

# MID LANCASHIRE AREA

## NEWS – Early 2018



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### Member's Day & AGM

Our annual Member's Day & AGM was held on the 27<sup>th</sup> January at the Broughton and District Club.

In the morning some well waterproofed walkers joined the 5 mile walk from the Club while about 8 members joined the mobile app workshop to get in touch with the viewranger walking app. There is an increasing number of Routes onviewranger submitted by our members and available for your use.

After the buffet lunch some 30 members attended the AGM. Minutes will be on the Area web in due course.

The only change in the committee is that Carole has taken over as Treasurer so the Area officers are now:

Chairman	Brian Delaney	Vice Chairman	Eric Crichton
Secretary	David Kelly	Treasurer	Carole Chandler
Walk Programme	Eric Crichton	Footpath Secretary	Joe Howard
-    Publicity	Kevin Matthews	Web Master	Eric Crichton
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The prior AGM minutes and the Annual Report can be found on the Area web site. <http://lancashire-ramblers.org.uk/>

After the AGM a demonstration of Morris Dancing was given by Leyland Morris Men and then followed by some members taking the opportunity to try for themselves. We won't mention the minor injuries due to misguided sticks!



### New on the Area Web Site

A new addition to the site is an offer of free maps and books. These have been donated and are available to request and keep. If sent by post, a donation towards the postage is invited.

Have a look here <http://lancashire-ramblers.org.uk/free-maps-books.html>

The number of walk descriptions increases and will keep increasing over the months. Do take advantage of them and if you do, let us know of any clarification/corrections needed.

We continue to encourage members to use the web site to access information on walks, groups and footpath issues.

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# Ranger Service

In the 60s large parts of Bowland was out of bounds, with no access being allowed to Ward's Stone and many of the Bowland Fells. The footpaths were restricted to the Dunsop Valley, Salter Fell Track and from Langden Intake over Fiendsdale Head to Hazelhurst.

The 1949 Countryside Act allowed county councils to enter into agreements with landowners to allow access to the fells. Typically these were for 21 years and they usually banned dogs. The Peak District entered into a large number of agreements, with the effect that most of the upland parts of the Peak National Park access was allowed. The closure of the moors was allowed for a few days each year so that shooting could take place.

In the 60s pressure was growing for better access to the Bowland Fells. In 1969 access agreements were made with the Abbeystead Estate and the Bleasdale Estate. The former allowed for an access strip that covered Ward's Stone and the latter to Fair Snape Fell. As part of the agreements Lancashire County Council (LCC) were to have a Ranger Service for the purposes of managing the public. The reason why it was an access strip rather than a footpath was that it allowed for small changes to be made to the footpath without the need to make changes to the legal agreement.

In Bowland the access agreement with the Abbeystead Estate was on renewal in the 90s was extended to cover Wolfhole Crag and a path from Tower Lodge to Millers House. The renewal process took longer than expected to complete. When the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) was passed in 2000, it allowed for access to the fells, which completely changed the rules.

Having formed the Ranger Service, LCC then in subsequent years employed Rangers in other parts of the County for managing access to the moors and to other rural locations. This system worked well until 2009 when the number of Rangers was in the teens and the period of austerity started. From that point if anybody resigned or retired then the post was not filled, which meant that the remaining Rangers had a larger patch to cover.

Then in 2015 LCC started to look for more cuts because the constraints of austerity meant that more cuts needed to be made. All non-statutory duties were then effectively placed in the firing line. Having a Ranger Service is useful and desirable but it is not a statutory duty, so it was proposed that the Service be ceased from the end of 2017. LCC then invited charities and voluntary groups to apply to take over a site(s). Access on foot was to remain free, but charges could be applied for car parking and other activities e.g. games. Some organisations like the Woodland Trust stated that they were not interested in taking over any of the sites.

Of the 90s sites being offered LCC only received positive responses in respect of 12 sites, which meant that 78 sites were destined to remain with LCC. This meant that LCC would have to continue to manage these sites. The latest information is a bit vague but seems to indicate that two rangers will be retained, one of whom is to co-ordinate volunteers, with two full time support staff and one part time support staff. Mention is also made of the need to raise more money, but what this means is not clear.



What will be the future of the Information Centre at Wycollar and a similar building at Beacon Fell is unclear. With a much smaller Ranger Service it is likely that the number of activities being arranged in future will be fewer, which could have implications as to how the buildings are used and maintained.

We will need to observe developments to check that the buildings are not being put to an inappropriate commercial type use.

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