

# MID LANCASHIRE AREA

## NEWS – Mid 2017



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### **Web Site Update - Have you tried it yet? [www.lancashire-ramblers.org.uk](http://www.lancashire-ramblers.org.uk)**

The site continues to provide a single point of access to information on all the groups.

- Interactive access to all the walks from the groups by list or map.
- Currently some 18 fully documented walk descriptions of accessible walks.
- About 300 locations of viable walks around the country including GPX tracks for your use.
- Single point of access to all the Web Sites, Facebook Pages or Meet Ups for each group.
- Information on Coastal Path progress and LCC status reports.
- By the time you receive this there should be a central footpath issue reporting form if you do not know where to submit it.

As soon as possible it will have information on mapping systems to help you use the GPX tracks (see Workshop below), also help in using Pathwatch on computer and phone.

Do have a look and feel free to let us know what else you would like to see on the web (use the "Contact Us").

### **Workshop**

The recent Area email invited a show of interest in a Workshop on using technology. There has been sufficient interest to explore further on this. The workshop would deal with using your smart phone, computer and dedicated devices for mapping and following routes. Probably ½ day, Probably on a Sunday in a few months time.

If you are interested, please let Eric know, either through the area web contact point, the recent email or 07740470728

### **Alan Madeley - Obituary**

Alan served the Ramblers in many roles over the years which included two years as the Area Secretary between 1993 and 1995. He was born in June 1956 and died in early May 2017.

He was a founder member of the West Lancashire Group in 1987 and at various times served the group as the Secretary, Footpath Secretary and Countryside Secretary. In the summer months he frequently went out with a strimmer in order to keep the vegetation down on local footpaths. As was stated at his funeral service he did not mind being a pain for the local authorities when corresponding about footpaths, which included planning applications and blocked footpaths, especially in the Skelmersdale area where he lived.

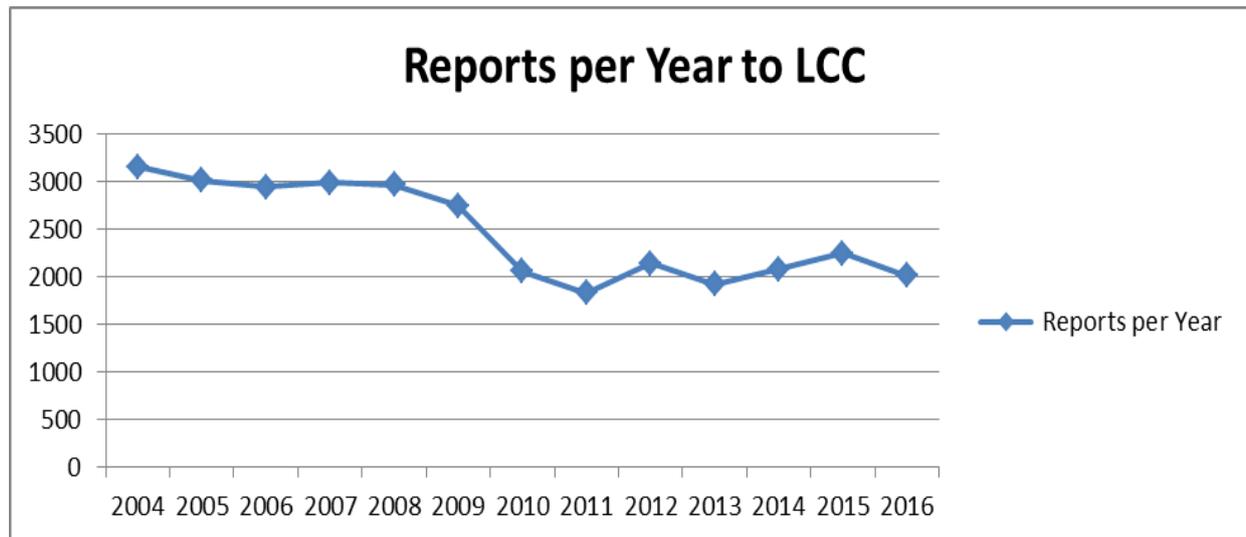
Also he was a walks leader for the Ramblers, Skelmersdale Ramblers and the West Lancashire Footpath Group. Besides his strong interest in the outdoors he was also keen on badminton, motor bikes and was an active member of St Michaels Church, Dalton.

He met his wife Jennifer whilst on a ramble, but sadly Jennifer died six years ago. Alan is survived by his Father and two daughters.

Any items for inclusion in the next Area News need to be with David Kelly by the 31<sup>st</sup> July.

## Footpath Statistics

Lancashire County Council (LCC) has recently provided statistics about the number of complaints during recent years.



Staff at LCC have commented that they think that some people are not reporting faults because they consider that the chances of anything happening is low. The thinking by staff in LCC is that when in some future year that more money becomes available for maintaining public footpaths is that people's expectations will increase, so they will be more likely to make a complaint.

An alternative way of looking at the figures in this period of austerity is that those who complain the least are the ones that are more likely to see a cut in services, so it is important to continue to report defects that are encountered.

LCC have also provided information about the source of complaints with Ramblers using the official LCC Footpath Complaint Form being the most frequent source of complaint in the years between 2004 and 2010. This is still the way staff at LCC still like to receive a footpath complaint for it is the only method that allows for both a digital photograph and comments about the fault to be entered. A good photograph and description may enable staff at LCC to save time by not having to do an initial site visit. From 2011 to 2014 was a period of transition during which peoples habits were changing as a result of modern technology.

The most popular method now of complaining about a footpath is now to use the internet, for with a modern smartphone or pc it is now very easy and quick to make a complaint this way. Using LCC's Highways web site allows the user to enter the location and to also enter a description, but it does not allow for a photograph to be uploaded. This report will then be passed to the group that handles fault reports in respect of public footpaths.

We have recently learnt that the staff in the section concerned with public footpath complaints do not have the facility to pass information back to the Highways Web Site. This means that a report made through the Highways Web Site will result in a red dot being displayed at the location concerned on the Highways Web Site, and this will be removed 12 months later, be it that action has been taken or the report has joined the backlog of reports. The user after an initial acknowledgement usually gets no further updates as to what has happened to the reported fault. (It could be that a report about a fault on a road made through the Highways Web Site may get updated by the staff in Highways, so the red dot could disappear when the fault is repaired.)

LCC's Highway Web Site is limited to Lancashire. The other method of making a fault report is via Pathwatch which will allow for a fault report to be made about anywhere in England. This method will allow for a digital photograph to be uploaded but presently does not always allow for text to be entered. For example a photograph of a wobbly stile will look perfectly normal, so why is it being reported ? <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/get-involved/big-pathwatch.aspx>

As can probably be expected the number of footpath complaints made by phone and by letter (in the traditional post) to the public rights of section in LCC between the years 2004 to 2016 has dropped, which is another sign that the way we use technology is changing.