



## Volunteer lengthsman update – July 2019

'Rather than starting with paths and work, I will show this picture of an adder I saw sunning itself on the edge of a small path near Haweswater. I hadn't seen one for years. It reminded me that when you are working outside you see so much wildlife – lots of insects and spiders which I love, also birds and wildflowers.

The statistics for work done by Fix the Fells rangers and volunteers look good so far with nearly 1400 duties completed. But after years of teaching maths and looking at graphs, projections and numbers, I left that life behind. So I thought I would write about a few of the jobs I have done as a volunteer – the work on the ground, so to speak!



Recently we had a 'blitz', a call out for anyone who could help with more sheep path work near the top of the Stake pass.

In doing talks I always find people are fascinated in how Herdwick fleeces are put tightly in a trench across peat moorland, covered with a fine gravel – the 'pinnel' from a nearby pit – and then this forms a solid path and helps to protect the peat from further erosion. Some came from NT Scotland to help and some of our number regularly go to Loch Lomond and Ben Nevis on short visits to help them in return.



Adder in the sun

Drain runs continue. Friends think I am rather odd when I talk about the cross path drains on the fells, of how they can fill with stones and other debris and the pleasure I get from seeing them clear, with water running through and down the fellside, not along the path. The photo right is of a drain at the top of Tongue Gill below Fairfield – with a really large stone at one end.



Tongue Gill

There has been plenty of work for the weaklings like me who are no good at building drains or pitched paths using large rocks. I find I can help stop extra side paths from forming - these seem to pop up rather quickly. I thought it would be easy to do but even a small stretch takes time to hide it properly. Looking and deciding why people use the short cut and then visually sorting out the best plan to stop it being seen, goes before finding clumps of grass and rushes to replant and physically hide the route and stop it looking so inviting.

This photo is from one of many work parties going on – it is on Lingmoor where a scruffy, eroded wide path is in the process of being 'hidden' and a new route just above constructed.

Several of us recently celebrated ten years with Fix the Fells. That's ten really good years – but there will always be lots of work here for more people to do!



Erosion on Lingmoor

**Christine Hurford**  
Fix the Fells volunteer  
July 2019

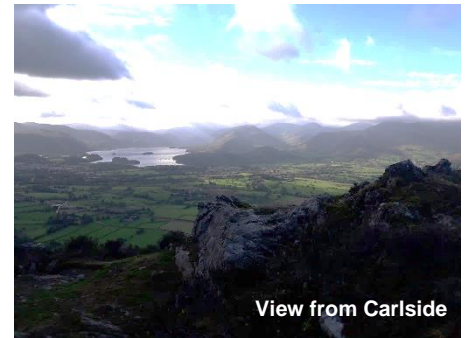


## Volunteer Development Ranger update – July 2019

‘Hard to believe that the halcyon days of summer are upon us, and over half the year has passed already. A pertinent time perhaps, to pause and take stock of one’s progress and objectives.

In regard to my primary objectives as Volunteer Development Ranger (VDR), progress is continuing apace, with dozens of minor repair jobs completed on paths across the Lakes. With responsibility across the whole of the National Park, my work programme is dictated somewhat by the reporting of the dedicated volunteer lengthsman, whose comprehensive path maintenance programme acts as an ‘early warning system’ of erosion and damage. Naturally however, the more popular paths tend to suffer the most, so work has been clustered around tourist hotspots such as Borrowdale, Langdale, and the paths around Grasmere. Likely this will continue to be the pattern into the second half of the year.

I have also been working closely with NT path team supervisors and experienced lengthsman in developing an unsupervised works programme, affording those volunteers with the requisite skills and experience to tackle repair jobs on their own. Thanks to their fantastic commitment, we are starting to reap the rewards and make real inroads into the seemingly endless job list – this nascent approach should continue to evolve in the latter half of 2019 and beyond.



Another primary objective has meant welcoming a new round of recruits in the spring, and it has been a pleasure to see new faces on work parties, drain runs, and throughout the induction process. The fantastic recruitment and mentoring system allows new members to integrate seamlessly into the Fix the Fells family, reflected in the high retention rate and prodigious attendance of many of these newbies. To facilitate training and development, we utilised the helicopter recently to have stone flown in to the Wythburn path above Thirlmere. More time can now be focussed on gaining experience of the essential elements of upland path work. It also meant I got to experience a thrilling helicopter ride over the Lakes – without doubt a highlight of the calendar!

Working closely with colleagues at the Lake District National Park Authority, I have also been developing the Young Ranger programme. After taking over this programme from the Park earlier in the year, we were keen to integrate it with our regular volunteers and now have a pool of lengthsman to help the youngsters develop, and a recruitment initiative in place to enhance sustainability. Exciting times ahead as we reach out to new sections of the community!



Another way that Fix the Fells has been future-proofing has been through a corporate volunteering offer. As VDR I have been working with supporters to offer a unique experience in helping us to look after the incredible Lake District landscape. There have been additional benefits to this, as social media updates and videos produced by our partners have helped raise our profile. It has, however, meant some embarrassing appearances on film by the VDR – all in a good cause!

A great first half of the year then, and with the fantastic support of volunteers and staff alike, plenty to look forward to for the remainder of 2019.’

**Matt Tweed**  
Volunteer Development Ranger