



## Volunteer Report – November 2018

'Fix the Fells' volunteering continues to go from strength to strength in 2018 with 547 volunteer drain runs and 153 volunteer work parties already completed by the end of October. This has contributed to a combined total of 2150 upland volunteering days for the year so far and we should be heading for a new record number of upland volunteering days at the year-end, we hope! Additionally, the last two months have consecutively seen a full 100% achievement of our routine maintenance drain run schedule in all areas, which itself is a very considerable achievement and a new first for Fix the Fells.

We thought in this newsletter we would perhaps change the focus a little and include some brief inputs and comments from a couple of our lengthsmen colleagues Chris and Caroline, who have contributed greatly to the success of two of our Fix the Fells volunteer projects this year.

Chris joined the volunteer lengthsmen scheme in 2017 and has contributed 38 days so far in 2018. Chris was the only one of our lengthsmen to participate in and contribute to every single one of our fifteen Wansfell summit work parties earlier this year. He has said this about his experiences.

"Having been a Lake District visitor and walker for many years, Fix the Fells was an obvious choice for me to undertake volunteering work. During my first ten months as a volunteer lengthsmen, I gained a good grounding participating in drain runs, drain building and landscaping, and learning the skills from experienced team members.

On 21st March 2018 Fix the Fells commenced the first work party on the Wansfell summit volunteer project, providing a great opportunity to gain experience in stone pitching. A deep gully was forming due to erosion on the path leading directly down from the summit and it needed to be stabilised and repaired if further damage was to be prevented. Over a period of fifteen work parties during the spring/summer, which concluded on 25th September 2018, we built stone pitching to the summit to create a new resilient and sustainable path. This provided a clear route, addressing the existing erosion issues and minimising the possibility of further erosion to the fell. In addition, the team built four water drains and undertook landscaping to blend the work with the surroundings of the fell.

It was a most enjoyable experience which provided me with a great deal of satisfaction, from initially seeing the damage caused by the erosion on the first visit, through to the subsequent work parties with a great team and learning new skills along the way. We received lots of kind words, appreciation and feedback from passing fell walkers throughout the project. It was good to hear not only were we preventing erosion, but improving the walking experience for hikers."



*Picture left:* Chris can be seen holding a special cake kindly provided by Joanne Backshall FTF Programme Manager, to celebrate the successful completion of our Wansfell summit volunteer project. *Below:* The new section completed.



Caroline joined the volunteer lengthsman scheme in 2012 and has already contributed an amazing 95 days this year and is undoubtedly one of the real enthusiastic stalwarts of our FTF volunteering. Caroline agreed to take on the challenge of acting as lead volunteer for our Mires Beck project – this was a first lead role for Caroline, and she did an outstanding job. She talked about her experience.

“When I was asked if I would be interested in leading a volunteer project to work on a section of footpath on Mires Beck, I was really excited. Although I have been volunteering for a number of years and worked on numerous paths, this was my first opportunity to be involved in a volunteer-led project from the initial site visit and development of the job specification, through to the actual undertaking of the work with a group of fellow volunteers.

A section of the footpath on Mire’s Beck had been washed away through storm damage leaving the path line in danger of collapsing into the stream below. A job specification was developed which included the creation of a new path line three meters into the fell side away from the area that had been washed away.

The nature of the work was quite varied and so appealed to a variety of volunteers. For those who like moving large rocks, the stone work required the construction of a new cross drain and new sections of stone pitching. For those volunteers who are not into big rocks, there was plenty of landscape work to block and landscape out the old path line. The work was carried out over five days with up to eight volunteers on each day. Each work party was followed by a debrief in Glenridding, in one of the many establishments serving some sort of liquid refreshment, chips and cake.



*Picture above right:* Caroline leading the team on one of our five visits to Mires Beck.

The Mires Beck project has been a brilliant learning experience for me. One of the challenges was keeping the old path line open, to allow safe passage for walkers whilst the new path was created. As the construction of the new path produced a large amount of soil, we used helibags to store the soil whilst the turf was piled at the side of the path, until we were in a position to close the old path line down. At times it looked more like a building site than an upland path. It was tremendously satisfying when the old path line was finally landscaped out and all that remained was the new path line.”

Caroline also received occasional watching help and encouragement from a certain ‘little white supervisory assistant’ too!

Finally we would like to take this opportunity to wish the Fix the Fells newsletter readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Thank you for your support.’



**Compiled by David Brooks and Barry Capp with the help of Caroline Mercer and Chris J Wood**

**November 2018**