Extract from lecture:

Introduction to National Trails
Part 1: their origins in the UK

Dave McGlade
Hadrian’s Wall Path National Trail Officer
6th September 2015
In discussing the South Downs:

“There would be provided a 70 mile walk along a green ridgeway, through typical English country, with convenient halts and camping sites at regular intervals”

(Is this the first documented proposal for a long-distance route in UK?)
WANTED - A Long Green Trail

WHEN two American girls wrote asking advice about a tramping holiday in England, they wondered what they would think of our island, particularly of the restrictions placed in the way of those who wished to see some of our most captivating scenery.

If, at the end of their tour, these visitors from across the Atlantic are over-loud in their praises of their native “Land of Liberty,” who shall blame them?

They mention their acquaintance with the Appalachian Trail, a footpath that runs for 2,000 miles through the Eastern States from Maine to Georgia, established by tramping, mountaineering and other open-air organisations, and generously aided by the Government and State authorities.

N ow this path has been eclipsed by the John Muir Trail which reaches from the Canadian border through Washington, Oregon and California to Mexico. For 2,500 miles without any stopping on hard roads, one may follow this track over lofty peaks, by deep-cleft canyons and through great National Parks and reserves saved for all time from spoliation by unplanned and irresponsible building.

After allowing for difference in geographical scale, what can we in England offer to compare with these enterprises?

Many have been closed, but new ones are unknown.

What will our visitors think of one of the most prevalent features in our landscape — “Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted”? Would, with the passing years, engrave on the face of the land.

The native isle, with its pruning beak, would be visited on route for the far recesses of Upper Swaledale. From Keld they would turn to Tan Hill with its little whitewashed inn on a wind-swept moor with the authority of the Ordnance Survey to refuse the claims of would-be rivals as the highest licensed house in England.

ON across “Stainmoor’s Shapeless swell,” between Tees and Eden, the way would wind through bewitching desolation by barren haunts of plover and curlew, over seemingly endless moors to the crest of Cross Fell, the Pennines’ topmost height.
Origins in UK: Report of the Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas 1942 (Scott report)

“The principle that the countryside is the heritage of all involves the corollary that there must be facility of access for all”

“The recognition of such schemes for main hikers’ highways as the proposed Pennine Way”

“The re-opening of the old coastguard path as a right of way for walkers round the whole coastline of England and Wales”
Origins in UK: National Parks in England and Wales
(Dower report, 1945)

“A first main installment of decisions (which should include schemes for the Pennine Way and other long-distance walking routes referred to in the Scott report) should be reached and put into execution as soon as possible”. (p38)
“We also attach importance to the provision of long distance paths and bridleways in and between National Parks and Conservation Areas. There should be continuous routes which will enable walkers and riders to travel the length and breadth of the Parks, moving as little as possible on the motor roads.

The most widely advocated perhaps is the Pennine Way. Other attractive routes are the Ridgeway...the Pilgrim’s Way...the South Downs path...the Offa’s Dyke Path...and the Roman Wall Track from Newcastle to the Solway”. (p67)
“Where it appears to the Commission as respect any part of England or Wales that the public should be enabled to make extensive journeys on foot or horseback being a route for which the whole or greater part does not pass along roads used mainly by vehicles the Commission may prepare and submit to the Minister a report under this section”
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<tr>
<th>Trail</th>
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<td>Pennine Way</td>
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