



# NORTHERN VIADUCT TRUST

NEWSLETTER No. 8 | AUTUMN 2014

## *Newsletter*



### Welcome and Thank You...

The Trustees are pleased to circulate another of their occasional newsletters. Regrettably there has been rather a long gap since the last one, but there has not been a great deal of news and we wanted to give you the latest and up to date news about our flagship viaduct at Smardale Gill in this one, which where possible is being distributed electronically. If you have received yours by email please print off and make use of the 2014 appeal form... We are extremely grateful to our supporters for their donations in response to the 2012 newsletter which totalled over £4000 exclusive of Gift Aid. This applied to most and resulted in a worthwhile contribution from HMRC. Thank you again, and please keep up the good work. We hope that you will enjoy reading our news, and your visits to our magnificent viaducts and walks. Your interest and support are invaluable.

### THE TRUST...

Last year Glenys Lumley and Peter Robinson stood down as Trustees and just as this newsletter was to be issued we were shocked to hear of Peter's untimely death. We extend our sympathies to his wife Margaret and their family. Glenys and Peter worked hard for the Trust and we are grateful for their efforts. Glenys's local knowledge and interests were very useful, as were Peter's railway and railway history connections. With sadness we also record the death in December 2012 of Gavin Martin, one of the Trust's founders and certainly the main saviour of Smardale Gill viaduct in the late 1980s. The present six Trustees continue to meet regularly under the enthusiastic chairmanship of Mike Sunderland of Hartley, Kirkby Stephen, and enjoy their work for the benefit of the Trust. They are encouraged by the use made of the viaduct walks - particularly when dog owners act responsibly...

### SMARDALE GILL VIADUCT

Following much professional and other advice the main problem requiring early remedial action at Smardale Gill is the waterproofing of the viaduct deck. The present tarmac surface laid in 1990 is life-expired and water is being 'sandwiched' between it and the concrete on top of the arches. This is highly undesirable in respect of the long-term integrity of the structure as a whole, and after particularly helpful advice from our local masonry contractors Eden Stonework Ltd. we have decided to strip off the tarmac and have a waterproof plastic membrane spray-applied to the concrete above the arches by specialist contractors known to them. This plastic membrane technology is relatively new, and did not exist when the viaduct was repaired and restored in 1990. The drains in the concrete have also stopped working and will be replaced by a new surface drain, when the tarmac is renewed. We expect this initial work to be done in late January/February next year, when for a fortnight or so public access to the viaduct and nature reserve will be prohibited for safety reasons. It will cost up to £20,000 plus VAT and this will be paid by the Trust from its own resources; hence the request for a generous response to the appeal for funds included at the end of this newsletter. The plastic membrane spraying and provision of a new top surface to the deck suitable for walkers, cyclists and the occasional vehicle are to be the subject of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant application once the present tarmac has gone, when it will be possible for the necessary detailed quotations to be obtained in respect of the work. We are advised that it will not matter if there is a considerable time lapse between the removal of the old tarmac and the provision of the new final waterproof surface, although it is our hope that the entire job can be finished by the end of next year. Completion of the waterproofing and re-surfacing will leave some masonry repairs to be done to one pier in particular; these we are advised are not urgent and they will be the subject of a further application for grant aid, probably also to the HLF in the first instance.

The tarmac scrapings which we hope will exist in quantity in the autumn will in theory be useful to us for surfacing paths, etc. but of course given the remoteness of Smardale Gill the cost of transporting them away will be considerable. It may be that they will be offered to our neighbours Cumbria Wildlife Trust who we understand are proposing to improve the small car park at Smardale, just 'up (or down!) the line' from the viaduct.



## Unwelcome Visitors

Responsible visitors to the Trust's viaducts are of course most welcome and indeed it was founded and exists to preserve them for the benefit of the public at large. Last year, however, it was discovered that several different groups of bridge and bungee jumping enthusiasts were taking advantage of the remoteness of Smardale Gill and, more particularly, that viaduct's handrails, ironically added to the very low stone side walls in the interests of public safety at the time of restoration in 1990, for the purposes of their thrill-seeking activities. One group was from an apparently respectable Cumbria based adventure holiday company; and it was clear that bridge- and bungee jumping was going on at Smardale Gill all too regularly. Needless to say this was without the Trust's permission, or its knowledge, to begin with. It was entirely unacceptable both to us and Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the custodians of the adjoining National Nature Reserve. Clever detective work on the part of our local

Trustees, with assistance from CWT staff and volunteers and Cumbria Constabulary, resulted in the miscreants being identified and brought to book. One group rather 'shot themselves in the foot' by posting film of one of their sessions at Smardale Gill online... Their antics – and blatant trespass – can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bazjhMp-68](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bazjhMp-68) and [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr9jea6ZKi0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr9jea6ZKi0)

The more reputable groups apologised, and readily agreed 'not to do it again'. The Trust has always made it clear that abseiling, bridge-jumping and the like cannot be permitted on its structures, for a variety of reasons, not least disturbance of Smardale Gill National Nature Reserve. Fortunately the problem does not arise at Podgill or Merrygill, as those viaducts have sheer stone side walls; also, both are less remote.

## Our Younger Helpers

The Trust is pleased that it now has an active group of keen young volunteer workers, mostly Kirkby Stephen and Appleby Grammar School students who are Duke of Edinburgh's Award candidates. In particular we would like to congratulate Edward Miller, Alfie Wren and Stephen Ousby on their hard work and voluntary service to support their Silver Awards. They have carried out useful path improvement and undergrowth clearance for us, and their current project is the provision of a hand-made wooden picnic table at the bottom of the Stenkrith car park ramp, overlooking the river Eden. We are grateful to them for their hard work and enthusiasm, and hope that they will continue to assist us.



Jonny Miller - Vice Chairman, Mike Sunderland - Chairman, DofE students Alfie Wren and Stephen Ousby

## Nature Conservation

We are proud of our Conservation Plan in respect of our Hartley – Stenkrith viaducts walk, and thank Martin Holdgate in particular for his work on this. The wildflowers beside the former railway are much admired, and our Chairman thought that you might like to see some pictures of them (*pictured left*). For information about the Trust please visit [www.nvt.uk](http://www.nvt.uk)

- Mike Sunderland - Chairman
- Jonathan Miller - Vice-Chairman
- Tim Bounds - Treasurer
- Michael Pettigrew - Secretary
- Paul Thompson
- Sir Martin Holdgate

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Address for Correspondence – Michael Pettigrew, 6 Norton Road, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 2AE

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