

Trustees' Report 2017-2018



Introduction

In the spring edition of 'Voice of the Moors' we reported that our two Vice-Presidents Ron Foster and Allan Patmore had died, within two weeks of each other in January. A tribute to Ron was placed in the spring edition and one for Allan in the summer edition. Although they came from very different backgrounds, they had three things in common: modesty in their achievements, a love of the North Yorkshire Moors, and their valuable contributions to NYMA.

In the twelve months since June last year a great deal of Association activity has taken place. We have reported on much of this in our 'Voice of the Moors' and in e-newsletters. Members received information in Issue 131 of 'Voice' about our Privacy Policy on how we collect and safeguard personal data and comply with the EU data protection regulations which came into force on May 25th this year.

'Voice of the Moors'

Prior to 2008 our magazine emerged through an editorial panel but in 2008 Albert Elliot became editor, commencing with Issue 94. He carried on as editor until the Issue 128, the summer edition of 2017. Altogether, this adds up to 34 editions of 'Voice' over a period of 9 years. On behalf of NYMA we would like to thank Albert for this huge contribution to the Association and to present him with a modest token of our thanks.

Sharon Artley took over from Albert in a well-organized and seamless changeover. As you will have seen there are some design changes, but the regular contributors continue to give us the quality and balance established under Albert's editorship. We are fortunate in having Sharon take over because she brings fresh skills to the job, especially expertise in computer publishing, which gives us a stronger connection with the magazine designer Pascal Thivillon at Basement Press. Basement Press continues to provide this design service free of charge, and we our grateful thanks to Pascal for this.

Guided Walks & Events

Over the last 12 months there has been a programme of 15 guided walks, with walk organisers having collectively led us over more than 80 miles in an area stretching from the coast south of Whitby to the moors of Bilsdale. Thanks are due to Beryl Turner, Heather and Colin Mather, Cal and Dave Moore, Wendy Smith, Albert Elliot, Margaret Kirkby, Jane Ellis, and George. In addition, Janet Cochrane organized a special group visit to Shandy Hall, in Coxwold, the former home of author Laurence Sterne.

History Tree Project

The 'History Tree Project' was the focus of much of our energy during the past year, with over 30 contributors writing 40 articles on events and personalities across the Moors and contributing photographs. The 2018 AGM saw the launch of the finished book, which will be sent to 90 primary schools in and around the North York Moors National Park as well as being on sale at a wide range of outlets. We are extremely grateful to our funders – the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Land of Iron

Project for funding the production of the book, which has been a real community effort. We give particular thanks to editor Janet Cochrane, to NYMA President Ian Carstairs for his design and photography inputs, and to Albert Elliot for conceptualizing the project.

A.J.Brown: Walker, Writer, and Moorsman

NYMA was delighted to facilitate a commemorative event for the writer, walker and 'moorsman' Alfred John Brown (1894-1969). On 28 April 2018 a memorial blue plaque was dedicated to honour his life and work and his contribution to the North York Moors at Darnholme. The plaque was affixed to the wall outside the house which was formerly the Whitfield House Hotel, owned by A.J.Brown.

Park Wood Biodiversity Project

We are continuing to attend to this one-acre site which we manage, and in March we repaired a stretch of fencing - ending the task in a snow shower. On May 2nd we planted 30 trees donated to us from the Botton tree nursery. We would like express our thanks to Alan Ayers, the Forester at Botton, who kindly provided us with these trees.

MoorsBus

Our financial support for the Moorsbus over the last 3 years comes from a ring-fenced bequest from the estate of the late Charles Laughton of York, which was specifically intended to support walking in the Moors. We are fortunate to have on our Council Colin Speakman, who is an expert on public transport and an adviser to Moorsbus. In 2017, between May and the end of September, there were over 10,000 passenger journeys. Importantly a passenger survey showed that 65% of bus users did so in order to go walking and thereby justifying the purpose of the bequest.

Wildflowers of Northeast Yorkshire

We look forward to the development of a project based on the unique collection of photographs of wildflowers accumulated over many years by Nan Sykes, who is a botanist of considerable renown in North Yorkshire and who also raised the alert over the decline of plants of arable land. Her concern led to the Cornfield Flowers Project.

Cooperation with other agencies

We continue to be very much part of the wider family of National Park Societies and over the year we have had a presence at Council meetings of Campaign for National Parks (CNP), held in London, and at the National Park Societies conference in the New Forest in October. CNP keep us informed about national issues and government consultations which we participate in, adding our voice along with other national park societies. We have responded to requests from other organisations such as the North York Moors Green Lanes Alliance, which is spearheading the campaign against misuse of green lanes. We share a common concern over legal or illegal off-roaders and the damage which they cause, making green lanes impassable for other users.

Liaison meetings with the North York Moors National Park Authority continue to take place at least once per year, with a 2018 meeting taking place on June 6th.

Planning Matters

We continue to scrutinize commercial developments in the North York Moors and to campaign against inappropriate ones.

Sirius Minerals submitted what is known as a Section 73 application to change some of the original plans which were approved in June 2015. At a planning meeting held in November 2017 these proposed changes, which were described as ‘minor material changes’ were passed by the planning committee. We attended the meeting with objections also supported by a submission from CNP. We did not consider the changes to be minor changes because they represented considerable changes to the mine-head layout and tripled the size of one of the main buildings.

We have held direct meetings with senior staff of Sirius Minerals to discuss our concerns and are somewhat reassured that due to the scrutiny they are under from the National Park Authority and from ourselves, they are implementing environmental mitigation measures to offset some of the impacts caused. This does not change our view that this major development is completely inappropriate in a protected landscape.

South Moor Farm Airfield

A further application was submitted by the applicant for the airfield in late 2017 which was once again refused at a planning meeting on the 21st November. This led to a fourth appeal and subsequently an appeal hearing on 31st January this year. The appeal was dismissed on the grounds that the proposed development would have a harmful impact on protected bird species and also have an impact on landscape character, that of disturbing the tranquility of the area. Hopefully this is now an end of the matter.

Fracking

This is the next major development threat to the National Park and to the immediately adjacent area on the south side of the NP. Although plans are at an early stage, there are growing concerns over the intention of INEOS, which has a petroleum exploration and development license covering a large area along the corridor of the A170 between Helmsley and Scarborough. The process of exploration has already begun, with public consultations due to start this summer. We will be watching this and reporting to CNP who have also expressed concern. This is definitely a question of watch this space!

NYMA AGM and the President’s Award

The President’s Award is awarded biennially (alternating with the Conservation Award) and supports research which contributes to the body of knowledge on the North Yorkshire Moors. Awards cover a wide range of topics, such as natural history, archaeology, social or economic history (or current issues), and the environment (natural or built). In 2018 we couldn't decide between two very good applications so the prize was increased slightly – to £600 in total – and split between them. The winners were:

- Carol Wilson for publication of her guide to the wildflowers of Westerdale
- Thornton-le-Dale History Society to support research into the history of the village

The AGM was very well attended, and we were pleased to welcome Guest Speaker Rob Baines, Programme Manager of the National Park’s Turtle Dove Project.