

The Pennine Way Association Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2006

Issue No. 61

To improve, protect and preserve for the benefit of the public, the Pennine Way. For this purpose, but not otherwise, the Association shall: provide information about the Way and its environs to the public; encourage users of the Way in a proper respect of the Countryside; make appropriate representations to governmental and non-governmental bodies at all levels, and to their individual members; and provide a forum in which different interests connected with the Way and its use can discuss problems of mutual concern.



Registered Charity No 511519

The contents of this newsletter are not to be taken as the Association's policy or views

The Pennine Way Association (Formerly the Pennine Way Council)

Founded 1970

Membership:

There are two categories:

1. Representatives of voluntary organisations such as the Ramblers' Association, National Park Voluntary Wardens Service, Peak & Northern Footpaths Society, YHA, Association of Countryside Voluntary Wardens, and County, Borough, District and Parish Councils through whose area the Pennine Way passes.
2. Associate Members, i.e. individuals who support the Association's objectives. It is **NOT** necessary to have walked the Pennine Way – only to be interested in its preservation.

Meetings of the Association:

The Association meets twice a year in Leeds, and the Executive Committee [elected at the Annual General Meeting] meets on two additional occasions. At these meetings a variety of matters concerning the Pennine Way are raised, discussed and pursued through the various channels available. Each year, the Association organises, on behalf of its members, a walk along different stretches of the Way, followed by an annual dinner.

Publications:

The Association offers three publications:

1. An accommodation and camping guide priced at £1.50 including postage etc.
2. Spring and autumn newsletters [issued free to members].
3. A Pennine Way Memento on parchment type paper priced at £2.50 including postage.

Officers and Executive Committee:

- President: John Weatherall
- Vice Presidents: Ron McLoughlin and Chris Sainty.
- Chairman: Bill Gallon
- Vice Chairman: Trevor Hardy
- Acting Hon Secretary: Doug Moffat, 49 Hedley Hill Terrace, Waterhouses, Co. Durham, DH7 9AZ.
- Newsletter Editor: Chris Sainty, 29 Springfield Park Avenue, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 6EL.
- Hon Treasurer: Graham Daniels
- Minutes Secretary: Vacant
- Membership Secretary: Tony Jones, 19 Bywell Avenue, Hexham, NE46 1JA
- Editor – Accommodation & Camping Guide: John Needham, 23 Woodland Crescent, Hilton Park, Manchester, M25 9WQ

Executive Committee: Veronica Boulton, Steve Westwood, Bill Button, Heulwen Goodall, Kevin Proctor, Paul Quest, Peter Stott and John Goodall.

Editorial

The YHA is a registered charity, founded in 1930 which operates a network of 219* youth hostels (* YHA annual report to 28th February 2005) across England and Wales. Its mission statement is 'to help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, and appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing Youth Hostels or other accommodation for them in their travels, and thus to promote their health, recreation and education'.

The YHA has 246,824* members, employs an average of 1,065* staff, has an annual turnover of £35.623* million, and is one of Britain's top 50 charities. In 2005 (the 75th anniversary year of the YHA), the YHA announced on their website that they wished to "strengthen their focus on young people" and renew their accommodation network so that their "sites" are in the "right place and of the right quality" to deliver their objectives.

Their future plans include increasing membership and extending the YHA network where they do not have youth hostels at present. The YHA also stated that it will be "investing in sites that have a long-term future, withdrawing from those with limited potential".

All youth hostels go through an ongoing review of performance. The performance review looks at each location's popularity with "guests", the investment needed to achieve a three-star standard (good to very good overall level of quality measured in terms of facilities, cleanliness, friendliness and efficiency of staff, décor, furnishing and food etc) as set out by Visit Britain Standards for Hostel Accommodation, as well as other

factors such as the contribution to central services costs after maintaining and servicing the building, and the return on capital invested in that site. Recommendation of closure is usually the result of falling/poor visitor numbers (30% capacity or less – over the calendar year) and/or the need for substantial work (and expense) to upgrade facilities. Today's fire, hygiene, disability, and security requirements mean that maintaining hostels for public use is expensive.

Last summer, the threat to close large numbers of hostels was mooted. Sadly this was confirmed by a press release by the YHA on 1st February 2006 announcing that they are closing 32 hostels. The following PWA hostels will be closed (the YHA does not envisage replacement but would be happy to work with potential enterprise operators in any of these locations): **Alston** (YHA 3★), **Baldersdale** (YHA3★), **Bellingham** (YHA 1★), **Earby** (YHA 3★), **Greenhead** (YHA 3★), **Keld** (YHA 3★), **Stainforth** (YHA 3★), and **Byrness** (YHA 3★). This is indeed a very sad year for hostelling.

You will note that the YHA have announced that no less than **eight** Pennine Way hostels are earmarked for closure sometime after 31st October 2006 (although Byrness and Baldersdale could go earlier). These closures will devastate the Pennine Way's hostel provision, leaving just **Edale** (currently 2★), **Crowden** (3★) [where there will also be changes as it is about to merge with Rotherham LEA – whose building burnt down a few years ago and whose usage of the building will have some impact on the availability for YHA members], **Mankinholes** (4★), **Malham** (3★),

Hawes (3★), Langdon Beck (3★), Dufton (4★), Once Brewed (3★), and Kirk Yetholm (SYHA 2★) on or near the route (Haworth is 2.5 miles from the PW). One can but wonder at the decisions to close some of the hostels, even with the problems that the YHA appear to be currently facing. Keld covers the PW, Wainwright's Coast to Coast walk, and the Herriot Way which must surely put a strain on existing B&Bs in the village at peak times. This could force walkers to abandon the Pennine Way altogether if they are unable to find sufficient accommodation in this area. I can only compare the current decision to close this many PW hostels in one go with the Beeching report published on 27th March 1963. There are so many parallels with it.

The YHA state on their website that they expect to use some of the funds for reinvestment and that their overall network will remain about the same size, but some of this will be by seeking existing providers who want to operate under the "YHA umbrella". They also say that they are "withdrawing from unpopular locations and looking to relocate to new better sites" and that they "want to provide good accommodation in good locations that people want to visit". Also that they exist "for all" but their main target in terms of beneficiaries is "young people of limited means". However, most hostel overnight costs have risen by 10% this year and the new "yield management scheme that allows our staff to match availability with market demand and price accordingly" (Chief Executive's review if the year [2005]), intimates that peak season prices may be higher.

The timing of the closures, so recently after celebrating the 40th anniversary of the PW, could not be worse, nor could the number of hostel closures on the LDP. Some could be closed without affecting walkers, especially where there is plenty of other accommodation in the area, e.g. Alston, but others need more careful thought before they are finally closed. Other avenues need to be explored first, e.g. lottery funds and the more profitable hostels helping other less used ones. Finally, YHA Chief Executive Roger Clarke has said: "We are targeting families with children, schools and youth organisations, and young people travelling independently for the first time." (www.manchestersonline.co.uk). This is one approach, but it leaves many hostellers (older members, people without children, and people who don't want to share a hostel with a school party – if you can get into a hostel once a school party has booked it) outside in the cold.

As someone who has spent three decades walking the PW, hostelling has always been my first choice in accommodation. Each hostel on the Way is a piece in a jigsaw, and to lose some of these crucial pieces may mean that the whole picture will for many become untenable? Youth Hostels, and their unique character and welcome for walkers are fundamental to the PW experience – is this something that we are prepared to lose?

At the March 2006 AGM of the Association, "It was resolved that the PWA strongly urges the YHA to rescind its plans to close hostels which serve the accommodation needs of Pennine Way walkers, especially in areas such as Keld and Greenhead, where there are insufficient alternative

accommodation, and to enter into discussion with the PWA and other interested organisations to explore ways of maintaining the network of hostels, including political pressure on the government for funds to sustain the enjoyment of the countryside and National Trails in particular, by those of limited means.”

If you have any opinions on these closures, please make your voice heard by emailing the YHA. Their address is given on their web site at www.yha.org.uk . I would also be very interested in your thoughts about this situation, and would welcome your stories about your experiences at any of the hostels along the PW route, particularly those scheduled for closure.

Chairman's Chat

After what has appeared to be a long winter it is good to see the leaves returning to the trees and hear the call of the curlew and pewit in the Pennines. The Association continues to grow in numbers and we will try to ensure that we work to achieve our objectives as stated in our publicity. You, as members, can help us by being active in the PWA. We look forward to your views, comments and ideas. Thank you to all those members who sent me their email addresses.

On a broad front there has been both good and bad news. The government's National Environment and Rural Communities Bill became law on 27/3/06. The main points were that only claims prior to 20/1/05 will be processed under the horse and cart rule which means that many green

lanes and bridleways should be free of the 4WD and motorbike brigade, and that the National Parks Authorities now have the power to impose Traffic Regulation Orders prohibiting recreational vehicles from green lanes. The Highway Authorities previously did this.

The bad news was the probable closure of 32 Youth Hostels, which included 8 hostels of use to PW walkers. In some cases this causes limited problems but the closure of Keld and to a lesser extent Greenhead and Byrness could inhibit the use of the Trail. The YHA are currently employing an officer to investigate partnerships to fill in the gaps caused by these closures but it remains to be seen as to how successful they will be. We have been in consultation with the YHA at the top level and have voiced our concerns and views.

The Hareshaw Linn diversion is proceeding slowly with the main problem appearing to be the cost of a bridge over the Linn north of the waterfall. The problem with the memorial plaque to our late President Ken Willson has been resolved and it is to be placed on the new bridge over the Maize Beck sometime this summer. Footpath improvement work continues with major work being carried out to the north of Stoodley Pike where there are erosion problems.

We now have an Acting Secretary Doug Moffatt who will be formally elected to the position at the first opportunity. Doug is a member of the Durham Countryside Ranger Service, and has been so for many years, as well as being a Voluntary Warden for the YHA.

This year's Annual Walk is in County Durham and full details appear as an insert in this Newsletter. The long walk will be on the Bowes alternative, as will much of the shorter walk, giving people the chance to see the fine two new bridges on the route. Indeed with the probable closure of Baldersdale YH this route will probably see greater activity. Those attending the weekend have the opportunity of staying at Baldersdale which is about 30 minutes from both the start of the walks and the dinner venue at Barnard Castle.

Last week I walked half of the Robert Louis Stevenson Trail which starts in the Ardeche and crosses the Cevennes in the Massif Central. About ten years ago the Trail became a Grand Randonee, which is equivalent to our National Trails. This is well way marked by linesmen who cover sections and in one aspect is certainly superior to our system; at difficult junctions, where errors are likely, the wrong direction is marked with a red and white cross. The walk also illustrates the benefits of a theme with items about Robert Louis Stevenson all along the way, information boards quoting sections from "Travels With a Donkey" on which the walk is based, and even model donkeys in people's gardens. When passing through villages many of the locals are aware of his comments on their village.

Have a good summer of walks and we look forward to seeing many of you at the Annual Walk as well as our Executive Meeting in Leeds on 8/7/06 at the Quaker Meeting House, Woodhouse Lane, at 1.30.

Green is the new Black (Hill)

John Goodall

The Huddersfield Daily Examiner reported in February that Black Hill, famous for its morass of wet, soggy peat, and prior to the P W being flagged, a place to dread in bad weather, is to shed its dark foreboding image. The owners of the land, United Utilities and Yorkshire Water, recognise that it needs a helping hand to recover and will shortly begin work to revegetate 46 hectares around the trig point. The first stage is to spread 163 tonnes of heather brash, to a depth of 1cm deep, cut from areas of moorland elsewhere in the National Park. This will act as a protective blanket, helping to protect the peat from further erosion and provide a source of seed. Black Hill has, in the past, suffered from over (sheep) grazing, acid rain and fire damage, and hopefully, these measures will make it blend into the land rather than being a blot on the landscape.

Pennine Way News

I mentioned in an earlier newsletter that Footprint had updated their 2 part Pennine Way map guides (Edale to Teesdale and Teesdale to Kirk Yetholm) and that they now come in a waterproof format. They are very compact (12cm x 21cm) and lightweight (about 25g each - 80g for both maps plus plastic wallet) and delightfully clear and easy to read. They are excellent value too at £4.95 each. I use them all the time but must declare a personal interest as the latest editions have my photographs on the main covers. Full details can be found at www.footprintmaps.co.uk

A warm welcome to new members!

Brian Hall	Grimsby	John Pattrick	Leigh-on-Sea
Tony Watson	Holmfirth	Ian Howes	Chesterton
Robert Till	Australia	Tony Waddy	Duston
John Connell	Watford	R Massheder	Scarborough
J B Wright	Ashbourne	Peter Monks	Chorley
Cameron Beck	Hardingstone	David Redcastle	St Albans
Sally Beck	Bradford	Linda Worth	Singapore
Chris Collins	Bangor	Susan Kelly	Bangor
Adam Butler	London	Chris Jonas	Brendon
Chris Thompson	Daventry	Tim Nicholls	Hildenborough
Joe Macfee	Northallerton	Donna Cowie	Grimsby
Viv Ashley	Colchester	C P Sanderson	Normanton
Rebecca Stubbs	Southgate	Gregory Howard	Southgate
Ian Retson	Ashby-de-la-Zouch	R.Turrell	Lichfield
Neil Hatley	Portsmouth	Anthony Vallis	Durrington
Gemma Paskin	Middleton-in-Teesdale		

The Gentle Art of Walking

Peter Stott

When the 'Pennine Way' was first proposed, Mr Joseph E Morris, of Totnes, wrote to The Times in protest. He recalled that fifty years before, when a boy of sixteen, he had walked 'the trackless Pennine Fells between High Force and Appleby, absolutely alone, in very doubtful weather, and without compass and proper map'. A special Pennine Way, he thought, was quite unnecessary and he protested strongly. 'Of course I lost my way,' his letter continued, 'and came down into the Vale of Eden by Scorsdale Head instead of High Cup Nick, but that merely gave a touch of additional joy. It would have been safer, no doubt, to have had compass and ordnance map; yet I managed to do without them'.

'To anyone who really loves wild nature the modern intensive 'spoon-feeding', so dear to motorist and fashionable 'hiker', is absolutely abhorrent. To steer one's way through the solitudes by following streams or ridges, or by aiming for distant landmarks, and even on occasions to be lost temporarily in mist, is actually, though doubtless only to those who understand their job properly, part of 'the fun of the fair'. Wild nature, tamed and domesticated, is no longer wild nature; man meddles only to mar.' That's how Mr Morris saw it in 1938, and the quotation comes from "*The Gentle Art of Walking*" by Geoffrey Murray, published by Blackie and Son Limited in 1939. For the committed walker this book is a delightful read, filled with choice catches from Murray's trawl through the records of walking since the Children of Israel embarked on their forty-year long distance trek out of Egypt.

Those of us stimulated by the "E" footpaths across Europe may well gasp at the audacity of Tom Coryate who set off in the early seventeenth century to walk to Venice and back - he took five months - outshining himself four years later by walking to India where he died from drinking too much sack, forced on him by 'over kindly' Englishmen.

The Outdoor Equipment and Nutritional Theorists might snort at the clothing and diets espoused by such exponents of the art of 'pedestrianism' as Captain Barclay and Foster Powell. Huge crowds turned out to witness the ends of their (unrelated) walks in the second half of the eighteenth century, such as London to York and back (402 miles) in six days, and London to Birmingham via Cambridge (150 miles) in two days.

The names of many selected walkers are familiar: Keats, Wordsworth and Constable weren't burdened by what we might call 'proper jobs', and their vocations took them out into the natural world. Until Murray enlightened me, I was ignorant of many of the other characters, including Stephen Graham, born 1884, who gave up a safe job in which he felt imprisoned, to lead a life of roaming and mystical writing.... how many of us have failed to live that dream?

Murray ended his book with a review of walking in the twentieth century, with references to the Manchester Pedestrian Club, the various rambles' movements, and the YHA. He pointed out that, even in 1939, a Bill for Access to Mountains had for fifty years failed to gain a Second Reading in the Commons, though he was confident of its eventual success; we now know he was right. He also foresaw the growth of organised holidays in the form of hiking tours in the Himalayas.

This is a charming book. I imagine it has been out of print for decades, but if you can get it from your library or pick it up in a second-hand shop you won't be disappointed.

Pennine Way Improvements

At the November Executive Committee meeting, Steve Westwood provided a report on recent past and proposed work on the path. In the Peak District, flagging work was carried out at Broad Lee Bank near the start of the Way to provide a firm surface across the pastures. Pitching stone has been flown in to a section below the rock outcrop on the old route up Grindsbrook Meadow ready for work to be carried out in 2006. A section of

path north of the Snakes Pass road to Doctors Gate has been resurfaced with aggregate to provide an improved surface.

A section of built path between Standedge and Buckstones road has been resurfaced by flying in aggregate to top up the existing path.

In the Yorkshire Dales National Park, work has been done improving the pitching on the steep approach to Pen y Ghent along with work to help stabilise the Hunt Pot track by the construction of stone drainage channels. At Old Ings, following 4X4 damage to the path built in 2004, the section has been resurfaced and narrowed. In Thwaite Lane, the dry stone wall repairs have been completed.

In the Durham area, the narrow footbridge at Raploch Castle has been replaced with a bridleway bridge in line with the RoW status. The section of the Way prior to Cronkley Farm has been flagged to replace the various path surfaces previously used. Meanwhile, in Cumbria, the new footbridge crossing at Maize Beck has been built; the final sections of flagging over Dun Fell have been completed as has work to remove the landslip material from the 2004 landslip by Greg's Hut.

In Northumberland, some erosion prevention work on the site of the fort was carried out and a new footbridge was built to replace the ford crossing at the northern end of the site. Further flagging was done near King's Seat. The Field Studies Council are producing a laminated Field Guide for the Pennine Way, which will include flora and fauna, landscape character, geology and the farming year. This should be now be available.

Pennine Way Booklist

At the last count there were 40 books published on the Pennine Way. Some predate the National Trail, some are walking guides and some are “coffee table” books to look at in the warmth of the sitting room on a cold winter’s night. Below is the full list of books as far as I know. They are listed in the order of publication with the original publisher shown. If you know of any books that are not on the list, please let me know, as I am a dedicated collector of all things connected with the PW and I will add it to the list and my collection. Similarly, if you have any unwanted PW items, I can find a good home for them – Editor.

1. **John D. Wood - 'Mountain Trail'** pub George Allen & Unwin 240 pp [1947]
2. **Ken Oldham - 'The Pennine Way'** pub Dalesman pp 80 [1960] ISBN 0 85206 691 0
3. **Alan P. Binns - 'Walking the Pennine Way'** pub Frederick Warne 75 pp [1966] ISBN 7232 2803 5
4. **H. O. Wade - 'The Pennine Way in Twenty Days'** pub Harold Hill pp 72 [1966]
5. **Christopher J. Wright - 'A guide to the Pennine Way'** pub Constable pp 240 [1967] ISBN 0 09 462760 6
6. **James Haworth [ed.] - 'The Pennine Way and Walks in Derbyshire'** pub Derbyshire Countryside Ltd pp 64 [1967]
7. **Alfred Wainwright - 'Pennine Way Companion'** pub Westmorland Gazette pp 224 [1968]
8. **Michael Marriott - 'The Shell Book of the Pennine Way'** pub The Queen Anne Press Ltd 80 pp [1968]
9. **Tom Stephenson - 'The Pennine Way'** pub HMSO pp 112 [1969]
10. **John Needham - 'The Pennine Way Accommodation and Camping Guide'** pub Pennine Way Council pp 36 [1971]
11. **J. H. B. Peel - 'Along the Pennine Way'** pub David and Charles pp 204 [1972] ISBN 0-7153-7833-3
12. **Colin Walker - 'A Walker on the Pennine Way'** pub Pendyke Publications [1977] ISBN 0 904318 10 9
13. **J Jowett *et al* - 'The Pennine Way Pub Guide'** pub privately pp 63 [1980?]
14. **Laurie R. Boyle - 'The Walk'** pub privately pp 45 [undated]
15. **Gerard C. de Waal - 'The Pennine Way Ten Voeten Uit'** pub GédéWé pp 206 [1982]
16. **Graeme Hardy - 'North to South along the Pennine Way'** pub Frederick Warne pp 80 [1983] ISBN 0 7232 2813 2
17. **Alfred Wainwright - 'Wainwright on the Pennine Way'** pub Michael Joseph pp 216 [1985] ISBN 07181 24294
18. **Barry Pilton - 'One Man and his Bog'** pub Corgi Books pp 134 [1986] ISBN 0-552-12796-5
19. **Gerard C. De Waal - 'Going Dutch - The Pennine Way'** pub GédéWé pp 174 [1987] ISBN 90-800133-1-5 CIP
20. **John J. Fleming - 'Day by Day along the Pennine Way - a personal account'** pub privately pp 57 [1987]

21. **Pete Bogg - 'Laughs along the Pennine Way'** pub Cicerone Press
pp 104 [1987]
22. **Footprint - 'The Pennine Way - part one- Edale to Teesdale'** pp 8
[1988] ISBN 1-871149-01-0
23. **Footprint - 'The Pennine Way - part two - Teesdale to Kirk
Yetholm'** pp 8 [1988] ISBN 1-871149-02-9
24. **Peter Sansom - On the Pennine Way - Poems from Standedge to
Lunedale: 150 miles, or half the Pennine Way'** pub Littlewood Press
pp 45 [1988]
25. **Chris Harrison - 'The Pennine Way Pub Guide'** pub Scarthin Books
pp 109 [1988] ISBN 0 907758 23 1
26. **Tony Hopkins - 'Pennine Way North – Bowes to Kirk Yetholm'** pub
Aurum Press Ltd pp 168 [1989] ISBN 1 85410 40 8
27. **Tony Hopkins - Pennine Way South – Edale to Bowes'** pub Aurum
Press Ltd pp 144 [1990] ISBN 1 85410 022 X
28. **Frank Duerden - 'Great Walks, the Pennine Way'** pub Ward Lock
Ltd pp 176 [1990] ISBN 0 7063 68134
29. **Harry Penrice - 'Daily Outings on The Pennine Way, walks for
young and old'** pub Thornhill Press pp 157 [1991] ISBN 094632832 3
30. **John Gillham - 'Pennine Ways. Edale to Kirk Yetholm for the
Independent Walker'** pub The Crowood Press pp 160 [1994] ISBN 1
85223 841 0
31. **Mark Wallington - 'Pennine Walkies'** pub Hutchinson pp 229 [1996]
ISBN 0 09 1792347
32. **Peter Gorring and Dilys Cheetham - 'Walk this way - The Pennine
Way'** pub Gotham Press [1995] pp 45 ISBN 0 9526037 0 5
33. **Terry Marsh - 'Pennine Way'** [1997] pub Dalesman pp192 ISBN
185568 108 0
34. **Martin Collins - 'The Pennine Way'** pub Cicerone Press pp 136
[1998] ISBN 1-85284-262-8
35. **Ueli Hintermeister - 'Outdoor Handbuch England: Pennine Way'**
pub Conrad Stein pp 160 [1999] ISBN 3-89392-164-8
36. **Edward de la Billiere and Keith Carter - 'Pennine Way'** pub
Trailblazer Publications pp 258 [2004] ISBN 1 873756 57 7
37. **Harvey Maps - ' Pennine Way North'** pp 5 [2005] ISBN 185137421-3
38. **Harvey Maps - 'Pennine Way Central'** pp 6 [2005] ISBN 185137426-4
39. **Harvey Maps - 'Pennine Way South'** pp 5 [2005] ISBN 185137431-0
40. **Tony Hopkins - 'The Pennine Way'** pub Zymurgy Publishing pp160
[2005] ISBN 1-903506-13-1

Pennine Way Memories Barry Jenkinson

A few months ago I was in Hawes in Wensleydale and I went into a second hand bookshop and what did I find but a video about the Pennine Way made in 1998 called "Four get over-excited on the Pennine Way". It runs for 95 minutes and stars Ben Ramsden, Richard Cole, Sue Fox and Tony Garratt. Robert Langley, better known as Bob Langley of "Pebble Mill at One" used to be a well-known walker who did a TV programme called "Lakeland Summer". My favourite programme of his was a nightly half hour programme, which ran in the early 1970s following Bob Langley's walk of

the whole of the Pennine Way. It was fantastic with dramatic music and special effects showing the PW in all its glory. At the end of the 16 half hour programmes they showed a condensed one-hour programme, which was still great to watch. For years now I have been looking out for it in the TV and Radio Times etc to see if the BBC will ever repeat this brilliant one hour programme. Would it be possible for the PWA to contact the BBC for a copy or at least have them show it once again so our members could watch the programme (*They are available – but for a hefty price! – Ed*) I myself have walked the P W twice, once in 1977 and again in 1997, plus I have been over parts of it many times. In 1977 there were many more people walking the PW than now and the Border Hotel in Kirk Yetholm was full of P W walkers. Behind the bar you could buy T shirts, sweat shirts and ties, all showing a Pennine Way signpost with the words “Pennine Way Conquered” on them. I still have my PW tie. What a change in 1997. There was little sign behind the bar of the hotel that this was the end of the Pennine Way. Some days I didn’t meet anyone at all. I think it all comes down to the cost of doing this walk. You are talking of hundreds of pounds if you use B&Bs and hostels, having a few drinks each night, plus an evening meal – about £30 a day plus the cost of getting to Edale and back from Kirk Yetholm. Many of the young people don’t want to walk any more. Most of the walkers I met in 1997 were over 40 years old. You do see young people in hostels but they are just walking around the local area; school parties etc. not long distance walkers. After walking the PW you just never get it out of your mind. The memories stay with you forever. Not

one day goes by without me thinking about it. All the people I have met, all the great scenery, it just lives with you forever.

In defence of Byrness

Peter Stott

There’s little that excites me about Byrness, but it’s a great relief to arrive at the end of the lonely northbound trudge from Bellingham across Padon Hill and down through Redesdale Forest or the long slog from Kirk Yetholm over the windswept domes of the Cheviots.

Built as a construction camp for the Catcleugh Reservoir, the village has evolved into a forestry community, where passing trade on the A68 trunk road and the Pennine Way inject a little variety into a dull monoculture. An essential overnight stop for most Pennine Wayfarers, the valley is home to voracious midges and is no place to linger.

Uppermost Redesdale exudes the underlying menace of a foreign land. Viewed from its watersheds, the valley brims over with millions of conifers, whose dark green needles filter and release ragged eruptions of white mist, rising as moist smoke signals in a random and indecipherable code. Below the canopy, the feeble grey light reveals a lifeless gloom of withered limbs waiting their turn to join the rotting litter on the forest floor. Outside the plantations, riparian vegetation grows tall and rank in the midsummer warmth of wet meadows. Byrness crouches in its small clearings, and always I feel that the Reivers are hiding, watching, waiting for me to make an unguarded move.

My first visit came on a northbound walk in 1963, and a grim trio we must have looked in our unwashed and unshaven state. The Border Services Café fed us, but we needed beds for the night. Our only hope seemed to be the Byrness Hotel. We approached the premises with trepidation and decided that Neil, our natural leader, should plead the case for shelter. When a smartly dressed man answered the door, Neil for once seemed lost for words, and it was John who filled the void with a cheerful ‘Nah then, mate. Does tha do bed an’ breakfast?’ The man scrutinised us through a long and nerve-racking silence until, with unconcealed distaste, he led the way to a twin-bedded room where he threw a spare camp bed at us. Late that night we discovered that the Border Bar was directly beneath, and our sleep was interrupted far into the early hours by the shouts and laughter of tireless drinkers.

Today’s walkers enjoy more choice, with one or two B&B houses, good bothies in the forest, and Byrness Youth Hostel. The hostel is a quirky arrangement, comprising two adjoining terrace properties with no interconnecting doors. The ground floor of one house provides the drying room, kitchen and dining room, whilst the first floor has three bedrooms and a bathroom. The other house contains the common room, office, warden’s quarters, two further bedrooms and a bathroom. The hostel is self-catering only.

These details I know because I spent a week there as a volunteer warden last year, but I’ve also learned from the feedback of Pennine Way hikers that the little place is an absolute boon. My guests included eight Belgians

who were thwarted by dreadful April weather in their attempt to finish the Way. They’d been tackling the trail piecemeal for a few years, and I felt for them in their obvious disappointment. The following night’s complement included five guys who’d left Edale as two pairs and a singleton. They’d met en route and formed a companionship as they pressed relentlessly northwards through some rough spring days. They left at first light on a perfect April morning, and I’ve no doubt they completed their epic journey and will rattle on about it as long as their memories last.

So there you are. Byrness isn’t the prettiest place on the Way, but between Bellingham and Kirk Yetholm it’s the oasis everyone needs. The Youth Hostel provides the perfect launching pad for your final northbound test (I wish we’d had that in 1963) and a more than welcome recovery room if you’re struggling south. And you might just find that the volunteer warden has done the Pennine Way and will be genuinely interested in your tales of derring-do!

Miscellaneous

One of our members, Bren Farrell, under the nom de plume of Bill Keeth, has written a book, not about the Pennine Way, but about life in Manchester during the 1960s (cleverly written in the Mancunian vernacular) called “Every Street in Manchester” published by Limited Edition Press. Chapters 13-15 of the book cover part of the P W route and suddenly all the characters’ surnames are P W place names. It is an excellent well written book and further details can be found at www.novelnovella.com or www.amazon.co.uk

A different way of doing the Pennine Way.

Andy Brown

Andy Brown is a retired policeman, and now spends his time working as a part-time Patrol Ranger for the Peak District National Park, and at the Visitor Centre in the Upper Derwent Valley. He is also a 'biker'.

Having walked various bits of the Pennine Way over the past 30 years, he thought about the possibility of doing it on his motorbike.

Research involved looking at road and ordnance survey maps, and also contacting the Pennine Way Association to see if it had a record of any motorist books on the subject. He was recommended one published by Shell in 1968, and written by Michael Marriott. His local library found a hardback version, which he was allowed to keep for a month, and then managed to find a paperback version at an antiquarian bookshop in Warrington. In 1968 the book cost 10s.6d. He had to pay £18, but it was well worth it. He has no doubts that some of the members of the PWA will know this book. It was the inspiration he needed. Michael Marriott wrote the book for the motorist, including circular walks on selected pieces of the route. His motorist's route wasn't dissimilar to the one pencilled in on Andy's road map.

As part of his introduction, Michael Marriott wrote this; 'For the uninitiated, perhaps the best introduction to the Pennine Way is that advocated in this guide - with the aid of the car.' After commenting about determined yet unprepared walkers who often fail to walk the full length of the trail, he says; 'Much better to take selected bites at the cherry, learning about the

high places progressively and safely, always keeping the endeavours within personal capability.' That was in the days when there weren't as many cars on the road. One of the photographs taken on the road to Alston, is of a Vauxhall Cresta! Remember them, with rear fins housing the rear light cluster? Having now read the whole of it a couple of times, it is a great book with exceptional detail. So, he had to go and ride it! Days off were spent riding the various possibilities; the aim to try and keep as close as possible to the route on tarmac.

The traditional start is of course Edale, but in the first hour there is more travelling east and west than north. Within half a day, the Pennine Way is crossed no more than five times. This route also takes in some of the classic trans-pennine roads, the Snake Pass, Woodhead Pass, Holme Moss, the Isle of Skye road, the A62, Nont Sarahs (A640) and the A58. Heading north only starts from lunchtime at Hebden Bridge. The rider also gets a good look at the Pennine watershed - there are reservoirs everywhere! A northerly direction is kept up by linking the trans-pennine roads with 'B' class country roads. Quite a challenge on a big bike! Marsden was used as the morning coffee stop, at the Standedge Tunnel Visitor Centre, which also included a boat trip into the canal tunnel. Unfortunately, the whole centre appears now to have been a bit of a 'white elephant' for British Waterways, and canal trips are only done during school holidays and on some weekends. You can still do the whole length of the tunnel on a Hikers Ticket, but check the tug boat is actually operating. Andy has done it, and it is worthwhile.

Andy decided to make the first day's stopover in Hawes, the route from Hebden Bridge taking in Oxenhope, Wycoller, Earby, Gargrave, Malham, Stainforth, Horton-in-Ribblesdale and the Ribblehead Viaduct. Great roads!

From Hawes the route is definitely more northern, with the exception of the Middleton-in-Teesdale to Alston road. There are no tarmac roads suitable to get to Dufton, so this is part of the route which is probably the furthest from the Way. No matter, the road is a superb bikers road!

Through Haltwhistle, along Hadrian's Wall with a scheduled stop at Housesteads, up through Bellingham and onto the A68 to the Scottish Border. From here Andy found some interesting and challenging roads, with almost no traffic but lots of farm mud and gravel through Hownam to Morebattle and into Kirk Yetholm. The Pennine Way done in two days! Total mileage - 295.

Since his initial recci, Andy has turned this into a bit of a summer business/hobby. He runs Pennine Motorcycle Tours, and now includes other long distance walking routes in the itinerary- Coast to Coast, Offa's Dyke. He does the Pennine Way in two days, returning to Edale on the third day via other great Pennine roads.

It is surprising the number of customers he gets that boast that they did the Pennine Way in their youth, relate their trials and tribulations, and ask to stop at localities that have some poignant memory for them. Although Andy doesn't manage to get his customers to the top of the fells, the roads

he rides certainly have great views. He rides mostly single-track roads, has to keep an eye out for sheep, cow dung and the odd tractor. He takes no more than five bikes on a tour, to minimise annoyance to residents and other road users. Plus the fact that having only that number of bikes is easier to control.

The Pennine Way is Andy's favourite of the routes he now offers. He regards it as a classic! In actual fact, a group of 'Classic' Bike riders often do the Pennine Way at least once a year. What bike does Andy ride? A Honda STX1300, in a nice wine colour. So if you see him out and about give him a wave! You can get more details of Andy's ventures if you go to his website at www.pennine-motorcycle-tours.co.uk

Tales from America

Moira Kelly, New York

Here I am, sitting at my desk in the middle of Manhattan, New York City. On the shelf in front of me is a little framed postcard of High Cup Nick. I'm listening to the cacophony of the street below my window, thinking of the never-ending list of tasks awaiting me. When I look up, the picture reminds me that somewhere this blissful and quiet place endures, heedless of the turmoil of time and work.

Last year, on a trip to Hexham to visit my father, I met a member of the PWA. I told him I had always wanted to walk "the Nick" and he arranged a trip for me and five "fellow" walkers. The weather was wonderfully changeable; an active sky filled with a litany of light and shadow. We

began the hike in watery sunshine, but as we rounded the first bluff a stiff wind blew shards of rain in our faces and brightened our cheeks.

We stopped for an early lunch in the shelter of an old dry stone shooting hide. The gentlemen provided me with the most comfortable stone on which to sit and we shared hot flasks of tea and pork pies.

We proceeded to the head of the valley and he pointed out the "backbone of the Pennine Way weaving its way across the moors to the east. We looked over the rim of "the Nick", past the spiky stone (I can't remember the name – *Nichol's Chair - Ed*), the distant valley below opening westwards to a view of the domed Lake District. High Cup Nick is like a big slice taken out of the uplands. Our clothes caught the gusting winds, acting like parachutes, keeping us away from the edge.

On the way back, along the Southern rim, we lost the footpath and descended to the valley below on a precipitous sheep path, some of us backwards, some on our backsides! It was hard going, but no complaints. At the fell's foot we were greeted by a great blue heron fishing in the brook among peacefully grazing sheep and cows. Little lavender wild iris - they may have been orchids, were growing in the livid green moss bordering rivulets running toward the brook. The sun was shining and it was as if we had descended from the misty wrath of the gods to the tranquillity of paradise.

Now I can look up from my work every now and then and know that there is always another more peaceful existence available, and good friends to guide me there.

Pennine Way Hostels

