



National  
Trust

# Fix the Fells

About our upland footpath and  
conservation work in partnership

Winter 2013

## What is Fix the Fells?

Fix the Fells (FTF) is a long-term partnership now lead by the National Trust, working with the Lake District National Park Authority, Friends of the Lake District, Natural England, Nurture Lakeland and Cumbria County Council.

The partners are committed to helping repair and prevent further damage to this unique upland landscape and promote understanding and support for its rich heritage. Most of the work is funded by donations, legacies and grants.

The National Trust specialist Upland Ranger Teams carry out much of the repair work, usually focussing on a handful of major projects each year.

Our volunteers come from Cumbria and beyond. Some are retired and others work full-time but they all have one thing in common, they love the fells!

There are 81 volunteers (48 male and 33 female) referred to as 'lengthsmen'. This term comes from medieval times when lengthsmen would be paid to walk the length of the parish and repair any roads and unblock ditches.

In 2013, volunteers gifted a record breaking 1184 days on upland path work in the Lakes.

We couldn't do all this without their enthusiasm and support.

## South Lakes Team—Ian Griffiths

In the spring we headed to the hills for our annual workout of filling helicopter bags with heavy stone. This can be a testing time of year as it's physically gruelling, the weather isn't fantastic and we've yet to develop our so called 'fell fitness'. This years' first big challenge was to actually find the stone under the snow! Almost unbelievably, the snow thawed just in time to enable the lift on Swirral Edge to go ahead.



Whilst underway, we were joined by a film crew for ITV's 'Inside the National Trust' programme. When the show aired we think we came across quite well, although some things didn't go to plan. The crew fixed a camera in our vehicle with strict instructions not have the radio on. After the drive, we realized we had it on all the way. The poor cameraman had so many slips that we were seriously worried he'd do himself an injury.

In April we started our big project of the year on Fairfield. From Grisedale Tarn to the summit footpath erosion needed fixing before it got worse. It was a very windy site, but with spells of good weather and really hot days in June. Rangers back at the base asked how we managed to work up there in the heat. We shrugged casually, not mentioning our cooling lunchtime dips in the Tarn!

We worked at Swirral Edge with the West Lakes team—a long walk up to Helvellyn summit and down to the Edge from there. We got our 'fell fitness' back! We also worked at Blea Tarn Moss with volunteers from Basecamp, with FTF Lengthsmen at Langdale Coomb, on stretches of the coast-to-coast path and enjoyed productive days on numerous paths in the Lakes. Now back in the valleys, winter projects will involve dam revetment work up at Moss Eccles Tarn and a path project at Cathedral Quarry in Little Langdale. Used by climbing groups to access the quarry, the path is badly eroded so we're going to work our magic on it. We believe in winter the sun never reaches the quarry so it's very cold. Time to test the new thermals we get for Christmas!



## Central and East Lakes Team—Pete Entwistle

This year we spent a total of 107 staff days on Angle Tarn to Esk Hause path, a two year project to improve a 200m section of path. The existing stone pitching there falls short of present day standards and with the increasing popularity of this route onto the central fells it needs to be made more user friendly. The unseasonable May weather presented challenging conditions including snow blizzards and sub zero temperatures.



Over by Aira Force we worked with several volunteer groups to improve the circular route around Gowbarrow. This is a popular path taking in Gowbarrow summit and linking with the path network around the much visited Aira Force.

The path has many boggy sections which can be impassable during periods of heavy rainfall. To create a firm walking surface with drainage, 100 tonnes of gravel and 10 tonnes of rock was flown in. By hand we dug a one metre wide 30cm deep tray to fill with aggregate. Thanks to everyone who helped with this project—NT working holidays, Field Studies Council and FTF volunteers and Environment Agency Staff.



We also worked on the Glenridding to Red Tarn path. This is a popular route to access Striding Edge and Helvellyn summit, used regularly by local outdoor pursuit centres as it provides convenient and quick access onto the fells. Consequently it has been worked on several times over the years. This year's work involved flying in 28 bags of stone and installing an additional 18 stone cross-drains to reduce water erosion damage.

A landslide during the winter of 2012 caused the collapse of a 30m section of stone-pitched path at Mire Beck, becoming dangerous to use. Here we diverted the path away from the landslip by stone-pitching a new section.

Back at Helm Crag we continued the sub-soiling work from last year and we plan to finish this in 2014. We improved the drainage and landscaping on the subsoil path created in 2012. Revisiting projects to maintain and improve them is vital to ensure they withstand the effects of weather and to ensure they continue to be enjoyable to walk on and will be used.

In addition to the big projects, together with our hardworking volunteers we've spent many days simply clearing drains and carrying out minor repairs to the existing network of paths. Now down from high ground during the winter, we'll be working on various low level paths and taking well deserved holidays to be refreshed for next season.



## Update from the FTF Programme Manager—Tanya Oliver

It has been a great year for Fix the Fells. The launch of the National Trust appeal and the donations we have received, both large and small, will help us continue to maintain and repair the upland path network. My thanks and the thanks of all the team go to everyone who has contributed. Every penny is appreciated and makes a real difference.

The appeal led to a range of local and national television, radio and newspaper items on our work and it coincided with the ITV series on what goes on behind the scenes of the National Trust. The first episode of this featured our Fix the Fells rangers and the terrible weather we had to battle with during our helicopter lifts earlier this year. All this coverage helps raise awareness of what we do and why it is important walkers keep to the paths wherever possible.

We continue to receive strong support from our volunteer lengthsmen. Without their help we would not be able to undertake the scale of work we do, particularly on maintenance. We are always in need of more volunteers, so if you or anyone you know would like to join us then please do get in touch.

Our work programme for 2014 has been agreed by the Fix the Fells Board and as well as maintaining the paths we have already worked on, we will be working on paths on Catbells, Dalehead, Gowbarrow, Helm Crag, Helvellyn (Striding Edge) and Crinkle Crag. You can read more details about this work on our website.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year. Thank you again for your continued support.



## Basecamp—Rob Clarke

Winter is a quiet period at High Wray Basecamp, the National Trust's full time volunteer centre. It's when we look back at the year just gone and plan for the next.

The accessibility of the Blea Tarn site allowed us to give many groups a taste of upland path work with the South Lakes team. Volunteers groups included these pictured from Brentwood House, a drop in support centre in Middleton. Many groups played a part to help reduce the amount of feet trampling the very delicate moss (less technically, bog) below the path. We also worked here with students from the outdoor studies course at Kendal College—a useful way for us to help spread the message of the importance of keeping to the paths to reduce erosion.



Our monthly work parties with the Fix the Fells lengthsman have continued, with days spent on all manner of tasks from drystone walling to invasive species control, a great way to be able to offer these extremely dedicated volunteers opportunities to expand their skills beyond working on the fells. We've also provided accommodation for their weekend volunteering events, meaning more people can get involved and enjoy social evenings together too. A great example was the summer three day work party with FTF volunteers and the South Lakes team at the top of Stake Pass, building a path on sheep fleece over very boggy ground. It was a big job that would have taken a very long time without the help of so many volunteers and has protected a fragile piece of our upland Lake District landscape.

NT working holidays are a great way to get involved with Fix the Fells. We welcome people from a variety of backgrounds who leave with a real sense of ownership over the piece of path they've helped looked after. This year brave participants camped for three nights at around 2500ft on Esk Pike and worked to reduce a very ugly, wide erosion scar. Next year we'll run five upland holidays, giving even more people the chance to get hands-on in the high fells.

Basecamp also works with many groups who aren't able get into the hills. They help us with a huge range of vital jobs from removing invasive rhododendron to path repairs at some of our very popular low level sites. A great example of the power of volunteering was a job to repair the main footpath used by many visitors to Hill Top. A number of groups helped restore the overgrown path to its original width and told us they really enjoyed doing it. This work has brought benefits for the path, the users and for the people building it too, which is a nice distillation of the Basecamp ethos and something Fix the Fells is instrumental in helping support.



## West Lakes Team—Iain Gray

We started 2013 planting trees by the thousand along various stretches of Eskdale Common, before beginning upland projects and the usual varied programme of activities. After a brief foray into Ennerdale to restore a collapsed section of the coast-to-coast path by Angler's crag, the unexpected return of winter in April delayed the start of our main Wasdale task. We spent a whole day digging a way through a three metre snowdrift before eventually the Yewbarrow project got underway. The initial stage of path repair just above Overbeck car park included installing new gates and fencing, followed by a realignment of the path up to the summit by the crags.

During June and July we interrupted this task for our working holidays with bridleway work on Boot Bank as well as a few days on the highest parts of the Scafell massif narrowing the trampled path area. We joined the South Lakes team for more work on Swirral Edge as well as their major project on Fairfield above Grizedale Tarn.

Returning to our western fringes in September we spent a while at the other end of Yewbarrow, defining and stabilising the route up to Stirrup Crag from Dore Head, followed by spell on Haystacks and Scarth Gap. On the former we repaired some vintage 1980s path work as well as redefining the sustainable Wainwright route to the summit. We also spent time with FTF volunteers improving drainage on the lower sections of Scarth Gap.



Back in Wasdale for a FTF residential weekend in September we continued the gradual reconstruction of the path by Lingmell Gill up to Scafell Pike. We enjoyed late a summer heat wave, quite a contrast to the snowdrifts of April.

Finally we have to mention our continuing high media profile, with a brief appearance on Channel 4 explaining to Sir Tony Robinson how modern path repair techniques owe a lot to the Romans. We'll also be appearing on mountain filmmaker Terry Abraham's year long study of Scafell Pike—due to be premiered in May 2014.



National  
Trust

# Fix the Fells

About our upland footpath and  
conservation work in partnership

## Why do we need to fundraise?

The National Trust is currently leading the Fix the Fells partnership. With much of the footpath work carried out by our teams, every pound we receive through donations, legacies and grants is vital and will directly support this work, now and into the future.

We are a registered charity with no government funding for our core work. Membership fees cover only a third of our costs so the support of people like you, our members and our volunteers is vital to enable conservation work to continue in this unique place, free for all to enjoy.

Please help to look after what you love. Every gift really does make a difference .

## How to donate

Post a cheque or CAF cheque payable to the National Trust to Liz, details below. (Or pop into the office.) All donors are personally thanked.

Please tell us if there is a particular footpath or area that is special to you, and we'll direct your gift to our work there. If you are interested in supporting a wider range of conservation work in the Lakes including at our built properties, we can allocate your gift to The Lakes Appeal fund too.

And you can make your donation worth 25% more. To qualify for Gift Aid what you pay in income tax or capital gains tax must be at least equal to the amount we will claim in the tax year. Just mention it when you send your gift.



## Get in touch

To find out more about Fix the Fells, how to become a volunteer or how you can leave a legacy to the National Trust to support this area of work, please feel free to contact us. All enquiries will be treated confidentially.



**Liz Guest, Fundraising Coordinator, National Trust, The Hollens, Grasmere, Ambleside, LA22 9QZ**  
**Direct tel: 015394 63806 Email: [liz.guest@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:liz.guest@nationaltrust.org.uk)**

More info online at: [www.fixthefells.org.uk](http://www.fixthefells.org.uk)  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lakedistrictappeal](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lakedistrictappeal)  
<http://fellrangers.blogspot.com>  
<http://countryside-catchup.blogspot.co.uk>  
[www.facebook.com/NTHighWrayBasecamp](http://www.facebook.com/NTHighWrayBasecamp)  
twitter @ntlakesfells

## Extra bits

We have an outstanding range of places in our care in the wider North West region, from Paul McCartney's council house to stately homes, beaches to mountain tops, valleys and now a pub in the Lakes too. To find out more talk to Liz or visit the website [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk). Look out for us on Twitter and Facebook too.

To minimise costs this newsletter is produced and printed here at the Grasmere office. We can also email it to you.

If you would like this newsletter in a different format call Liz on 015394 63806 or email [liz.guest@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:liz.guest@nationaltrust.org.uk)