

## Moors for the Future Hathersage Audio Trail

### 1. The George

James Tolhurst

Welcome to this moors for the future audio trail. Hathersage & its surrounding hills & moors, has an extremely rich historical cultural & ecological heritage. This heritage is of international renown as it makes the world in which we live, a richer place.

Within this area of outstanding natural beauty lie hidden treasures, secrets, legends & the echoes of history reverberating through time.

Here with some tips on how we can all help to keep this place special for now & the future is Dan Boyes, Moor Care Project Officer for Moors for the Future.

Dan Boyes

The most important thing we want visitors to do is enjoy themselves, but while they're here we want them to respect the place as well. Hopefully this audio trail will highlight some of the important areas & why this place is so special. In discovering what is special about the place we want people to preserve & look after it. Just following simple guidelines like making sure that your dogs are kept on leads & that they don't disturb wildlife or other people who are here to enjoy the place. Take care not to start fires deliberately, but also don't throw your cigarettes on the floor. Don't have barbecues on the sensitive moorland because moorlands are prone to ignition especially during the summer months.

When you're walking around Stanage in particular you'll notice signs about birds nesting. These are rare birds called Ring Ouzels. They nest on the crags so make sure you observe the signs & follow the guidelines that say where they're nesting so the birds can nest in peace. Also follow the moorland code. It's available from the visitors' centres & it highlights the sort of thing you should be doing when you're out on the moors to make sure that you can protect them for future generations.

James Tolhurst

This area has always been & still is a deep source of inspiration for artists. It certainly worked its charm on Charlotte Bronte with many of its places, names & people becoming inextricably woven into her first novel, Jane Eyre. Our guide to these is Bill Bevan, archaeologist & Interpretation Project Officer for Peak Experience.

Bill Bevan

We usually associate the Bronte sisters with Howth in Yorkshire, which is of course where they lived. However the Charlotte Bronte connection with

Hathersage is that she came & lived here with her friend Ellen Nussey who lived in the vicarage in 1845.

Hathersage is the village of Morton as appears in the novel. Charlotte stayed here for quite a while. She was also a schoolteacher in the local school & while living here she really drew her inspiration for Jane Eyre.

The large building on the road, the George Hotel, which you can see has the very small windows, This appears in Jane Eyre in a very tangential way. The landlord of the pub at the time was called Mr Morton, of course Morton became the name of the village that featured in the novel. The George Hotel was an 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn built to supply the increase in road traffic through Hathersage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Jane Eyre

“A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; & when I draw up the curtain this time, reader, you must fancy you see a room in the George Inn at Millcote, with such large figured papering on the walls as inn rooms have; such a carpet, such furniture, such ornaments on the mantelpiece, such prints, including a portrait of George the Third, & another of the Prince of Wales, & a representation of the death of Wolfe. All this is visible to you by the light of an oil lamp hanging from the ceiling, & by that of an excellent fire, near which I sit in my cloak & bonnet;”

## 2. Brookfield

Bill Bevan

Look towards the magnificent roof of Brookfield Manor through the trees with its numerous chimney pots sticking up like dozens of spires. This building was here when Charlotte Bronte visited Hathersage . It was owned by a local industrialist & member of the gentry & it appears in Jane Eyre as Vale Hall

Jane Eyre

“ ....I turned my face away from the lonely vale of Morton – I say *lonely*, for in that bend visible to me there was no building apparent save the church and the parsonage, half hid in trees, and, quite at the extremity, the roof of Vale Hall where the rich Mr. Oliver & his daughter lived.”

Bill Bevan

& Mr Oliver was the owner of the needle mills which appear in Jane Eyre. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hathersage became a main industrial centre for making brass buttons & wire. Then in 1750 Henry Cocker started the Atlas Works, a mill for making wire. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when Charlotte Bronte visited Hathersage, the area was then famous for its needle mills.

James Tolhurst

The different ecosystems you pass through on this walk have a high conservation value. Many contain rare & threatened species & are protected because of this.

A complex web of life covers the whole area with each plant & creature playing its role. Man too has played his part as we shall see. Ecologist Tim Allman will be our guide to the different habitats & the flora & fauna they contain.

Tim Allman

As you walk out from Hathersage you can clearly see there is a mosaic of habitats from the river valley & improved grassland at the bottom, up to the stone edge & moorland on top. Down in the river valley the predominant habitat is improved agricultural grassland which is used for grazing & silage cutting. It is a reasonably heavily managed landscape but even here there are rarities. Water voles can be found living on the riverbanks & the great crested newt can be found sheltering in the drystone walls, especially in winter. On certain steep areas of the valley sides, known as cloughs, you can see mixed broadleaf woodland, which increases the habitat diversity of the area.

### 3. North Lees

James Tolhurst

Nestling between these rolling hills with its glorious view this hall is the scene of one of the greatest romances in British literature.

Bill Bevan

When you're looking at North Lees hall, you're looking at Mr Rochester's Thornfield because it was North Lees that Charlotte Bronte used as her model for Thornfield.

Jane Eyre

"It was three stories high, of proportions not vast, though considerable: a gentleman's manor house, not a nobleman's seat: battlements round the top gave it a picturesque look. Its grey front stood out well from the background of a rookery, whose cawing tenants were now on the wing: they flew over the lawn and grounds to alight in a great meadow, from which these were separated by a sunk fence, and where an array of mighty old thorn trees, strong, knotty, and broad as oaks, at once explained the etymology of the mansion's designation."

Bill Bevan

When Charlotte Bronte lived in Hathersage the house had been lived in by the Eyre family for generations. And obviously that's where she got the surname for her heroine in the novel Jane Eyre. The tower that you can see now was originally built in 1590. The wing to the right was added in 1750 after the

original kitchen wing burnt down. There's a legend that also goes with North Lees that at one point there was a mad woman locked away on the top floor locked away in the attic, and this mad woman died in a fire, possibly the same fire that burnt down the kitchen wing. So really you can see how many elements of the story have come out of this one building.

James Tolhurst

Some of the surrounding field systems are even more ancient than this venerable hall. Up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they were farmed as they had been for generation upon generation. This long standing relationship between man and nature resulted in a particular habitat which has become increasingly rare with the changes brought on by modern farming practises.

Tim Allman

As you leave the lower valleys and improved grassland, you enter the areas of unimproved grassland. For centuries these fields have been managed for hay, and one of the Peak Park priorities is to increase the areas where traditional hay management is practised. This leads to greater floral diversity, here we have common spotted orchids, harebells and fescue grasses, none of which are as prevalent in the lower fields. This diversity in turn leads to a greater number of insects and indeed, birds that feed on them too. The unimproved pasture and the moorland leading up to Stanage edge supports a diverse range of birdlife. Here there are birds of prey such as Goshawks, short-eared owls and the Merlin, all of which find this a fertile hunting ground.

James Tolhurst

Halfway up the first field above North Lees Hall there is a footpath to your left. Take this path over the stile and follow it for 50 metres until it kinks slightly to the left

#### **4. Romano British Village**

James Tolhurst

You are now standing next to an ancient archaeological site, the remains of a Romano British settlement. Can you see it?

Bill Bevan

Look to your right and you'll see what looks like a standing stone. It's actually the end of a wall which is part of a terrace, and the terrace runs away from you and underneath the field wall and into the woodland beyond. If you look closely you'll see the front end of the terrace is supported by a row of blocks that have been laid on end. They look like a row of jagged teeth and this terrace is one of five that go down the valley side. All of these terraces were built in the Romano British period, there about 2000 years old and they were built to support rows of timber buildings and this was a Romano British village.

One of the terraces was excavated and they found Romano British pottery most of it made in the potteries near Derby that were set up after the Roman invasion. And they also found a small hand corn grinding stone known as a quern stone that proves that crops were cultivated in the fields next to the village, and these fields would have lain between the terraces and the chapel in the area which is now the green pastures.

The people who lived here as far as we can tell were the native people. They were the descendants of the iron age families who were living in the peak district when the Romans invaded. The nearest roman fort is actually very close to here, it's just at Hope which is only about five miles away. So the people living here probably would have paid their taxes to the roman garrison at that fort. They may even have exchanged or sold some of their produce at the small settlement of civilians that built up outside the fort, and their local lord would have been the descendant of the iron age lord.

## 5.Pride & Prejudice

James Tolhurst

Over the years, the Peak District & its dramatic scenery has been the setting for many film & television series. These include ITV's Peak Practice, The League of Gentlemen, Elizabeth starring Kate Blanchette, & The Dambusters. You may recognise this view in particular as it was here that those iconic shots of Elizabeth Bennet, played by Kiera Knightley, were taken for the classic 2005 adaptation of Pride & Prejudice.

As you look over to the West & South West you can see Sheepwash Bank & behind it, the Heather of Bamford Moor. Both were settled by ancient Britons who, in their passing, have left behind very little except the mysteries of their burial mounds, standing stones and stone circles.

Bill Bevan

If you look at the land in front of the conifer plantation, that area was lived on and farmed from the bronze age through to the iron age, a period of up to 2000 years between 4000 and 2000 years ago. What survives is mainly the field boundaries and their clearance cairns. These cairns are piles of stone that were cleared out of the way when the prehistoric farmers had to clear the ground before they could cultivate it.

If you look beyond the conifer plantation towards the lower moorland beyond Stanage edge into the distance this area also has evidence towards prehistoric farming. There is also a stone circle here as well and many of the prehistoric settlements had there own stone circle next to them, for small scale family ceremonies and these ceremonies would be related probably to the changing of the seasons or to celebrate the rites of passage to do with birth puberty and death.

One of the interesting things about the stone circles of Derbyshire is that all of them are built on the gritstone and none of them are on the limestone in the middle of the peak district. Also most of them look over the Derwent valley and quite a lot of them have one stone which is larger than the others. And in

most cases this larger stone is built on the side of the stone circle nearest the valley. So what it appears to be is that the people having the ceremonies in the stone circles, they live in the surrounding land but for some reason there referencing a view across the Derwent valley onto the limestone. This may be to do with the passage of the sun over the sky because in many cases the stones are on the south west side of the stone circle, but more often its just related to the view and what you can see from where you live.

James Tolhurst

As you walk along Stanage edge see if you can find Robin Hoods cave. Legend has it that this was one of the many hideouts to which the outlaw resorted when being pursued by tyrannical authority

## **6.Jane Eyre**

James Tolhurst

In September 2006 the BBC took advantage of the profound associations between this landscape and Jane Eyre and began filming their four-part adaptation for television. Ruth Wilson played the lead role and it was in this area that several scenes in the final instalment were shot. It is hear that we see Jane struggling across the moor, destitute and starving. Bill Gordon, manager of the North Lees estate, helped them find locations and was present at some of the filming.

Bill Gordon

She showed the film company a location on the estate which was a waterfall, and in the filming programme it just said "a storm looms", and it was just her alone sat at the top of a waterfall. And it was pointed out to me that she changed from Ruth Wilson to Jane Eyre within seconds. That's how professional they are.

James Tolhurst

Britain has some of the most extensive moorlands in the world and because of this it is carefully managed and protected. Within the moorland are even rarer habitats such as the blanket bog. This is home to the poetically named Sundew. A plant whose name belies its darker side as a carnivore trapping and devouring unwary insects

Tim Allman

Here standing on top of Stanage edge the impact of the underlying geology is perhaps most evident. The gritstone of the dark peak gives rise to a thin acidic poorly drained soil. This determines the vegetation that can grow here and it also gives rise to the conditions in which peat can form. Characteristic birds of moorland and high mountain are also found here including the grouse and curlew.

James Tolhurst

Up here life hangs in a precarious balance and yet as the area has become more popular with ramblers, climbers, mountain bikers and off road vehicles it has come under increased pressure. It is thanks to initiatives such as the Stanage forum, where all these groups can meet, that real progress in the areas conservation have been made.

One of there most notable successes has been the increase in pairs of ring ouzels nesting on Stanage edge.

However with the spectre of climate change hanging over us there are fresh challenges to be faced by mankind and all living creatures.

Bill Gordon

It's a matter of saying, you know, we live on a very tiny planet, it's a tiny landscape were looking after, and without us all taking considerations of other people and other things, we are not going to survive.

### 7.Moorseats

James Tolhurst

It is the lights from this house that guide the famished and desperate Jane through the darkest and stormiest night of her life to deliver her to a warm and compassionate sanctuary.

Bill Bevan

Your now standing in the grounds of Moorseats and this was the inspiration for Moor House in charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, and Moor House was the home of the parson St John and his two sisters. St John was the man who befriended Jane after she left Thornfield and she was a school teacher. He was the guy who proposed to her after taking her in and looking after her. And this is when, in the novel, the tension mounts. What is Jane going to do? Is she going to marry the parson? Who wants to then leave the country and be a missionary, who's a man who doesn't really believe in love as such, he doesn't have passion in his heart. Or is she going to ignore his advances and try to find out where Mr Rochester lives again.

Moor House appears in a number of scenes in Jane Eyre and it is not described very often but at one point charlotte Bronte does refer to the two girls, the parsons sisters, as kneeling and looking through the lower latticed window of Moor House kitchen.

Jane Eyre

"They love their sequestered home. I, too, in the grey, small antique structure, with its low roof, its latticed casements, its mouldering walls, its avenue of aged firs- all grown aslant under the stress of mounting winds; its garden, dark with yew and holly – and where no flowers but of the hardiest species would bloom- found a charm both potent and permanent. "

## 8. Norman fort

James Tolhurst

At the top of the hill here we are confronted with a curious site. A country house and garden semi enclosed by a large earthwork. It is certainly not in recent times that garden features like this were in fashion. What kind of deranged landscape gardener creates such a thing? The answer is of course that of an invading army.

Bill Bevan explains

Bill Bevan

What you'll see is a large grassy bank that rises above you between 2 and 3 times your head height. This is about 1000 years old this bank and its actually the outer defence work of a Norman castle. When the Normans arrived in the north they had to defend the strongholds of the barons from the local Anglo Saxon populations. The first thing they did was rapidly build defences for their homes. This one was built by piling up this large bank of earth and then it would have had a large fence on top of it. The whole manor of Hathersage was given by William the Conqueror to one of his loyal barons who fought with him at the battle of Hastings. This was effectively his prize and you can imagine what the local Anglo Saxon population thought about this sudden arrival of this foreign speaking new lord of the manor, who then built this real status symbol of his power and his dominance over them, as they lived in the village below.

Probably the most important thing the Normans did, and this is quite ironic, is that they created England in effect. There was no centralised power before William the Conqueror and that's why William was able to win the battle of Hastings so easily, because at the time you had three major earls. Harold lord of Wessex, also king of England, but there were two other earls, Mercia and Northumbria subservient to Harold. When William came over the channel the Northumbria and Mercian lords did not go and help Harold because they saw it as a local battle between two people arguing over the lordship of Wessex. When the Northumbria and Mercian lords realised what was happening they then tried to resist Norman power. The very famous uprising is now known as the harrian of the north. The harrian of the north is this very effective laying of waste, a sort of scorched earth policy almost a genocide policy, of William in northern England.

## 9. The Church

James Tolhurst

Here we are at Hathersage Church, a place steeped in history, with many interesting features inside & out. It is here that the historical importance and influence of the Eyre family is most clearly seen. It was in this vicarage that

Charlotte Bronte stayed, so you can clearly see how the influences and inspirations for Jane Eyre were right on her doorstep.

Bill Bevan

There's probably been a church on this site since the Normans arrived here about 1000 years ago, if not possibly an earlier church. Much of the church you see today was restored in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However it was originally built during a major restoration of the church under the patronage of Robert Eyre the lord of the manor in 1460 and he added all the gargoyles and heads and its worth looking up around the tower and to the left of the porch and looking for these fantastically carved heads and gargoyles. The one to the left of the porch which is just above a drain. Below the battlements is particularly interesting because it is almost identical to a number of Celtic stone carved heads that have been found in the hope valley between Castleton and Hathersage. One of these is now on display in Sheffield museum.

We think Celtic stone carved heads are made for a number or reasons. Were not exactly sure, but one reason that people carved body parts or heads in the iron age and early roman period was as offerings in wet places to the gods of springs.

James Tolhurst

Why do we find replicas of a Celtic head on a Christian church? One theory is, that vestiges of the old religions survive through the tradition and craft of the stonemasons, and that these heads are a throwback from the Celtic cult of the head. Here to elaborate on this gruesome topic is Terry Howard, local folklorist and chair of the south Yorkshire and northeast Derbyshire ramblers association.

Terry Howard

They found places in France where there's doorways have got severed heads, skulls, placed in it to protect the entrance. Now where the people in this area doing something similar by putting carved heads at vulnerable places around a building to stop evil spirits coming in.

James Tolhurst

The church has strong links to the legend of Robin Hood being the reputed site of little John's grave. Local stories relate how little john's bow, hat and mail shirt once hung in the church. These were removed by a local squire when the church fell into disrepair and were lost forever.

Terry Howard

Its quite a big grave, must have been a big fellow. Tradition has it that when this grave was opened up some time ago, they found the remains of a pelvis of a person and they said he must have been at least 7ft tall. Its just part of that superstition of little john and Robin Hood stretching from Nottingham right past Leeds and this area being rich in Robin Hood place names. Was he in this area? I believe robin hood is more to do with jack in the green, this belief that there is a man or a person or whatever living in the green wood. Again it's to do with earth religion and peoples relationship to earth.

James Tolhurst

The green man or jack in the green, has always been a powerful symbol in Britain. He appears in many forms and again is a manifestation of pre Christian religion that appears in churches as carved leafy heads. He appears in Arthurian legend as the green knight, beheaded by Sir Gawain but returning to life. He appears in other cultures as Bacchus, Pan, Puck and other tree spirits. We hope you enjoyed your walk and have enjoyed exploring this beautiful place. We'll leave you now with a traditional song about Jack in the Green and the mayday celebrations of his rebirth in spring.

#### Credits

Produced by: James Tolhurst & John Davies at The Boiler Room Recording Studio, Nottingham.

Many thanks to all the interviewees;

Bill Bevan; Interpretation Project Officer for Peak Experience

Dan Boys; Moor Care Project Officer for Moors for the Future

Bill Gordon; North Lees Estate Manager

Terry Howard; Chairman of the South Yorkshire & NE Derbyshire Ramblers Association

Johnathan Winn; Ecologist for the North Lees Estate, Peak District National Park Authority

Tim Allman; Ecologist

Mathew Croney; Land Agent for North Lees Estate, Peak District National Park Authority.

Jane Eyre read by: Kate Millman