operational pairing would have had an additional human along too, a navigator, to make sure they know where they are while the handler concentrates on the search itself. They have another role too, because, odd though it may sound, when the dog makes a real find, the handler's job is not to attend immediately to the casualty but to reward the dog; it's essential not to default on the deal – dog makes find, dog gets reward, always! So the navigator is also there to prioritise the casualty.

Scout energetically dove here and there through the thick undergrowth with Paul urging him on and giving directions. Suddenly even I noticed Scout's attitude change; he'd got a whiff of something and disappeared. A minute or two later he was back and 'indicated' to Paul, barking and signalling that he should follow and, sure enough, he took us straight to the spot where the other Paul was hiding! So Scout got another reward game of tag: I was far too gentle – Scout likes a very energetic game!

There are few finer experiences than watching a good dog at work, using all its senses and intelligence, and with a handler similarly deploying all his skills too to get the best out of the dog. That evening was a real treat.

Paul has been a member of Woodhead Mountain Rescue Team for some time; you must have that level of experience before being accepted for SARDA training. Then Paul and Scout have to go through four stages of testing (they're through the first two already): firstly a general obedience test including around farm stock; then find a 'body', return and 'indicate' – these first two are mostly about the dog; then do the same but effectively 'blind' (where the handler doesn't know where the body will be); and lastly operational assessment: Paul must show that he and Scout can do all this



Paul and Scout,
Photo: Peter Judd.

over much more challenging terrain with Paul planning an effective search and looking after Scout to ensure they 'clear the area'.

Search dog pairings active in SARDA can be called to searches anywhere in the country, and they're not restricted to any particular team. There are currently over 30 SARDA dogs operational in England with around seven of them in or near the Peak area. Completing training is clearly a huge commitment and we are extraordinarily fortunate that volunteers like Paul (and Scout) are willing to go through all this to provide such a special service that we hill users hope we'll never need, but are so glad is there.

Maybe you would like to volunteer as a 'body'? SARDA is always looking for more people – though practise can take place in all conditions, so it's not always the cushy experience I enjoyed! You can find more information here:

www.sardaengland.org.uk/training-information/dogsbodies

If you're not up for such a commitment, then do please consider sending a donation to support SARDA:

www.sardaengland.org.uk/fundraising



Longshaw from High Fields.
Photo: National Trust.

National Trust Update: September 2018

Rachel Bennett

Protecting special grassland in the Peak District

Wildflower meadows and pastures were once a common sight across the UK. Hugely variable in character and complex in their nature, they were beautiful to look at, provided vital grazing and winter fodder for farm animals, and were actively managed, initially by hand using traditional tools like the scythe then later by machine or by grazing with small native breeds of cattle or sheep. These places were a home to a wide range of plants, insects and birds.

Although 37 per cent of land in the UK is still grassland, since the Second World War the majority of our grasslands have become agriculturally improved. The process of improvement continued until the 1980s when it was recognised that semi-natural grassland communities should be priority habitats for conservation (UK Biodiversity Group, 1988).

Sadly, the unintended consequence of this improvement is that these grasslands have lost the majority of their associated plant, insect and animal richness. Species-rich semi-natural grasslands now represent just two per cent of the UK grassland area. And where they do exist, they tend to be small, highly fragmented sites. Small sites still require active and appropriate management to maintain their interest, either by cutting for hay or grazing with suitable breeds of farm animals, and this can be challenging in light of the economics of and large machinery used in modern farming today.

Although small, these grasslands are important and are worth saving – not only are the plant species in semi-natural grasslands extraordinarily diverse, there is also a range of other wildlife associated with them, including butterflies, bees and other pollinators, reptiles, mammals, and birds.

The small scale of these places has other advantages. They lend themselves to involving people: whether that is helping with their restoration by spreading green hay; reviving old skills such as scything, dry-stone walling or collecting the maturing hay crops to restore other grassland sites; monitoring the plants, insects and animals present; or providing a great place to simply experience the beauty, the sights, sounds and tranquillity of nature.

As Britain marked National Meadows Day on 7 July, the National Trust completed the purchase of 186 hectares of wildflower-rich farmland in the Peak District – supporting its ongoing commitment to restoring a healthy, beautiful, natural environment.

The 80 hectares at High Fields near the village of Stoney Middleton and the 106-hectare farm at Greensides near Buxton are home to a diverse range of grasses and flowers, plus an enormous range of insects and invertebrates, small mammals and birds, forming a fully functioning ecosystem that supports a complete food web.

The unusual geology of the White Peak landscape and its acidic, neutral and calcareous soils provides the ideal conditions for a huge variety of flora to thrive to include the vibrant early purple orchid; yellow mountain pansy; butterfly yellow cowslips; bright yellow common rock rose; frothy white pignut and dark purple blue bilberries.

These in turn make the perfect home for many different invertebrates such as bees and butterflies like the common blue; birds such as meadow pipits and skylarks and other animals such as the brown hare and the protected great crested newt.

Rare examples of limestone pavement are also a feature on both farms, which supports many ferns and wildflowers.



Ringlet butterfly.
Photo: National Trust.

High Fields also has a few dewponds, originally created as watering holes for livestock, which now provide wetland habitat for the newts.

The first job will be to put into place a plan for managing the land in the short term. It's likely that the land at High Fields will be grazed by cattle to restore and maintain the rich variety of flora and fauna, and at Greensides there is the potential for more focus on its special hay meadows.

For more information about the National Trust's work in the Peak District, please email: **peakdistrict@nationaltrust.org.uk**

Peak Area Meetings

2018

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

Forthcoming Events

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

BMC South Peak Limestone Festival 15-16 September

Based from the Royal Oak in Wetton, this new event is a chance to sample the crags of the area and explore the wild limestone features which can be found in the Dovedale area.

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?id=3991>

Peak Area White Peak Hill Walk Sunday 16 September

See page 6 for all the details.

Stanage Forum Open Meeting Saturday 13 October, 2-4 p.m.

Hathersage Methodist Church Hall
Find out about what's happening on Stanage Estate and ensure our views and ideas are included in future management plans. Everyone is welcome.

**Red Deer Bolving Championships
Saturday 13 October, 5-8 p.m.
Barbrook Cottage, Eastern Moors
www.visit-eastern-moors.org.uk**

BMC Peak Area Contacts

Peak Area Chair: Rob Greenwood.
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Secretary: Becky Hammond.
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Peak Area Reps (your voice on the BMC National Council):
David Brown and Alison Cairns.
<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/peak>

Access Reps Co-ordinator:
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Peak Area Hill Walking Reps:
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Peak Area Newsletter Editorial:
Dave Parry and John Coefield.
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Next meeting: Wednesday 21 November, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE