



Volunteer Report July 2018

'So, our regular readers will by now know how committed our Fix the Fells volunteers are. 2017 was a record breaking year in all ways for us regarding drain runs, work parties and the number of volunteer days gifted to the work on the upland fells. The problem with breaking records is maintaining that level of service, let alone matching it in subsequent years. Well, it is like this so far this year, we are on track to create yet another super year of volunteering. Yes that's right, it looks like it is going to be another record year for us in our support to the National Trust Upland Path Teams, Basecamp and now our newly appointed NT Volunteer Development Ranger (VDR) Matt, looking after the fells we hold so dearly to us. OK a bit mushy but you get the drift.

We have been helped along greatly by a good influx of new keen and eager volunteers who are proving to be just that. Our new VDR Matt is settling in nicely and leading on path maintenance training and supervised work parties, enabling our new folk to gain the 'volunteer qualification' for unsupervised work parties led by fellow experienced volunteers. He is of course helped by our own volunteer mentors who introduce and nurture our 'mentees'. This is allowing us to up the number of days on work parties and of course our core business of drain runs, where we walk the fell paths clearing out drains and sweeping the stone pitched steps. We currently look after 330 paths!

Each year we have highlights and one of those this year must be a special day out in London at Buckingham Palace for our volunteer Barry and his wife Alison. Barry was invited to a Royal Garden Party in recognition of his outstanding work in volunteering and being a lead person in just about all we do. Sadly his charge Hamish, one of our senior Fell Fixing supervisors, had to stay at home. Whilst he is very well behaved, sadly he did not get his own invite! Perhaps to avoid a new breed of a West Highland Corgi?



Right: Barry and Alison at Buckingham Palace. We are assured he took his cap off before going in.

Left: Hamish



As with most things, the more you put in the more you get out of it. If you have ever wondered if we injure ourselves, of course we do. Despite our rigorous risk assessments and precautions taken, working with heavy stone on steep ground in all weather does mean from time to time injuries will occur. We've not done too bad this year, just two broken fingers and an ankle so far as well as some cuts and bruises, all duly recorded in the accident register.

In June our now annual three day Blitz took place on Martcrag Moor Langdale led by the NT High Wray Basecamp staff, where the aim was to build a sheep fleece path across some particularly wet areas to protect the precious peat from being destroyed. We were joined by our own National Trust Rangers and the team from Snowdonia, together with National Trust Scotland Rangers from Ben Lomond, some of their volunteers plus a team from the Ben Nevis Partnership. In all over 100 volunteering days spent on the moor in less than perfect weather. And what does it look like building a sheep fleece path?

Right: NT Rangers Rob and Hilary on Martcrag Moor. Of note is that Hilary was until recently a volunteer herself, now appointed as a Ranger at Basecamp. Nicely done Hilary.



Left: This is why we do it, for scenes like these on Cat Bells, one of our regular routes. It just about sums up a fell fixing day. Good company in some fantastic locations.

We have also this year supported the Friends of the Lake District Great Cumbrian Litter Pick over many of our upland paths in Langdale, Ullswater, Borrowdale and Coniston. 35 kilometres of upland paths were walked collecting many bags of litter left by some uncaring folk.



Left: Cat Bells litter pick and drain run.



Right: A busy day on Ben Lomond working at 700 metres amongst a torrent of walkers out for the day.

We have also continued our support to other areas with a visit to Ben Lomond in May helping to repair the main tourist path and a scheduled visit to Ben Nevis in September to help the Ben Nevis Landscape Partnership. These trips are all cost neutral to Fix the Fells being paid for by the volunteers themselves. As to be expected, Ben Lomond as the most southerly Munro was busy.

To sum up 2018 so far, we are on course for another very good year. We have more volunteers, a new VDR Matt, a volunteer employed as a NT Ranger, support from (and to) other areas, all in support of our four upland footpath teams and of course the staff from the NT Basecamp at High Wray.

I know you are wondering... So far this year we've gifted 1,450 upland days on 338 drain runs and attended 97 work parties, so not bad really. It promises to be another excellent year of fell fixing, hard work, fun and nonsense.'

David Brooks
Fix the Fells Volunteer