



Crow Stones, Howden Moors.
Photo: Peter Judd.

PEAK AREA NEWSLETTER



October 2021
peak.area@thebmc.co.uk

Rocking Chair

Andy Reeve



Yo yo yo, I hope you've all been having a productive summer. I'm sure that the boulderers will be happy that it's this much colder, but I appear to have gone soft and am still crossing my fingers for a few more sunny days before the real backend of the year sets in.

Over here at BMC Peak Area Towers (not a real place), we are sad to say that there are quite a few volunteers who are due a well-deserved rest from it all and so are stepping down to make way for some new blood. Ana, our esteemed secretary,

will be stepping down from January, as will Dave, one of our two Members' Assembly (previously National Council) reps. For anyone interested in supporting your local area, guiding decision-making, and earning the admiration of your peers (actually, I cannot guarantee that last one), come to the next meeting and we can let you know all about it.

As well as these posts, Dave and John, yes, the very Dave and John who have lovingly produced the newsletter you are holding in your hands, have also announced that they will be retiring from the team. As I have said before, the Peak Area Newsletter is the envy of all the other areas, which is testament to the hard work and enthusiasm that Dave and John have put into

Next meeting: Monday 18 October, 7 p.m.
The Internet. Register **HERE**.

it. Anyone who would like to take over the reins for the newsletter or writing the Peak climbing news and gossip column, please do get in touch – this is definitely a good opportunity for anyone wanting to contribute to the local area, gain experience with the graphics side of things, and write a regular column whose main focus is mocking someone who has been trying to climb the same route for the past twelve years.

Onwards, the next meeting is again on Zoom. Yet hopefully the one after – January’s local AGM – will be in-person. More news on that when we know.

Until then ...

Andy

Access News

Henry Folkard

What are the key improvements for access you would like to see, and, just as important, can you do anything about it?

For climbers, most crag access is OK, though there may be recurrent problems in some old limestone quarries where no formal agreement to climb, or place bolts, exists. While requests to formalise access are met, more often than not, with outright refusal to grant access, low-key discreet access tends to go under the radar so long as there are no parking problems or incidents of bad behaviour. It is perhaps a bit of a grey area, but grey areas are better than bans. There are also problems round Matlock (and possibly elsewhere too) where venues are lost to housing or commercial development, the latest being Lorry Park. The BMC is writing to the developers to see if any accommodation is possible.

For bouldering, new venues are often on privately owned land, with no right of access,

and often no parking either. Again, low-key discreet activity can go unchallenged, but visibility leads to vulnerability, and once there is a perception (which may or may not be real) that what is going on has become a nuisance, the shutters go up and private landowners will just say ‘No’ and refuse even to discuss.

Then for hill walkers, I guess we all know of particular places where something quite simple would vastly improve matters significantly by facilitating links or addressing safety issues. Some such places where I would like to see improvements of this nature include the trig point on Sheen Hill, a link between Wardlow Hey and Longstone Edge, Conies Dale, Hazelbadge and Linen Dale where there are road safety issues, and quite a few more. Over the years, national park access officers have tried to negotiate improvements, at our request, and through Local Access Forums, often on the back of a Stewardship scheme, and often with no success at all. Now there may be another opportunity through a DEFRA scheme called FIPL. Never mind the detail for now, but the key is that requests for funding for access and conservation improvements have to come from landowners (not just farmers), but that if a landowner can cite a joint approach with recreation users, a collaborative application between the two would stand a very strong chance of success. So, if you have any suggestions, get in touch with your local BMC access rep, or go through Rob Dyer in the BMC Office, and we will try and take things forward for you in conjunction with the relevant access authority.

The public inquiry into the infamous **Midhope Moor** plastic matting has happened virtually, and the BMC made written representation, but at the time of writing no decision has yet been announced. On Cut Gate, which the matting crosses,

there is good news in that National Trust and others have found limited funding for some additional improvements where Mend Our Mountains funding did not go quite far enough to do everything that really needed doing.

The BMC also made representation regarding what is now called the **A57 Link Road**, essentially between the M62 and Glossop. We did not comment specifically on the detail of the scheme where it falls outside the national park boundary, and acknowledged there is a real traffic problem thereabouts, but did say that we thought one inevitable consequence of the scheme could be adverse impact on the Snake Pass and the A628 in respect of tranquillity, wildlife, north-to-south walking routes, carbon release, parking and landscape. We were not confident that the proposals adequately addressed these issues which must be an integral consideration in the overall scheme. Making comment at this stage on aspects we would like to ensure the inspector would consider in the public inquiry does not commit us to doing anything further, but does secure the right to make future representation if we want to. Had we not made initial representation now we would have forfeited any such right.

Following reports of loose rock at the top of **Froggatt Pinnacle**, one of our access reps checked it out and has reported to the Eastern Moors Partnership that he found nothing that represented a safety concern.

Though little has been said recently about proposals to reinstate the **Matlock to Buxton rail link** through the Wye Valley and along the Monsal Trail, the Manchester and East Midlands Rail Action Partnership have continued to develop their plans to do this. Planners at the Peak District National Park Authority have recently reiterated their view that the reinstatement of trains there would be

unacceptable. For any such scheme to go ahead there would have to be over-riding strategic need at national and local levels, and facilities as attractive and popular as the Monsal Trail would have to be created elsewhere without detrimental environmental and landscape impact.

Discussion at a recent **Sheffield Moors Partnership** meeting suggested that the deluge of visitors to the national park during the Covid crisis had subsided, and where counts had been taken it suggested that, apart from some well-known honey pot venues, activity was probably at a lower level than before the crisis. This is ironic because we seem to be seeing an increase in restrictions of one sort or another – wild camping and parking at Redmires and Stanage being just some examples – to meet a crisis which has actually gone away. Neither have we seen any removal of the excess of double yellow lines all over the place that were introduced as ‘temporary’ measures and have only served to move the problem a little way down the road. On wild camping, we think that in the Peak at least you should not have a problem if you are a genuine wild camper, some distance away from a road or habitation, don’t have a dog, don’t leave any trace of your stay, and above all do not light a fire. That last point bears repetition: do not light fires, anywhere, ever.

Beavers have been mentioned in previous newsletters. I don’t think beavers will be introduced in the Burbage Valley, something that was being considered once, but what could happen somewhere else is not necessarily clear cut. I use the word ‘could’ advisedly.

Wild swimming has become increasingly popular, with stories of Yorkshire Water (and others) employing bouncer-type gentlemen to throw respectable ladies of advancing years who have been happily and quietly wild swimming

for decades off their land, and 133 people wild swimming at Barbrook Reservoir one day – to the doubtless unintended detriment of golden ringed dragonflies and water voles. Wild swimming does present a genuinely difficult issue for landowners. That said, finding ways of enabling people to enjoy outdoor recreation, which is in itself entirely a good thing, can provide a better way forward that imposing new, and often knee-jerk, restriction. So, I will finish this newsletter where I came in: discreet low-key activity as often as not goes under the radar in a kind of grey area. But volumes, bad behaviour, parking and visibility make the activity vulnerable.

That's it for now.

Hill Walking News

Peter Judd, Austin Knott & Vikki Hughes

Annual Report

Over the last year your area hill walking volunteers Austin, Vikki and Peter have: organised three area walks (two done, one to go – read on for more details); organised one conservation volunteering opportunity (with National Trust); inspected, reported on and given feedback to the project managers about the long-awaited delivery of our area's two Mend Our Mountains 2 path repair tasks; responded to the Swan and Lymer Rakes consultation; provided hill walking advice/support to our area access reps (including helping with our submission to the Midhope plastic matting public inquiry); given reports and been available to answer questions at each area meeting. In the coming year we hope to do more along those lines and would welcome the involvement of other members keen to lend a hand.

Area Walk Report: Shutlingsloe and Tegg's Nose

Our second area walk of the year took place in August and was the consequence of a kind offer from BMC member Michelle Martin, who'd attended our Hayfield walk earlier in the year, to take us around one of her regular walks that straddles the western Peak park boundary. Another good turnout saw 16 of us enjoy a mostly fine and sometimes sunny day exploring two mini hills that both offered good views. Our walks have been well attended this year, offering a good opportunity to socialise and network while also encouraging one or two new people to join/re-join the BMC, which is nice. We're very grateful to Michelle for offering her walk, and to David Eaton who assisted Peter and Michelle in looking after the party. If you, like Michelle, have a good idea for an interesting future area walk, and you are willing to share in leading it too, then your area hill walking reps would be very interested in hearing from you.

Conservation Volunteering Day: Invasive Species Removal

Two years ago we organised a very well attended volunteering day with National Trust, planting sphagnum moss up on Ronksley Moor. This year, National Trust, having completed their sphagnum planting for the present, asked for our help with another moorland conservation task: removing Sitka spruce saplings that have widely self-seeded on the moor tops adjacent to the A57 Snake Pass. Wind-borne seed carries from the Forestry England plantations that border the Snake in its upper reaches resulting in a rash of such saplings appearing on top of the peat banks that make up these moor tops. Sitka Spruce, a non-native tree incidentally, once established, both sucks water from the peat, drying it out, and also shades out light,

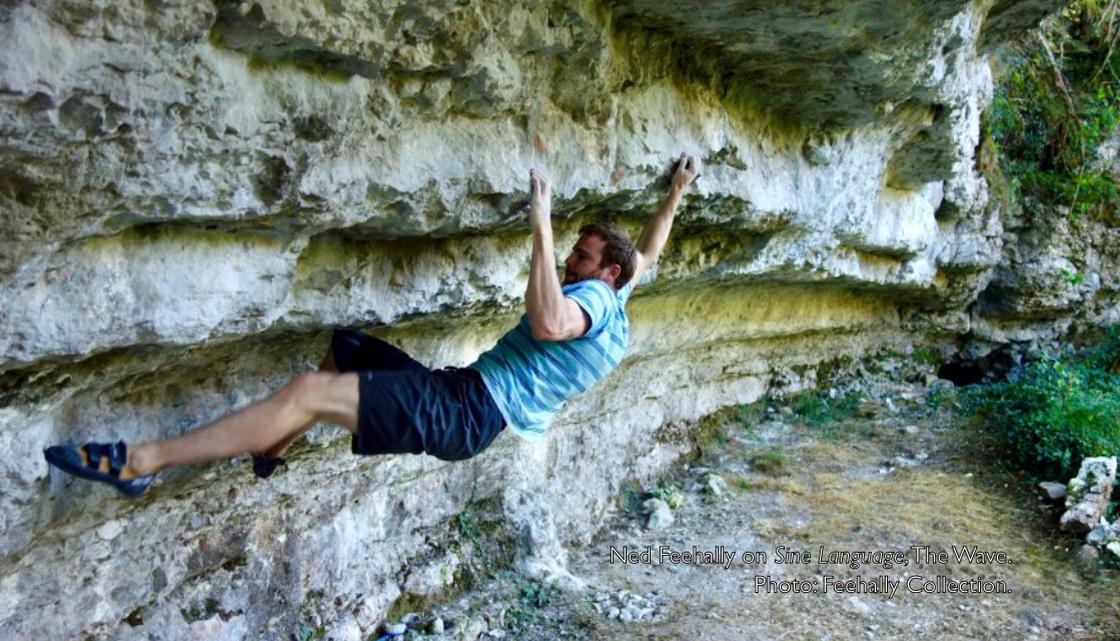


Sitka spruce removal with the National Trust.
Photo: Peter Judd.

preventing other plants, which would otherwise contribute to the vegetation mat that protects the peat from erosion, from growing below. Both these attributes are contrary to the interests of healthy blanket bog and its vital role in locking up carbon (hence contributing to the fight against climate change) so these trees have got to go! Nine enthusiastic volunteers (a mix of BMC and Mountain Training members) joined NT rangers Kait and James on a surprisingly dry and sunny late autumn day to remove as many Sitka saplings as we could from the moors adjacent to Birchen Clough. The excellent weather and eager participants meant considerable progress was made in pulling out and chopping down these small (and some not-so-small) trees. Nevertheless, there are plenty more up there that still need to come out. Kait and James were very pleased with the progress made and expressed their sincere thanks to all who'd taken part. We'll look for more opportunities to offer further occasional conservation volunteering opportunities in the next 12 months.

Upcoming Walk

Having visited the Dark Peak and Cheshire Peak District this year, our next walk, on 30 October 2021, takes us to the White Peak with a circuit that visits both Derbyshire and Staffordshire, and we'll be visiting the best limestone pavement in the area. It's a ten-mile walk starting from Hartington, home of the Old Cheese Shop. There are plenty of cafes and pubs that may make an ideal location for a post-walk debrief. Members and friends are welcome, so if you'd like to join the walk simply click here www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/167957875527 to register your interest and receive details about the starting location and time. Alternatively, contact one of your area hill walking reps.



Ned Feehally on *Sine Language, The Wave*.
Photo: Feehally Collection.

Climbing News & Gossip

Dave Parry

As you will probably have read, if you follow the usual convention of reading from left to right and starting at the first page of a document, this is the last one of these I'll be writing. Those who jump straight in to this bit without having read the chair's intro are going to be a bit confused – I make no apologies. You can't just expect to turn up and read the best bit first and not have occasional consequences. It's like putting a classic album on and skipping straight to the singles – you must listen to the whole thing from start to finish, whether you like the other tracks or not.

Anyway, I had always said that the day I stopped getting the butterflies before pulling out the laptop to write a scathingly sarcastic appraisal of a Mike Adams problem

somewhere near Doncaster would be the day I jacked it in. It's been a rollercoaster ride, but deep down I knew that the visceral thrill of scraping forums and Instagram for content might fade after a while. Better to go out at the top of your game, like Malc, rather than plough on for decades hoping to miraculously surpass previous glories against all odds, like Neil Gresham.

OK, let's get the limestone out of the way: Michael Bate has done a route linking 32 into 42 on the Cornice. Named *Hitchhiker*, it gets F8b+. Expect undercuts. Should have called it 37, Shirley?

While we're on limestone bolt routes, I will give a huge hat tip (I'm thinking Stetson or sombrero) to the Barbara Cartland of new routes, Gary Gibson. In case you missed this statistical milestone, Gary has recently notched up his 5,000th new route. A remarkable achievement, for a number of reasons. I can't really get my head around 5,000 new routes. And even if not every one is a three-star classic, then statistically some of them are bound to be

alright. How long before we're reporting 6,000? Nice one, Gary, and I mean that as sincerely as the jaded persona I inhabit when writing these columns permits.

At the other end of the quantity-to-difficulty continuum, recently published training book supremo Ned Feehally has done a Font 8c at The Wave. *Sine Language* is a standing start (LH on a two-finger gaston, RH pinch) and climbs along rightwards into The Ramp. I have to say this does look monster. At the same crag he's added a Font 8b on the right side: *Ground Wave* has a low start into a hard undercut move, before finishing through the main traverse line.

Also at the Wave – which has been in good condition late summer – Jon Fullwood has added a low start to the left of *Dan's Groove*, with two alternative finishes: one up *James/Ned's Problem* at a reported Font 7c+ called *Wave Mechanics*, and another up *Dan's Groove* at Font 7b+ called *Mechanical Dan*. However both of these were then quickly ruined by one lanky soon-to-be-ex-Peak-Area-news correspondent who managed to undercut through most of the initial difficulties, so take the grades with a pinch of salt – maybe knock a grade off for every inch over 5'11" you are.

Still on the limestone, in the Boardwalk Cave down in Dovedale, Ned reports a few really good-looking additions for those willing to make the trek down there. They featured on a video recently if you can find it on that internet they have now. The brilliantly named *Heely Selassie* is a Font 7c starting on 'the big fat undercut below the break that *Rastavarian* etc. starts on' and heads up using heels among other appendages. Also, some links: *Buffalo Shoulder* (Font 7c+) links *Heely Selassie* into *Slime and Reason*. *Ned Locks* is Font 8a+ and links *Heely Selassie* into *Rastavarian*. Finally, *Brute Away* (Font 8b) links *Heely Selassie* into *Roofs Manuva*. Last thing from Ned: down the

Churnet way on the FrankenChurnet wall, the project over on the far left is now *Bock Atrocity* – Font 8a in case you are wondering. Starts on a flake and a pocket.

Grit temps are approaching now though folks – you can feel it in the air, can't you? Lovely stuff. Cue a November where it proceeds to rain for four weeks straight. Anyway, at Stanage I note that even obvious boulders can still give up new things, case in point being the new problem *Guy Ritchie* which takes the arete right of *Snatch* on the right side from sitting perched on another block – this from Joseph Mullett and Ed Gow-Smith. Also on grit, the aforementioned Mr Fullwood has added a Font 7b on a boulder down below *Grand Doigts*. This is called *Smiling Moon* and is a sit start going right into an arete.

OK, at this point I think I can be frank with you, we're all friends here; I left it till the last minute to write this and then have come down with a cold so can't be doing with writing any more. Sorry, but it's a bit like when you've handed your notice in, you've got your reference, so that last week in your old job you can afford to toss it off a bit. We've all been there right? Don't try to tell me you haven't. If you've done something notable recently and I haven't included it and naturally you feel aggrieved, then I can recommend a good way to make sure your activities are included in future is to volunteer to write the newsletter. Contact the chair for details of the selection process.

Ta for reading.

Get in touch

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

Peak Area Meetings: 2021

18 October, 7 p.m., The Internet.
Register **HERE**.



Forthcoming Events

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

Peak Area Hill Walk

White Peak, Saturday 30 October

See page 5 for details of the autumn hill walk starting from Hartington.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, many events have been cancelled or postponed. For the latest information on forthcoming events in the Peak Area, please keep an eye on the BMC's community pages.

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The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) is the representative body that exists to protect the freedoms and promote the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers, including ski-mountaineers. Find out more: **www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-governance**