

PATH WAYS

Of the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers

PATH Year 56, No. 3

Autumn 2020



Remembering Chestnut Knob's Renovation



Ken Rose, left, and Bill Boudman dicker with the old PATH sickle bar mower outside the shelter prior to expansion. One of these Gordon Burgess photos also appeared in Blue Ridge Country magazine earlier this summer.

And how it helped
rejuvenate our trail club

By Paul Clayton

Chestnut Knob is a high point overlooking Burke's Garden, Va. From atop the knob, a spectacular 360 degree view can be had, encompassing peaks as far away as Mount Rogers and Whitetop. The present shelter started life sometime around 1929 as a Fire Warden's hut. Eventually it became a trail shelter, though an unusual one, built of stone, with a dirt floor, fireplace and low ceiling.

A draft management plan, undated but appearing to be from 1981, suggests that "the remnant stone hut on Chestnut Knob should be

removed.” Fortunately, the club never acted on this recommendation. However, afterward the shelter was known to club members as “the stone hut.”

During the summer of 1994 PATH and the Konnarock Crew completely refurbished the Chestnut Knob Shelter. The original low, flat roof was removed and replaced with an offset gable roof with plexiglass panes under the overhangs. Concrete was mixed by hand and spread to create a new floor. New bunks were built. In all, the Konnarock crew spent three weeks on the project. A total of 31 PATH members worked on the project, 18 of them for five or more days. PATH member Jim Ball made around 50 trips up and down the mountain on a Forest Service six-wheeler, hauling in water, gear and supplies. Jim spent 17 days on this project.

A trail neighbor, Mr. Dunford, let us leave cars in his yard and get water from his spigot. He also bulldozed the road up to Chestnut Knob and then rebuilt the tank traps after the project was over. Mr. Dunford is known for the billboard in his front yard warning people not to park or trespass on his property on pain of being shot. The fact that the Walker Gap parking area had not seen a vandalism problem was largely due to Mr. Dunford’s watchful eye. He was



The completed shelter after three weeks of work. Chestnut Knob is the high point of PATH’s section, both literally and figuratively. The shelter was also featured in a recent book about notable shelters on the AT.

friendly toward the trail community but strongly opposed to local people using the area for drinking and parties. Rumor has it that he posted his famous sign years ago after some drunken locals killed one of his dogs.

Some things to remember: the incredible meteor shower that kept everyone up late one night; Steve Williams’ frogmore stew; after-work drinks overlooking Burke’s Garden; the garter snakes in the old chimney; the Mickey Mouse embedded in the concrete floor.

The end of the project saw not only a rejuvenated shelter but also a rejuvenated club. Those three weeks in 1994 created tremendous energy and dedication. Many of the participants went on to be the leaders of the club for the rest of the decade.

The following PATH members spent five or more days on the Chestnut Knob Project: Jim Ball, Bill Boudman, Don Childrey, John Hartpence, Bill Medlin, Randy Sample, C. Simpson, R. Simpson, Trudy Whitney, Bobby Bass, Gordon Burgess, Paul Clayton, John Locke, Ken Rose, Brandon Saunders, P. Simpson, Betsy Truscott and Steve Williams.

ADDENDUM: Paul Clayton says the Konnarock crew members were required to wear hard hats; not so for the PATH members. But there were no injuries requiring more than a band-aid on the whole project, though frogmore stew left a couple of workers with stomach aches, and Ken Rose’s young grandson got a stomach ache from eating too many peanuts. “Oh yes,” Paul added, “many morning hangovers.”

2020 Calendar

Here is our original calendar for the rest of 2020, though whether any of this will happen is still up in the COVID-19 air. Please check with someone before heading to any of these events. SO FAR, NONE OF THESE HAVE BEEN CANCELED, BUT SOME ARE DOUBTFUL.

September 18-20 September Volunteer Weekend Stony Fork, Va.
Base Camp probably at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va. As with other work weekends this year, this will probably be a do-it-yourself with no actual meeting, social distancing, and, unfortunately, no potluck. Stay tuned.

October 16-18 October Volunteer Weekend Stony Fork, Va.
Base Camp probably at Stony Fork Campground off U.S. 52 north of Wytheville, Va. See the information for September.

November 7 AT Hall of Fame Banquet Carlisle, Pa.
The 10th annual AT Hall of Fame Banquet is set for 7 p.m. at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center. Visit www.2020athalloffamebanquet.eventbrite.com. Or write AT Museum, 1120 Pine Grove Road, Gardners, Pa. 17324. Tickets \$50, \$40 museum members.

November 21 PATH Annual Meeting TBA.
Our annual meeting, scheduled somewhere in the PATH region in North Carolina or Virginia. Review of 2020 work. Plans for this meeting are unclear, due to the coronavirus. An announcement will be made sometime this fall.

Aug. 6-9, 2021 AT Vista New Paltz, N.Y.
This is a four-day weekend event commemorating Benton MacKaye's 1921 article laying out the idea of an Appalachian Trail. It seems to be an effort to resume the discontinued Biennial ATC Conferences in a new form. More info is at www.atvista2020.weebly.com.

October 2021 39th ALDHA Gathering Abingdon, Va.
The annual gathering of the Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association. It was planned to be in October this year, but has been canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. They're still negotiating an exact date. Email Blaze@aldha.org

This is a newsletter for the Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers, a trail work club that maintains approximately 70 miles of the Appalachian Trail in Southwest Virginia. This newsletter comes out four times a year, as long as we have enough material and contributions. It is sent by email to the PATH List and others, or by U.S. Mail to members who don't have email. Feel free to print and post in your local outdoor store. HOLIDAY DEADLINE NOV. 20, 2020. Web site: www.path-at.org. Or for info: PiedmontATHikers@gmail.com. Or see our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/PiedmontATHikers/

Tom Dillon, editor (tdillon27127@earthlink.net) or (336) 725-2760

Reactions

Here are some reactions to the Summer Pathways story on replacing the Davis Path Shelter:

■ I enjoyed the read. Maybe a shelter down in the area of Reed Creek instead, a little north of Davis Path.

Karen Worthington

■ March 2008, Kerry Wood, an ATC employee, identified an 8-inch tree as a hazard tree, as it was leaning towards the shelter. He cut it down, and it fell in a safe place, exactly where Kerry said it would. I was impressed with his sawing & use of wedges.

The shelter had a leak in the roof, and hunters left trash around and in the fire pit. The shelter was infested with powder puff beetles, mainly because of the use of the near-by/on-site trees to build the shelter. May 2008, the shelter was removed with help from the Konnarock crew, leaving the existing hardwood floor as a tent pad.

November 2011, Steve Yonts was voted in as club Vice Prez, as this was intended to give him more clout in dealing with Mount Rogers NRA rebuilding a new shelter on the original site, so as to not need a NEPA study to rebuild. Steve pushed hard to rebuild. Jeff Brown joined in sometime later.

June 2012, during a storm a 28-inch diameter tree blew down, falling across the tent pad/shelter floor. I'm convinced that if the shelter had not been removed, there would have been hikers holed up inside. PATH had dodged a bullet, as this tree would have crushed the shelter and injured hikers.

Thomas Knob shelter on Mount Rogers suffered the same fate, just about the same time as Davis Path shelter. Mount Rogers AT Club spent \$\$\$ and took several years of planning and replacing just the necessary logs to save the shelter.

Jim Houck

Bits and Pieces

■ The **Appalachian Trail Conservancy annual membership meeting** will take place on Saturday, Sept. 12, from 10:30 a.m. to noon EDT. As with last year, it will be online only. You can view a livestream of the meeting on the ATC Web site or YouTube page. The conservancy said of it, "Our membership meeting is an opportunity for us to come together as a community to discuss the future of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and recommit to educating and empowering current and future caretakers." Voting for members of the board will run from Aug. 29 through 8 a.m. the morning of the meeting. All members in good standing will receive an email with voting instructions. Here are the returning candidates: **Colin Beasley** of New London, N.H., **Rob Hutchinson** of Sandy Springs, Ga., **Daniel Howe** of Raleigh, N.C., **Colleen Peterson** of Frostburg, Md., and **Nathan Rogers** of Windham, N.H. Newly nominated directors are **Eboni Preston** of Atlanta, Ga., and **Rajinder (Raj) Singh** of Raleigh.

■ PATH is looking for another person to mow the vast Chestnut Ridge south of the Chestnut Knob Shelter. **Buford Neel** has been doing it, but informed **Jim Houck** in July that

problems with asthma and the heat and dust were keeping him off the trail. Any ideas on this, please weigh in. It's a way to earn a little extra money. Please spread the word.

■ **Alexis “Moxie” Niedenthal**, shown in the picture at right from ATC, has been working as ridgerunner on the Mount Rogers ATC section and the southern part of the PATH section since mid-July. A native of Virginia (though she hasn't lived here in a while), she's a 2014 thru-hiker, southbound, and has previously worked as a ridgerunner in Maine and Georgia and as an expedition guide, trail crew leader or outdoor educator in Alaska, California, Washington state, Maryland and Pennsylvania. ATC recommended that Moxie hike north perhaps as far as the Settlers Museum or I-81. She is one of two ridgerunners we know. Our own **James Baum** is working as a ridgerunner in the Tye River, Va., area.



■ Thanks to club member **Sam Warrick** for gathering up items left on the trail in memory of **Ronald “Stronghold” Sanchez**, the Oklahoma veteran who was murdered on our section of the Appalachian Trail last year. The memorial, on the trail a few miles north of I-81, was a nice touch, but was having unintended consequences, with glass items and flags on the ground and, unfortunately, some trash. Sam delivered the items to **Tina Tempest** at the Quarter Way Inn, who got them to Sanchez's sister. If you missed it, there was also a good memorial story to Sanchez in the summer 2019 edition of AT Journeys. It's well worth reading.

■ Trail workers, remember to report your hours to **Paul Clayton**, our timekeeper, at paul@neuseriversailors.com. Don't just send them to the PATH List. Since there have been so few work weekends and so little work until July (see the next page), this will probably be a low-hours year, and we need all of them that we can get. There are also administrative hours that need to be reported, president **Jim Houck** noted, and there will undoubtedly be a lot of hours to report once we get clearance to work on shelters and privies. That has not come through yet, and Jim said in a late July email that some clubs have even been locking privies. AT and club leaders are still discussing these problems and how to solve them. We have received a shipment of special coveralls that can be used for cleaning shelters and privies.

■ **Bridge news:** The ATC reports that footbridge over the Potomac River at Harpers Ferry has been repaired/rebuilt and is back in service. You'll recall it was destroyed by a derailed train in December. Not much has happened with the PATH footbridge over Lick Creek in Poor Valley, however. It's going to be a ford crossing for the foreseeable future. Carry some flip-flops, or at least dry socks.



Despite the virus, we've worked in 2020!

This trail above may look like it's in pretty good shape, but it wasn't always so. The fact that we couldn't work for much of the spring, due to coronavirus, meant many of our AT miles were badly overgrown when the OK finally came through to work in July. A couple of those miles were in the big meadow just north of Va. 610 near Ceres, Va. The picture, below, with

Tina Tempest of the Quarter Way Inn and new PATH member Joe Hager, shows just how overgrown the trail had become, and why hikers were getting lost in the area. A crew of five opened up the trail and, hopefully, solved the problem. Workers, along with Tina and Joe, were Karl Kunkel, Tom Dillon and Ron Hudnell, the crew chief and mission photographer.



■ To send information to all members via the PATH List, send your email messages to path-list@path-at.org. To subscribe to the PATH List, see the directions on the Web pages. Subscribing to the list will increase the amount of email you receive, but it's a quick way to get informed and involved about PATH work. **It will pay you to sign up for the PATH List.**



And lastly, here's a selfie Sam Warrick took after he and Tina weedate the overgrown railroad-tie pathway along the North Fork of the Holston River in July. It's another part of the trail that really needed work, but is now passable for hikers.

PATH Officers

President

Jim Houck, 206 Hillcrest Avenue,
Titusville, Fla. 32796
(321) 615-2115
houckjw@bellsouth.net

Secretary

Hunt McKinnon, 2201 Sir Walter Court,
Greenville, N.C. 27858 (252) 916-3220
Mckinnonw@ecu.edu

Vice President

Betsy Truscott, 5021 Stockdale Place,
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104
(336) 602-6903
btrus@infionline.net

Treasurer

David Faucette, 1105 Hunting Ridge Road,
Raleigh, N.C. 27615 (919) 848-3811
dfaucette1948@gmail.com

Want to Join?



We are working on the Trail in 2020, despite coronavirus. If you'd like to join us, here's how: You may join PATH (or renew) at our Web site, www.path-at.org, with PayPal, or print and mail this form with check or money order. You can also attend work weekends/meetings and join or renew there. Please don't mail cash!

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Annual membership dues are \$20 for an individual _____, \$25 for a family _____ or \$15 for a student_____. Donations are also

accepted. Donation total _____

Send payment to PATH Treasurer, P.O. Box 4423, Greensboro, North Carolina 27404. Total amount enclosed _____

Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers
P.O. Box 4423
Greensboro, N.C. 27404
Address correction requested

