

# Moor Memories from across the Peak District



## *Acknowledgements*

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Please note: The text highlighted in purple in the different sections of the booklet denotes quotes from the interviews. The '...' is used to shorten the quotes and link sections of text where space doesn't allow the full quote to be used.

## Introduction

This booklet was produced as part of the Moors for the Future Partnership's 'Moor Memories' Oral History Project. The two-year project was set up to collect and publicise memories of the moors in and around the Peak District National Park. It has been undertaken by the Moors for the Future Partnership with support from the following funding partners: the Heritage Lottery Fund, Peak District National Park Authority, English Heritage, East Peak Innovation Partnership, South Pennine Leader (Pennine Prospects), National Trust, United Utilities and the Sheffield Ramblers.

The project collected the stories of people who lived, worked and played in these areas through interviews, written material and pictures to create a lasting archive of a way of life which is fast disappearing. 'Moor Memories' workshops and open days were held where local people could share their experiences and be recorded talking about 'old times'. Many people were interviewed individually or as a group and a recording made of their memories. Other people wrote about their experiences and provided photographs, booklets and old newspaper cuttings from their family archives. Recording these memories has helped to build a picture of the changes in the landscape and ways of life on the moors over the past 60 or 70 years and even earlier. These may be specific memories or more general, relating to childhood; farming; working as a gamekeeper, waterboard worker or contractor; visiting the moors from the urban areas of Manchester and Sheffield; and looking after the visitors and moors as wardens/rangers or rescuers. All contribute towards a rich and vibrant picture of life on and around the local moors and the changes they have seen.

This booklet covers the moorland of the Peak District National Park area and is one of a series of three produced for the Moor Memories project. The other two booklets are 'Mosses and Cloughs' focussing on the Holme Valley area and 'Hills, Dykes and Dams' looking at the Bradfield, Midhope and Langsett areas.

## The Area

The information in this booklet covers the moors within the Peak District National Park and its fringes. It includes Wildboarclough in the southwest; Hathersage and the Longshaw estate; the Dark Peak area; and Holme Moss and Black Hill to the north.



Moorland view  
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.



Kinder Downfall  
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.



Moorland restoration

© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

## Time Period Covered

Most of the contributions in the booklet relate to memories of life in the twentieth century especially from the 1930s onwards. This reflects the age of the contributors who have related personal stories of their home and working life. However, some have provided information which reveals glimpses of life in the nineteenth and earlier centuries setting the context for the changes which have taken place more recently.

The changes seen at a local level which have taken place over the last 100 years can be set against a backdrop of wider changes in almost every aspect of British society. The memories reflect the rise in public health provision of clean drinking water and tighter pollution control; and changes in the economy with the rise and fall of the textile, metalworking, quarrying and mining industries and the changes in farming practices. The impact of World War Two on local communities and the changing attitudes to recreation and access to the moors and reservoir sides is also reflected.

## Contributors

The following people have contributed their spoken, written or pictorial memories to the writing of this booklet: Maureen Armes, Derek Bailey, Margaret Bailey, Herbert Beardsell, Dave Blyth, John Bunting, Linda Cawley, Ben Cherry, David Cuttell, Ken Drabble, John Eardley, Gerald Eastwood, Bill Emmingham, Roger France, Marion Frodsham, William Frodsham, John Gill, Fred Goddard, Gordon Hallas, Frank Harvey, Ken Harwood, George Hill, Arthur Huddleston, Ian Hurst, Don Johnson, Geoff Kaye, John Littlewood, Carlton Mellor, David Millner, Dereck Nobles, Malcolm Nunn, Ray Platts, Ron Priestley, Arthur Quarmbly, Clifford Robinson, Philip Sharpley, Brenda Shaw, Nick Smith, George Townsend, Dave Wombwell and Bessie Worsley.

## Farming

The memories of the farming communities across the Peak District area record the move from horse-power and mixed small-scale farms to tractor/motor power and fewer larger units. People recall that they were more self-sufficient in the early days as John Eardley describes, they were ‘producer / retailers’ rather than farmers.

Dereck Nobles describes his family farm in Holme village, “... born into hill farming [in 1937]. We milked 15 cows and we’d 70 breeding ewes ... [that] brought me and my brother up ... We changed the breed of sheep, there’s the Gritstone and the Woodland, the White-faced Penistone strictly speaking, correct name. [The] breed we found ... most profitable, with the smallest mouth was the Dales bred, the Swaledale ... the butchers like them ... big sheep with a small bone and you as the customer don’t like paying for bone ...” He also recalls how the sheep were managed, “... used to bring them off [the moor] for lambing, we lambed them at home, ... April to May, ... didn’t want them lambing before there was some grass to flush the milk. .. hill men always lambed later than the lowland men ... turn them back [on the moors] after lambing and marking up ... gather again end of June ... for shearing or clipping and ... you dipped [them] in July ... let them go again [and] October time ... gather them again, then the lambs would be saleable size ... bring the lambs and sheep off ... and put them on better ground, in-bye land [reclaimed fields at the edge of the moor].”

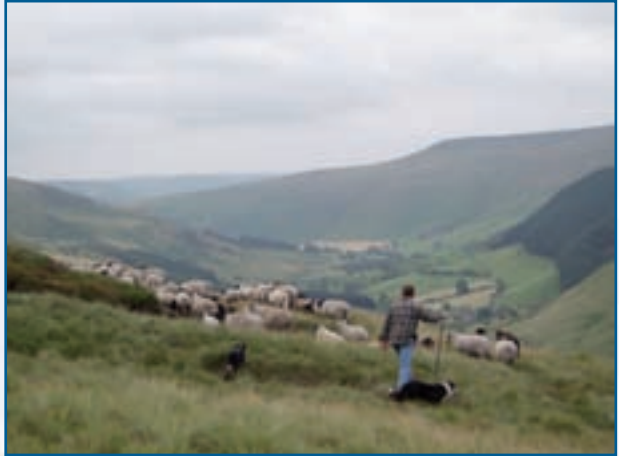


Looking towards Snailsden

© photograph Christine Handley.

Sheep rearing intensified in the mid-twentieth century but is now restricted as management practices changed. This has partly been due to designating the moors as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) with farmers managing the moor under Environmental Stewardship schemes and partly to help moorland restoration projects.

John Eardley, farming in the southwest of the area, says, "... the whole idea [then] was the sheep could winter on what they could get for themselves ... with the light stocking in the summer the sheep got as fat as seals and in winter ... wasn't a lot of money for feed ... just about managed to live through into spring. ... I helped to form a system where the sheep was taken off the hills in the winter and sent on to dairy farms for four months of the worst part of the weather, which has improved the hills a lot. ... That started in 1981."



*Gathering the sheep over Alport*

© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

John Gill talks about finding sheep in the snow around Chinley in the early 1980s, "... farmer next door came out ... snow had drifted ... you could hardly see the top of the wall, ... he was walking up and down on top of the wall. [He] had a long rod ... feeling down, had a sheep dog with him ... trying to find sheep which had been buried. [Sheep] migrate to the wall ... for shelter ... dog would then confirm [found sheep] by barking ... [farmer] get a spade dig down ... lift the sheep out. I started to help, hard work ... amazed ... sheep could live under the snow for two or three or more days, ... as long as [they've] got a bit of grass ... burrow down through the snow ... survive quite a long time under conditions like that."

Dereck Nobles describes how sheep had to be washed before shearing because of the pollution, "... newly shorn they [sheep] are white. ... When there was the old steam trains and heavy industry, ... every house had a coal fire, ... sheep by the end of August were black again. When you handled them, you could feel the soot. Years ago they used to wash the sheep, before they sheared them. There's a washing



hole at Harden today still, the old sheep wash. ... A man-made thing ... used to get in there and throw the sheep in. Don't know... if they used any soap or what they used to wash them ... the wool was down-graded [and sold for less] ... if it was dirty."

Ron Priestley recalls shearing, "hard work ... proper way to do it. When you're hand shearing, ... don't squeeze the blade up from the bottom, you squeeze the blade down from the top ... leaves a ridge across the sheep ... about three minutes to shear one by hand. It's a lot different now. Our Neil can shear a sheep in well under a minute." He goes on to say, "They [moors] were open and [sheep were] what we called hefted ... different then ... weren't keeping sheep to sell as lamb, ... selling it as mutton. [The] taste of mutton on sheep reared on the moors ....very little difference to venison ... when they get older, the sheep will eat the heather and it gives it a different flavour." "Everybody's got their own mark ... snip under the left ear ... raddle [paint] mark ... same, stroke down the tail and dot on the right side."

Several people mentioned shepherds' meetings as Dereck Nobles describes, "... an annual get together, ... one at Dunford Bridge, one here [Holme village, Fleece Inn], several pubs ... everybody gathered, ... and all trusted one another ... always got unmarked lambs. When the lambs were born you put your mark on them, ... [you] can see different colours on sheep. And there was a book, a loose-leaf book, when someone got some sheep [said, I'll] mark my sheep this way .. making sure you never marked them like someone else and then you would go into the book .. lambs that were born on the moor ... you'd mark them ... on the moors. They'd [shepherds] just put their dogs round and get maybe two or three hundred sheep and they'd mark all the lambs ... April/May .. some always got missed. They brought all these unmarked lambs to the shepherds' meeting ... form a human ring and you'd put them in the middle and the highest bidder would get the lamb or mostly they'd know their own breeds so they'd say – that's one of mine, that's one of yours John, so this was how it worked." Shepherds' meetings still take place in the Peak District as Ron Priestley who now lives near Buxton describes, "They have a

shepherds' meet ... used to be at Castleton ... now its gone down to Bamford. ... There's four shepherds' societies. There's Edale, Hayfield and Strines that are still going; the others have died like." At Edale the shepherds' meetings were held at the Church Hotel. Brenda Shaw, former landlady, recalls, "I was a shepherdess [an honorary position, as the hostess]. And they paid a shilling [subscription] a year."



An old farming landscape looking over to Broomhead Moor © photograph Frank Harvey.

On the edge of the moors and in the valleys, there were small dairy farms with up to twenty cows or with a few cows kept as part of a mixed farm. Frank Harvey working on a small mixed farm at BRIGHTHOLMLEE in the 1950s recalls " [the cows] required hand milk-

ing twice a day i.e. morning and night ... would go to work at 6.30 in the morning and return home at 7.30 [at night]." Bessie Worsley and Ben Cherry also recall that the cows not only needed milking but that the equipment and stalls had to be washed down and cleaned afterwards.

Many people remembered when milk was delivered door to door and sold from churns. Ron Priestley says that whilst living at White House Farm in the 1940s, "I used to take milk round. I was a milkman in [the] village, teenager. ... There were seven different milkmen in Hathersage at one time, now there is only one." Another of the Hathersage milkmen was Ray Platts whose family had a farm in the centre of Hathersage, "You didn't milk so many because ... it was delivered in the village, twice a day. ... A lot of people only had half a pint in the morning and half a pint at night." John Eardley's father had a thirty-acre dairy farm in Macclesfield before eventually moving to Wildboardclough, "We milked the cows and delivered the milk to the door with the old brass-topped churns with the people coming to the door with jugs and measures for putting it into."

Starting in the late 1940s milk was collected from the farm gate by lorry or taken to a station to be loaded onto a train and taken to cities such as Sheffield. William Frodsham says, “The thing that changed this country to my mind was when, I think it was Express Dairies ... used to come round ... say to farmers, if you put a five gallon o’ milk in a churn and put it in the side of the road, I’ll take it. And there was a Milk Marketing Board then and that was another wage comin’ in... and that made things a lot different.”

Almost all the cattle were kept on the lower pastures and in-bye [moorland fringe] fields nearest to the farms. But Ben Cherry remembers that until the 1930s the farmer at Midhope Hall Farm took cattle up onto the edge of Midhope Moor near Pike Low for summer grazing. Once Midhope reservoir’s boundary wall was built across the access path, the practice stopped. John Eardley,

who moved to his farm in 1949, also recalls, “Clough House was a typical hill farm. It’s 80% moorland and rough grazing and 20% pasture, meadow land. [We] used to be paid a government subsidy to have cattle to graze the hills, ... it was £3 per head from the period



*Mending the footpath after ploughing*

© photograph Frank Harvey.

12th May to the 12th October ... dairy farmers were encouraged to send the heifers or in-calf heifers onto the hills for the summer to help to improve management of the hills and the rough grazing. They [cattle] wasn’t as selective ... they made better pasture for the sheep.”

Ray Platts moved to his farm at Bamford from Hathersage with his father in 1943, “...spent all winter bringing the haymaking machines and everything ... so when it came to Lady Day we only had the stock to bring. [Outgoing tenant] left no fodder at all. So we kept whatever

hay we had at Hathersage; ... and we brought it here [Bamford] to feed the cows.” The farmland needed quite a bit of work to make it productive, “I remember someone saying to my father, “I don’t know why you have gone there ... that land’ll grow nothing.” Me father says, “There’s nothing matter with the land what a bit of good husbandry won’t put right”. He said it was short of lime. He ordered 100 tons straight away ... everyday ... not doing any other work, I was sent with horse and cart to ... spread this lime ... doing about ten ton a day, shovelling it into the cart and spreading it. As soon as I’d done this [my father] ordered another 100 ton and I wasn’t very chuffed about it!”

John Eardley talked about the old farm buildings in the fields, “got probably ... oldest building in Wildboarclough ... situated right on the edge of the moor; a small barn ... [room for] four cattle and a pig in the corner ... with an outside feeding [area] ... same as all the barns were in these hill areas ... such a good way ... took the cattle and the cattle were inside the barns on the floor and the hay was on the lofts above, ... lad’s job to go across – there was always a trough made outside these buildings, so could turn cattle out in winter for’t water... and look after it ... idea was that the muck was in the meadow so they didn’t have to cart the muck long distances, it was already in the field. It was a good system.



*George and Joel Buckley harvesting using scythes in the 1920s  
© photograph Malcolm Nunn.*

Interesting part about this farm ... there is a 22 acre meadow ... Lord Derby farmed it from 1885 to 1922/23, something like that ... had different bailiffs on it; and they once mowed it [all] with scythes in the day, 22 men. An acre a day was what a man could do with a scythe.”

Many of the farms also had a few acres where they grew cereal or root crops often as a way of providing winter feed for their live-stock. John Eardley and Philip Sharpley recall, “One of the hard work jobs was sowing turnips. And then hoeing them out to leave ones ...

so far apart ... and if that wasn't bad enough, come Autumn, ... had to take them out ... cut the top off ... cut the bottom off an' chuck 'em in the cart ... used as cattle feed again. And the worst one of the lot was growing kale; [you] brought kale in as you wanted it, couldn't store it ... on a nice frosty morning, ... go cut this kale and stack it on the trailers bring it into the yards ... carry it with ice running down yer because there were none o'the gear that you've got now for't weather. An' the ice dropping down yer arm carrying it between two cows that were so desperately hungry, ... so eager to see yer, ... they'd turn round in opposite directions ... you were stood there holding this great arm of stuff waiting for them to part, so you could walk through them."

During the Second World War and for a short time afterwards the in-bye land, pasture and meadows on the moorland fringe were ploughed up for crops such as wheat, oats and potatoes, as Fred Goddard recalls happening at Broomhead Hall near Stocksbridge. "The fields around Broomhead Hall (Broomhead Park) were ploughed up, as was an area ... the other side of Mortimer Road after the vegetation had been burnt and trees cut down. ... Broomhead Farm went from a small arable farm to a massive one ... a large area of ripe grain to be cut and ... threshing taking three days, which was a lot, and the hay was built into stacks and stored outside. At the start of the Second World War, Broomhead Hall wasn't in use, ... window was knocked out ... and the grain stored in there. Later potatoes were also grown and they were stored inside ... as well ... after the end of World War Two the arable farming was not kept up."

Traditionally bracken was used as winter bedding for cattle across the Peak District as several people remember. Farmers asked the gamekeepers which areas they wanted cutting that year so patches were managed on rotation. Ray Platts describes cutting bracken on the moors around Hathersage, "We'd no straw you see. What little straw we had, we also used it for feeding ... go in August ... father as a child got his nose broken carting bracken ... used to cut a bough, load it on ... and [take] ... out with a horse ... [he was] riding on this and got thrown out. [We] liked it to get [it] weathered ... because if green and

[the] cattle ate it ... was poisonous to 'em. But for horse[s] it was very good ... used to see some good beds of bracken up there [Stanage] ... couldn't cut it every year ... weakened it. You'd cut it about every third year, but in a different place each year ... get the permission of the gamekeepers to go on their patch."



Moorland management © photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

Philip Sharpley also remembers, "... started ploughing, we ploughed that bracken in, ... roots were there for years ... a bit o' fertiliser, it was good ... potatoes were very good and the corn grew ... use it [bracken] for bedding cattle, ... 1937, in the 40s; ... cut that with a scythe; ... [a] steep [hillside] .. covered in trees now, .. used to be covered in bracken. In fact when you went down the Congleton Road, ... the Nabs and Shutlingsloe was green ... people used to think it was potatoes, an' it were bracken. Field after field."

Today harvesting bracken for bedding has stopped. Herbicides and cutting are used to try to keep it under control. Ron Priestley recalls, "... lot of bracken clearance done at the end of the war [World War Two], ... used to roll it with a serrated roller ... tractor pulling it ... broke the bracken and let it bleed ... would reduce it. The year after ... half as much. The year after, it was getting old and going back again." He goes on to comment, "... not a lot of bracken clearance done [now] ... one of the biggest threats to the moors. There's acres and acres ... incredible the amount ... up there now to what there used to be." The Fitzwilliam Estate started to control bracken on their land around Midhope in the 1960s using a similar process to the one that Ron describes. It did have some success but as John Littlewood says, "... it was a slow process ... done annually over a period of three to four years [it] gradually weakened the bracken and allowed the heather and grasses to take over."

## Gamekeeping

Grouse shooting has been taking place in the moorland areas across the Peak District for over two hundred years. It was one of the sports which the large landowners developed in the nineteenth century as part of their social season. Many of those interviewed said that grouse shooting is no longer the social occasion involving local people that it was 40 or 50 years ago. Now, the shooting parties are big business with moors hired out for a few days by syndicates and beaters are recruited from a wider area.

The gamekeepers' main duty is to make sure that there are enough healthy grouse ready for the shooting season which begins on the 'Glorious 12th' of August. The season officially ends on the 10th of December but usually the shooting season has peaked by the end of September. Farmers may have sheep grazing on the moor but it is the responsibility of the gamekeepers to manage the moors. John Littlewood, a gamekeeper on the Fitzwilliam Estate in the 1970s, covered the Strines Moor area and did a 'full beat' walking around his patch each day keeping an eye on things and the vermin under control.

Gamekeepers aim to create a patchwork of heather stands of different ages where the grouse can feed, nest and shelter. Roger France, a gamekeeper in the Glossop area, says, “ [there is a] need to manage the heather, .. done over a fifteen year cycle using controlled burning .. undertaken between October and April when ground is damp ... enables the fire to “skim” over the soil surface leaving seeds and roots unaffected.” John Littlewood describes the burning in more detail, “ ... anything from 50m by 25m but usually 25m by 100 to 150m at one time depending on [the] area. First thing was to pick the



Using a fire broom on controlled moorland burning  
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

spot you would burn to [towards a fire-break] ... then light fire about 20m wide, as it would spread sideways ... have two teams flapping with 'flappers' [fire brooms] at the side of the fire, damping down the flames to keep it to a reasonable width."

Ken Drabble comments, "Actually, if you had a very good gamekeeper, ... they always hid fire breaks in the heather because [these] burning patterns was habitat for the grouse. And so if you had a swathe which was burned out, that was a fire break should the rest [of the moor] get on fire. The big dykes that you see, Black Dyke and whatever, they're not dykes for fire really, they were for shooters to go from one set of butts to another."

The shooting parties were out on the moors all day but stopped for lunch at the shooting cabins or gamekeeper's lodge. Maureen Armes recalls helping at the Waggon and Horses public house in Langsett which provided food for the Pilkington family shoots. As Maureen says, "When I



*Shooting Party at Oyster Clough Cabin*

© Roger France.

see the Victorian kitchen programmes packing up the picnics for a day out ... it was just like that in Mrs Green's kitchen ... [a] dappled grey [horse, would] pull a beautiful red and blue cart up with the dinners for the shooting parties. Old Sam Smith used to go ... to carve up and David or John Green used to drive the cart up." Later, in the 1960s, Maureen helped at other shoots, " ... Walter Salmon's wife would get up every morning and make fresh bread for the shoot. And I'd go with my children ... and help make the sandwiches. Walter was posh, didn't go up with horse and cart he had a shooting brake to take his things up to the cabin." In the southwest of the Peak District, Philip Sharpley and John Eardley similarly recall, "They used to have two days shooting there [Piggford moor] ... me dad used to take [the food up and the



beer in a horse and cart. An' when the horse an' cart left the road, you never saw [them] ... the bracken was covering the hillside. It was the height of the horse, you might see its ears sticking out over the top."

Dereck Nobles recalls his mother telling him about working at the gamekeeper's lodge in the 1930s, "My grandfather, George Hawsworth, [was] under-keeper for Pilkington's, ... she [mother] was a girl living at Harden ... she'd to go to Swinden. 10 year old, 12 year old and all the guests, all the guns, usually 8 or 10 guns, ... was an invitation job. Always the same people that came along ... come up by train to Penistone and then picked up by horse and trap and brought up to Swinden. And they used to get royalty. My mother used to say, "I fair remember the Duke of Gloucester used to come every year" ... they used to come for a week ... every bedroom was occupied ... mother said you hoped to god it wasn't rough weather because they'd fires to put in every bedroom, all the clothes there was to dry out, not like ... today with sort of goretex ... everyone was wet through and they'd to dry out for the morning after ... it was hard work."

Clifford Robinson describes how things had changed by the 1980s. The shooting party would meet at his house [the gamekeeper's lodge] and go back there for lunch but didn't stay overnight. The beaters and shooting party would meet at about 9 to 9.30am and walk to the shooting butts. The shoot would finish at about 5.30pm with the day's bag of grouse being divided up. The shooters or 'guns' could take a share of the grouse if they wanted, and the surplus was sold to a game dealer.

Shooting parties rely on a team of people for a successful day's shooting. The beaters and flankers guide the birds across the moor towards the 'guns'; the loaders help the 'guns' by reloading and passing the shotguns; and the dog-men use their dogs to retrieve the dead grouse. John Littlewood recalls his first experience of grouse shoots in the late 1950s, as a ten-year old on Broomhead and Midhope moors, "hard work ... no waterproofs like there are today ... used to wear one of my dad's old macs and a pair of old clogs and a flat cap ..." He

continues, “ ... being a young lad they [two friends] put me between them. We were flanking, lucky in that respect until I got to know the moor then I started beating.” Geoff Kaye recalls helping with the shoots in the 1960s, but his experience put him off as he says, “ ... it wasn't easy ... walk through bracken up to your neck ... on a wet day, by god was you wet when you came out. But like in my father's day, and me grandfather's we being country people and farmers, when it was grouse shooting, farming stopped and all the farmers went on the moor.” Dereck Nobles also recalls the beaters' job could be a very hard one, they had to walk in a line keeping pace with their neighbours either side of them. He was in charge of the beaters and led from the middle. As he says, “ ... the same guys came every year. I had a good team ... all had their own positions so you just set them off.”

Philip Sharpley and John Eardley remember a similar routine in the southwest of the Peak District at Piggford moor but describe the perks. “Oh we had eight shillings a day. Then it was very good money, ... we were only young, ... had a packet of sandwiches and a bottle o' pop ... beaters had two bottles of beer, big beer, and the sandwiches it was a big pile; we'd look forward to it, we were hungry ... three or four days a week [for about 6 weeks], something like that ... twenty of us beating. Yes all locals. We used to look forward to this. And they got a lot of birds then. A lot. 300 brace.”

During the shooting season, one of the duties of the Peak District Wardens was keeping walkers away from the shooting areas. Margaret Bailey describes, “I was once on a shooting party duty, that is, turning visitors back who shouldn't be there. Anyway there's 'No Access Today' signs at the Black Clough cabin in Longdendale. It was very boring, no one came. [The shooting party] wouldn't be back for lunch for hours. I had set the table, which is part of the job, and just sat there. Suddenly I thought this cabin looks so bleak and bare, so I decorated with ferns and rowan berries growing nearby. The first man in said “Oh god, it looks like a harvest festival” ... Then the boss arrived, looked around and said “Thank you so much my dear. Please accept a brace of grouse” I didn't tell him we [her family] were vegetarian!”

## Other Occupations

Some of the tenant farmers converted parts of their land to produce specialist crops for sale. Watercress which grew naturally in the local streams in parts of the Peak District was one such crop. As Bessie Worsley says, “... started off because there were so many springs in the Gradbach ... he [father] thought ... make a nice watercress bed ... me two eldest brothers helped to dig them [beds] out ... started off in a small way and then we went to get watercress roots from different places ... started to make more beds, ... [water] went in one end and round and out the other, so it kept running through ... started with four [beds] ... made about twenty altogether. On a Thursday we got the watercress and we used to put them there [in a deep pool] till Friday ... used to fetch them down and pack them up on the table in the kitchen in the Mill House. Sometimes three dozen sometimes four dozen [bunches].” The bunches of watercress were taken to Macclesfield and sold at the Saturday market.

Many of the men interviewed started life working on farms but later worked as contractors or hauliers for the farming communities and rural industries in general. Others became waterboard workers, foresters, quarrymen and miners.



*Planting trees on Broomhead Moor*

© photograph Frank Harvey.

Philip Sharpley recalls, “We had a threshing machine during the war [World War Two] on this lease lend, it came from America, ... I had to go round ... W'b Clough, Macc. Forest, Raynald, we went as far as Disley, Kettlehulme, ... one of the first to have a tractor, a new Fordson tractor. Me dad ... said you can use that 'cos we'd only one horse and horses were just at the start of dying out ... we had all the

implements for the tractor – all the machines. That was ... [on] 17th May 1937, a brand new Fordson [tractor] ... cost £196 delivered ... a deluxe model with a mirror on the mudguard, a horn and underneath exhaust with a silencer, oh and a hand brake on.”

William Frodsham, who lives at Flash, describes the various jobs that he did, “I did finish up lorry driving. I started off farming. When I first left school I went farming [as a farm labourer] at 35 bob a week ... I did that for about four year. Well I were working on’t quarries, an’ buildin’ an’ all sorts ... went working for Alcocks at Buxton. Tuppence an hour more money. I was in the quarry and jacked in that job, breaking stones for twenty pounds and loading it into trucks. One and nine pence [9 ½ p] a ton. ... [breaking them with] twenty eight pound ‘ammer. And I left that and went timber felling, for about, oh only on that for about six weeks. And then I jacked in there and went working for Alec Dale ... spreading, tractor driving.” Mrs Frodsham, “Half a crown an hour.” William goes on, “That ‘ud be in 1955 or 6; it ‘ud be 55 that would. Then left there and went working for Alf [Buxon] mowing, [getting] hay, gardening and one thing or another.”



Plantations around Midhope Reservoir, August 2011  
© Photograph Christine Handley.

Geoff Kaye, born at Upper Midhope in the mid-1950s, worked on the local farms as a young lad. However, his first job after leaving school was at Hepworths Iron Company before moving to the steelworks at Stocksbridge. He now has his own contracting business which he started whilst still

at Hepworths, “I had a tractor when I first started ... and then I put a loader on the front and a back-actor on the back ... nobody round ‘ere got anything like it, so I got bits o’jobs with local farmers and then I wanted to buy something a little better ... business partner ... ended up

buying it [a JCB] between us ... and we've been goin' ever since. With both of us bein' local people working on the local farms and different things, that's how we got [our] work ... repair the ditches, dikes, pipes, culverts, whatever's needed, resurface the road and all the rest of it, ... we're local and all they need is ring up and say can you go up to so and so and have a look, you'll see what the problem is, what's it going to cost us, give me a ring back, an it's all done over the telephone, not particularly meeting anybody. Sometimes we do, but we know the local area."

Gerald Eastwood started working for Batley Water Corporation, at Brownhill reservoir near Holmfirth, in 1958. His family had farmed in the area until the farm was compulsorily purchased to make way for Digley reservoir. He describes his early routine when starting out as a waterboard worker, "... the boss, would say...

empty the weirs ...  
[we'd] walk from here  
[Brownhill reservoir]  
up to Ramsden ...  
taking some of the  
tools with us; ...we had  
some of the tools up  
top end like [on the  
moor] set off ... eight  
o'clock in the morn-  
ing, twelve o'clock  
lunchtime, half past



*Brownhill Reservoir, Holme Valley*

© photograph Christine Handley.

twelve back at it again ... Half past four or four o'clock ... we'd take off and walk back down the hill ... that were your day done." He was then asked to do another job, "I was put in charge of taking [recording the rainfall from] the rain gauges, ... I was like working seven days a week, Saturday and Sunday ... well Met. Office then wanted the rainfalls ... we used to get 'em about half past nine, quarter to ten, ... I'd be ringing them in. Then, every month, it used to come for the monthly gauges. Which I'd then have to set off and do."

## Schooldays

Many of the contributors had stories about going to the local village school, often walking along country lanes or taking the school bus. George Townsend who lived at Ashopton and Thornhill in the 1930s remembers, “I had two brothers and one sister, we walked ..., one and threequarter miles there, there were no school dinners and we took sandwiches. If you wanted a drink there were a trough in the school yard with clear running water.” “We had work to do before we went to school feeding the hens, pigs etc. no mains water at Thornhill, so we had the drinking water to carry before we went to school and when we came home. I used to carry water for people round about and I drew a little money for that, after I came home from school.”

Ray Platts, born in 1922, went to the Church of England School in Hathersage. He says, “We had a service in assembly in the morning and another in assembly in the evening, a thing they don’t do today. When I started school in infants we had a slate ...15 inches by about 8, I suppose and it had a wooden surround on it. And on the top was one to ten and down the sides were the alphabet and that was what we had to learn. And we had a crayon, which was also slate, round like a pencil and we wrote with that. ... I left [the school] at 14.”

Bessie Worsley recalls that, “[I] used to take sandwiches to school, ... jam sandwiches ... mostly gooseberry jam ... can’t stand gooseberry jam! Never sweet enough really. I was going to Leek school then [early 1940s] ... wanted all those from Flash school to go ... after eleven ... to Leek school. The bus wouldn’t come [at first] ... supposed to walk up to Middlehills ... long way up so me dad wouldn’t let me. At twelve they decided to let the bus round ... was one or two more twelve year olds. So I went to Leek school ... left then at fourteen. Started working at home on the farm.” She also describes, “When we went to school ... little toffee shop ... could get ten aniseed balls for a penny or ... two liquorice, laces like, ... spinning wheels with toffee in the middle ... get such a lot for a penny. And we used to get these and divide them up between us [brothers and sisters].”

## Domestic Life

Ray Platts talks about daily life at the family farm in Hathersage during the 1930s, “... weren’t living in luxury ... if you had bread and butter ... that was it, you didn’t get bread, butter and jam. If you had bread and jam, that’s what you had, no butter on it. The jam was mostly rhubarb and gooseberry... [there] was a water boiler at the side [of the kitchen range] ... all the hot water we had. Fill it from the kitchen tap, then later my father, he got the plumber to come and put a pipe in so you turned it on and it filled up, ... marvellous until somebody forgot to turn it off and flooded the kitchen ... you didn’t use it for washing; you washed [yourself] in cold water. You always washed in cold water because there was no hot.” “No freezer in those days, no fridge or anything like that ... benches were stone ... [in] spring you had plenty of eggs ... back end [of the year] people who were having a dozen eggs a week got down to three. So when there was plenty they used to sell the eggs and they used to pickle them in ... isinglass and they was alright ... use them for baking ... not much use for anything else, but baking they were alright.”



*In the garden at Langsett House*

© photograph Maureen Armes.

Bessie Worsley recalls moving to Mill House Farm at Gradbach when she was three years old, “ ... pantry ... at the back all underground, ... always cold, you never needed a fridge, ... used to have a little square thing ... meat safe with netting on the front just to keep the flies off. Used to have pigs and all sorts ... someone to kill a pig ... a copper going with boiling water [to scald the pig after it had been killed] ... made brawn off the head ... really nice brawn it was with pepper ... he [the pig-killer] used to cut it into joints ... hang them up and then we used to slice bacon off, ... some were joints of ham ...” She goes on, “ ... used to grow mint ... in the garden like, ... had blackcurrant bushes ... loganberries against the wall of ... the tea room. We’d grow watercress in [a trough] for a quick pick like, for anybody’d come and we needed a bit. We had some fruit trees down one side of the

path ... two plum trees, two apple trees - eating apples, and two cooking ... grow quite a few lettuces and that. Have lettuce sandwiches and something for tea.”

The villages of Ashopton and Derwent were demolished when the Ladybower reservoir was built in the late 1930s and early 1940s. George Townsend, was born in 1929 at Rose Cottage, “Ashopton was very quiet during the week and hardly anyone had a car ... fairly busy on Sundays in the summer with bicycles, a few mollymorgans (two wheels at the front and one chain driven wheel at the back) and a few motorbikes. There were two shops ... a post office, Ashopton Inn, two petrol pumps and a joiner’s shop ... a Methodist chapel, .. stained glass window is now in the Hope Sunday School. Joel Marshall worked ... making carts, at the joiners shop, making coffins etc. ... no tractors, all horsepower. I remember a steam lorry one day bringing beers to Ashopton Inn. There was a bus service to Sheffield. The butcher came once a week, he was called Percy Law. Hancocks from Bamford brought orders, groceries etc. round every week. There weren’t many telephones, no electricity, there was a phone box. We had a wireless which not many people had. My father and mother used to make teas for people on Sundays. One man used to come every Sunday, wet or fine, he had two eggs, two boiled eggs. We had our milk from Tonbridge at Jackend Farm.” The family moved to a small-holding at Thornhill in 1939.



Site of old well used for drinking water  
© photograph Christine Handley.

William and Marion Frodsham recall the days before mains water and sewerage around Flash and Adders Green, “... everybody used to go to hole in the ground [a well] and get water and used to go to hole in the ground to go [to the] toilet. Had a twin seat [toilet] at Adders Green, big and a little [holes for the seats] ... older ones went on one and young ones went on other and two can go together ... toilet paper, you used [newspaper] ... cut it up in squares ... didn’t go and buy toilet rolls in them days.”



## Public Houses and Inns

A variety of public houses and inns have been described in the interviews. These provided one of the focal points of social life in the villages as well as a meeting point and place of shelter for travellers across the moors.

Brenda Shaw, former landlady of the Church Hotel at Edale [now the Ramblers Inn], describes moving there in 1945, "... happy to come .. liked Edale. Church Hotel ... weren't really used to no electricity and no proper telephone, ... become very basic, ... had a Lister engine [generator] in the garage. ... full of batteries, big batteries, and the lights used – my husband he turned the lights on ... as soon as it started to get dark ... had lights then till ten o'clock, when the bar shut the lights went low. ... [was] what we managed with for a long time. A big boiler in the kitchen and ... coal fires. ... made every morning. ... ten bedrooms and I had nine bedrooms to let." She goes on to say, "Course I had a lot of interesting people come to stay. Lord Hunt, ... he was a member of a club, he used to come walking. ... from Manchester, ... the Rucksack Club. Barbara Castle, she came, they opened the Pennine Way ... stayed quite a few times. And Lord, ... Hugh Dalton. A lot of the crew [for the film 'Charlie Bubbles'] stayed at the Church Hotel ... brought this van for them to cater ... couldn't get it over that bridge, to go up to the Lea. ... all had to come back to the Church Hotel. ... quite good for me, business-wise, 'cos they all came down at lunch time for sandwiches ..." Brenda ran the hotel herself with help from staff, "...a full time job for me, 'cos I did such a lot of the cooking. Well I'd so much local [staff] and then I'd so many Irish [who came for the summer]."

Brenda also recalls a small village public house at Sheldon where her family originated from, "... just a small pub there. And all of a sudden, a voice shouted to the landlord ... "You'd better come John, the calf, it's calving, the cow." And there was an old man sitting ... he said "Well you won't get any more drink tonight because ... be too busy with the cow." Bob and I sat and finished our drink and

came out. ... that was the pub in Sheldon. It belonged to the Duke of Devonshire, the whole village ... ”

Bessie Worsley talks about one of the public houses around Gradbach, “... there was another pub ... the Peg Inn, a bit lower down ... they couldn't get a licence for that, so they used to sell pegs and give a glass of beer with this to get round it ... I don't know if they were too close [to another pub] ... that was why it was called Peg Inn.”

Derek Bailey recounts the closure of one of the old inns, “The compulsory purchase of the Isle of Skye Inn (on the A635) resulting in its demolition, as its effluent drained into the catchment area for the proposed Digley reservoir [completed in 1953] caused a great outcry all around. Appeals were organised but all were rejected. The main source of dissent was that the inn provided shelter in the severe winter snows to travellers trapped in snow drifts. ... also [played] host ... to the Prince of Wales around 1936-1938 ... a guest at the farm, shooting lodge, on the Greenfield side of the moor ... [he] was very popular with the locals, ... very sociable ... always bought any locals present 'a pint' ... also join in any games of dominoes or darts ... including on one occasion [with] my own father, Gideon Bailey ...”

George Hill recalls, “... [in the 1970s] used to go to the Club Inn at Midhope, a real spit and sawdust place ... the barmaid ... always wore black with a little bit of lace round her neck ... arms like two sides of beef. ... kept order. ... beer was renowned.

Cellar must have been good, kept beer absolutely perfect. ... go for a pint of hand-pulled Tetleys, it was the finest ... would look at each other and say 'that's good'... it was like walking back into time ... Friday night it would be absolutely packed.”



Waggon & Horses public house, Langsett

© photograph Christine Handley.

## World War Two and the Home Guard

Several of the people interviewed told stories about how the second world war had affected life on the edge of the moors and, as this selection shows, the contribution which the Home Guard made.

Ray Platts, born in 1922, remembers, "... with being young it didn't have the same effect on me as on my father ... Dunkirk, they brought ... two soldiers. All they wanted was somewhere for the night and then next morning they were gone ... one had no shoes and neither had got a gun and ... you know those little gaiters they wore? He'd only one and he gave it to me. Then they had a roadblock on the bottom road ... had a lot of old cars and you had a chicane there. And I remember coming back with the eggs one day with me father and these soldiers told us "Stop" and I kept riding past and me father shouted at me to stop. He said we're in a different game now to what we used to be." Ray was in the Home Guard, " ... at Hathersage, but when I came up to Bamford ... they was forming a separate platoon ... they wanted two people from each company, that was each village to join this. So me being an outside come in, they volunteered me straightaway and a chap called Reggie Morgan ... come from the south coast out of the bombing because of his wife's health... We met at Stoke Hall ... our job ... we had to blow all the bridges up and didn't have dynamite, we had ... gelignite. The chappie that was our commanding officer, he'd been in the First World War and he'd been a sapper ... he taught you how to make the stuff blow where you wanted it to blow, rather than take its easiest way out..."

Arthur Huddleston from Hayfield, slightly younger than Ray, talks about his experiences, "My father was in the Home Guard and me brothers were till they got called up ... and my youngest brother and I were in the Scouts. And they used the Scouts as runners between various places ... one particular night I was on duty ... [the] Home Guard in Hayfield [had] gone to New Mills to ..., either parade or something, ... just a caretaker there and the phone rang ... from Upper House ... wanted some assistance because a plane had just come

down and I said well it's difficult because they're in New Mills. So we contacted them and they came ... the crew were all Canadians, six of them and they laid them out here in these garages, here at the Royal Hotel [Hayfield], ... they brought them down the next day. No [none survived] ..." He goes on, "And on that area where the bypass comes down there was an ammunition dump there, a big curved building ... where the Home Guard kept all their ammunition and things. Where we are here, all the bombing in Manchester you could see what was happening ... it was Christmas time when Manchester had it's Blitz, ... I was up ... Highgate Road, ... [saw] taxi, with a trailer behind it with bits of furniture and they'd been bombed out of Manchester and fortunately they'd had some relatives ... lived at Stones Edge ... [they were] people coming out of the blitz. And some of them still stayed while others moved on."



Remains of wartime plane crash

© photograph Herbert Beardsell.

John Bunting describes his time in the Home Guard on the moors around Sheffield, "... being a steelworker, ... could go in Home Guard. So at weekends we were patrolling moors. Some nights we were on Totley Moor, Hallam Moors, looking for German paratroopers. And just before blitz [1940] we were lighting fires on moor. If you go on ... you'll see a lot o' holes full o' water and I'll always remember one young lady, she says, "What do they need all these dew ponds for on moors?" I said [laughing] "They're not dew ponds, they're bomb craters that are filled up with water". 'Cos we used these fires to decoy German aircraft bombing Sheffield. But course they were useless when blitz came 'cos it were a beautiful starlit, moonlit night, and it were just like daylight. And even from top of moors you could follow River Don right through Sheffield. It was clear as a bell. Sometimes they were piles of wood or barrels o' tar or summat like that [to light the decoy fires], you know, anything like that. Somebody would [go up every night] different, course there were different companies of Home Guards all over Sheffield and we'd take it in turns."

## Hiking, Rambling and Climbing

The moors on the edges of Sheffield and Manchester have been popular for day trips and holidays since the nineteenth century. They were the site of the ‘trespass’ walks from the 1930s onwards, organised by local ramblers who lived and worked in the cities and towns on the fringes of the Peak District. Then, people either had to have a specific often work-related reason for being on the moors or were supposed to stick to the few public paths which crossed them. After the Second World War and the creation of the National Parks, the ramblers assumed that the ‘right to roam’ across the moors would soon follow. However, it took another fifty years of concerted campaigning by the Ramblers’ Association and other groups. The Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland (SCAM) was set up by a few committed campaigners. As John Bunting recalls, “ ... that’s when we really started organising trespasses ... advertised them ... notified the land-owners ... we were going ... I couldn’t see why we couldn’t walk on places ... you had got to stick to the path ... couldn’t take a short cut ... like the people with grouse shooting rights ... when we got back [after fighting in World War Two] we were no more free than [we were] before ... that’s when I really got interested.”

Walking on the moors was a regular weekly activity. As Dave Wombwell remembers, “[In] the early 1950s when I lived ... at Didsbury. And we went to ... Beaverpark Baptist Church and the young people there used to quite regularly go into Derbyshire and walk. And most of them



Ramblers

© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

were older than me; I’d be about twelve or so... persuade them to let me accompany them. Catch the train from Didsbury Station, quite often we’d go to Chinley, sometimes to Hayfield, and we’d walk up over the tops and back down to Edale Station and the ticket would enable

us to come back to Didsbury. Normally there'd perhaps be about ten or twelve of us ... walk up ... probably drop down Jacob's Ladder. The most vivid memory was getting blisters on my heels because at that time I wouldn't have any boots, I'd just go in ordinary shoes. I think the older people would have proper nailed boots at that time. One or two occasions [I was] carried the last bit by one of the fellows because I was in such pain from the blisters on my heels. The other thing ... was the mist. Because very often we'd get near the top of Kinder Scout only to find the top was enveloped in mist and we would find the way. I don't remember anybody ever using a compass but certainly people had the ... OS map and we would follow that. Anyway, we never got seriously lost and we always seemed to arrive at our destination in time to catch the train back home."

Don Johnson recalls his introduction to hiking, "GHB Ward ... founder of the Clarion Ramblers, ... [a] hero of mine [I'd] go with the Clarion, ... out walking. That was my first introduction to the Edale Moors ... this was in the 1940s." He goes on to describe the clothes that the walkers wore, "They didn't wear



Clarion Ramblers at Stanage Pole in the 1950s © photograph Bill Emmingham.

modern gear like cagoules and goretex ... unheard of! What he [GHB Ward] used to wear normally [was] ... ordinary Norfolk jacket and trousers. He might have carried a small rucksack, but more often than not, they didn't. In winter, when it was cold, he wore a cap to protect his head and he wore a very long mac, which he also used to carry his sandwiches in [the pockets]." Don talks about a typical day's walk, "... used to set off about 8 o'clock in the morning, and the day usually was finished about 8 o'clock at night. 10 to 12 hour days walking, on a Sunday, that's the only day they had. [They'd] walk until about 11 o'clock ... someone in the party ... carry a primus stove. In those days, it wasn't considered to have a flask of tea, you brewed up. We found a stream ... and we brewed up. And after we'd had that, we might

have had a sandwich or something. Carry on 'til lunchtime, do exactly the same then sometimes we had afternoon tea, ... used to have favourite spots which, in those days, were more often than not farm places. What is tremendously different between those days and today is the basic clothing they used to have; they didn't have anything modern and waterproof; they just made do with macs and caps and that sort of thing." Don recounts the following anecdote, "[was] chased off the moors as a young man ... about 1944 ... onto Kinder and the friend I was with was very experienced, said "We have to watch for gamekeepers." [We] did in fact see a couple of them. He said, "Don't worry, we can get away." So we had to run off the moor chased by these people, but we knew it just as well as the gamekeepers, we did in fact get off. But we actually got off the moor just by the Snake, by the river there, and unfortunately he [his friend] sprained his ankle so it was even more exciting, but I remember we went into the Snake Inn."

Bill Emmingham recalls the start of his lifelong interest and involvement with the moors, "... course when I joined Woodcraft [Folk] in 1942 me life completely changed ... started camping, even though war was on we still went camping every Sunday in summer, walking every Sunday in winter. Always had to have our shorts on no matter what weather was. [My] first summer camp was at Youlgreave on Buxton's Field. They [Buxtons] had a shop in village .. let us camp ... on this field ... in '43." He goes on to say, "I went out of Folk ... joined the Clarion [Rambles] ... went into forces ... did a spell just walking on me own and probably going out with a friend ... used to do barning and things like that. When you'd had enough walking you'd go and spot a barn and have a look round it and then jump in it and sleep for night. And I always remember one Christmas I were doing it and I happened to see this farmer and I says "Have you got anywhere I could sleep?" he says "Mate, it's absolutely freezing, where do you want to sleep?" I said "Have you just got a barn where I can just drop down like?" So he says "Get in that manger thing" you know, where they used to push hay. He says "Get in lad wi' beasts" he says "They'll keep you warm." And so you didn't need your sleeping bag, I just slept up there and heat from bodies, oh, were lovely."

Bill Emmingham also talks about a tradition learnt from the Clarion Ramblers' G.H.B Ward, which Bill still carries on, "... after lunch he'd [Ward] always got a tale to tell ... one famous one that's always stuck in me mind, when he were telling us ... what a huge profit these biscuit makers made. I listened to him and it's never left me. He were good at that. And ... in his little book, he had poems. And he sometimes read one. Or he read a piece out o' little book ... And I still do it in actual fact. I've got a song book, a Woodcraft



*Party of teenagers from the Woodcraft Folk in the 1970s*

© Bill Emmingham.

Folk songbook, which is like all about open air and things. And I either sing a couple of songs after I've had me sandwiches before I leave or I read 'em as poems. And that's all from the sort o', I just like to carry on some o' traditions I've picked up on way, you know."

Linda Cawley, a Woodcraft Folk leader, also recalls the singing tradition of the groups and ramblers in the 1960s and 1970s, "... on a Saturday we'd get on and do a big walk ... then we'd stay over and we'd have a good sing on Saturday night, get up on Sunday, have another little walk, and then we'd always make a mad rush back down to Fairholmes to catch the bus because the last bus went at four o'clock. ... 'cos nobody wants to go home. And on the bus home we used to sing. We'd get upstairs, ... and we always sang on the bus home. Wherever we went we sang and nobody thought it was [strange]. We sang political songs, we sang songs about the outdoors, we sang humorous songs, everything you could think of. Not usually pop songs cos we all were a bit folky and we liked the Woodcraft Folk songs."



The walkers and cyclists who visited the moorland areas in the early days would often be welcome to call at a local farmhouses as Malcolm Nunn recalls, “ ... grandmother used to make meals of ham and eggs for passing visitors [ramblers in the 1930s] and in wartime the scouts came to camp at the farm [Agden House].”



Agden House and woodland in the 1920s  
© Photograph Malcolm Nunn.

Places to get food, a drink or just hot water for tea were advertised in the Clarion Ramblers' handbooks. Small cafes were set up next to people's houses to catch passing trade and to supplement incomes. This happened all over the Peak District, as Bessie Worsley describes at Mill House, “... [be]cause my mother had a café at the end [of the house], she started doing teas and we had watercress sandwiches. People used to love those watercress sandwiches. And we used to sell apples and oranges out of a big box, anything to make money, and they were a penny each. I remember, washing up as soon as we [children] were old enough to handle cups and saucers. ... me and May, the next sister to me ... stand on a box, orange box or something ... to reach the sink because we were not big enough. I'd only be about four or five, five, I think, maybe six when we started washing up. It was Saturdays and Sundays when people used to come down and call for a cup of tea and these sandwiches. Mother used to make these scones as well. Well there wasn't anybody walked past much in the week ... everybody was working in the week ... the ramblers used to come [at weekends]... walked to the church ... a spot where everyone went to ... and [at] bilberry time.”

Maureen Armes and George Hill also recall a café at Langsett favoured by cyclists, “Charlesworth's ... the café was a hut, a wooden hut, yes was one of the old navy's huts ... [everyone] called Mrs Charlesworth 'Ma', she was known as 'Ma' from Lands End to John O'Groats everyone knew her as 'Ma'. Mind you she was widowed, reason she opened the café, her husband died young. And my [Maureen's]

mother went to help her to start up, she started just doing teas and became very successful.”

Bill Emmingham talks about these small cafes from a rambler’s point of view, “You can’t go to a café now wi’ your own sandwiches. You could ... when we used to go up wi’ old Bert Ward ... have us sandwiches at Alport Castles ... Miss Ayres, Mrs Lancaster’s at Castleton, could always have your sandwiches in there and a pot o’ tea. You know, you could go all over place. Villages had ’em, more than one.”

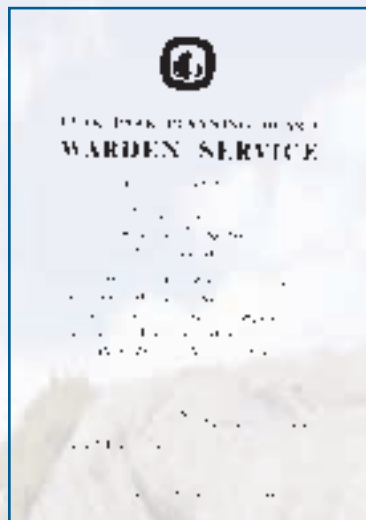
One of the recreational sports which attracted many to the Peak District area was climbing. Dereck Nobles recalls his early days climbing from the late 1940s, “There was no fancy kit then! It was a couple of ‘grannies’ and a good lad [laughing]. We used to make our own gear at work. Like if you wanted to put a running belay in a crag you’d get an appropriate sized stone and wedge it in and put a sling round onto it by a rope. I once came off at Stanage leading a climb. Only time I came off leading rock and I shouldn’t have gone that day but it was nearly dark and we’d had a really good day must have had twenty-odd climbs and my mate says, “Come on, lets go for a pint, its nearly dark.” I said, “Come on we’ll just do this before we go.” I was hanging on with one hand and my jumper was pulling against and there was this bulge of rock and I couldn’t pull [myself up]. But I had a good runner on. That’s why you protect yourself ... that’s what you did at work [make runners out of nuts]; what you did, you took the threads out, different size nuts ... put them on a lathe or just file them out ... you bought the right ... always had a good rope. It’s a dangerous game is mountaineering. You know, when things go wrong they can go very wrong. They go wrong very very quickly.”



Page from a Clarion Ramblers' Handbook advertising places where walkers could get afternoon tea © Moors for the Future Partnership.

## Peak District Wardens' and Rangers' Service

The early climbers and ramblers together with ex-service personnel and a few local residents formed the nucleus of the original warden service and mountain rescue teams. The Wardens' Service was set up after the newly created National Park Authority began negotiating access rights, as Ken Drabble recalls, "... negotiated a number of access agreements both with the Chatsworth Estate, private landowners and eventually the water companies. Having done that they had to provide a warden service which became a ranger service to make sure that people behaved and didn't misuse the countryside."



Peak Park Warden Service training certificate  
© Moors for the Future Partnership.

Ken describes how he became involved, first as a part-time volunteer and then as a full-time member of the service, "... saw an advert ... for part time wardens to patrol Kinder Scout. So Bill Thompson and myself ... both applied ... were two of the first six part time wardens. And Tom Tomlinson was the head warden and eventually George Garlick was the deputy head warden. After some years, the access at that time was just Kinder Scout and parts of Bleaklow, the water company of Manchester Corporation didn't want walkers on there because of pollution to watercourses ... harm the water supply to Manchester. Eventually [more] access agreements ... new post was created also in Longdendale ... Tom asked me if I would apply ... and I got the job. So my life changed from that time." He goes on to say, "moved up to live in Crowden and Longdendale... there for six years. And then when George left ... Fieldhead, I was moved from Longdendale to Edale to take his place ... here for another five years. Then things started to change and they did away with the head warden, they got a ranger, called it a warden service officer, who was Johnnie Lees, [had a] George Cross, ex RAF, and he was our boss. [I] moved to Bamford

... there until 1974 ... when '74 came [and] local government reorganisation ... called them rangers instead of wardens."

Dereck Nobles was a volunteer warden and ranger for 34 years and explains how he became involved, "I joined in the early 60s. I was brought up in farming. I had a lot of friends and colleagues [who were] keen on the outdoors

[and] I was keen on the outdoors. ... just wanted to give something back ... and I applied. I mean there was no course ... all you did was go to Bakewell and you sat there and they asked you a few questions."



Rangers outside the visitor centre in Edale © Moors for the Future Partnership.

Margaret Bailey was one of the first female wardens, joining the service in 1964, as she describes, "There is a saying "life begins at 40", mine did. I joined the Ranger Service ... escaping husband and two young sons to return happy and rejuvenated ... I read about wardens ... took the training course on bye-laws, compass work ... First Aid course etc." She recalls her duties patrolling the moors and on one occasion, "... fortunate enough to see the *Brocken Spectre* at Kinder Downfall. ... usually seen at higher mountains like the Alps ... happens when sun throws one's shadow onto an inversion of cloud. Suddenly on the misty clouds a figure with an aura of pale coloured light, encompassing its head, was visible across the Downfall, but, there was no other person around. Feeling rather stupid I lifted my arm and waved; sure enough the other figure did the same."

Ken Harwood, another of the early wardens, describes how the service has developed, "[They] don't just restrict themselves to the access areas or bounds, it's generally the countryside and footpaths and so on... broadened out quite a lot... go round schools and that sort of thing ... one side of the job ... as full-time Rangers ... giving talks."

## Mountain and Moorland Rescue Service

Ian Hurst, the President of the Buxton Mountain Rescue service, describes the start of the modern rescue service, “I first got involved through the then Warden Service, back in the late 50s and early 60s. I volunteered and used to travel to Edale virtually every weekend and we’d camp at Ollerbrook. George Garlick was the head warden then and he lived at Fieldhead. People were using the moorlands, Kinder Scout particularly, and having accidents. And we, as a natural flow in a sense, got involved with that process, equipment was provided and a little bit of training and we just got thrown in, in the deep end. It’s much different now but then it fulfilled that particular purpose.”



*Clarion Ramblers' Rescue Training Exercise on Kinder in the 1950s © Bill Emmingham.*

Ken Drabble recalls being recruited into one of the first teams, “... got demobbed from the Marines .. asked if I would help ... at New Mills and saw Bill Thompson. Be about 1960. ... only three rescue teams at that time. Buxton, the Glossop and the New Mills team[s]. So we used to practise on Kinder Scout and all that...”

The Four Inns Walk tragedy, when three venture scouts lost their lives, was one of the catalysts for the co-ordination of the service. Several of those interviewed also took part in the rescue. Ken Drabble says, “Jack Longland, Rusty Westmorland from the Lake District, Kim Meldrum, Fred Heardman, Bill Thompson from New Mills, he was the rescue team leader, started the Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation. There were teams before that but what happened on that Four Inns tragedy, there was the RAF Stafford, the New Mills team and the Glossop team, and we were all called at the same time. We were given a brief by the sergeant on duty at Glossop. The brief

that we were all given was the same so that we all came to the same conclusion. So one area was searched three times.”

Dereck Nobles described one of the other key tragedies which resulted in the service changing, “Yes, we did [have an avalanche]. In 63, a big thaw came very rapidly. No, there was no rescue service then. That was in the very early 60s. Harry Mountford, he was the waterman at Chew Mount ... by Chew reservoir. Very experienced mountaineers ... they decided to climb this gully called Wilderness Gully. It’s recognised if the conditions are right as an ice climb. The snow just came down and piled up. It had nowhere to go. Well Harry Mountford got called, he got involved and the watermen started digging and the police came and they got involved and started digging. And they dug and dug and dug until dark and they hadn’t found them ... [so] they all came up here [Holme village] and kipped down for the night ... At first light [they] went back again and he [Harry] says, “Do you know, we hadn’t been digging ten minutes and we came across one [of the mountaineers].”

The mountain rescue service has changed and adapted as Ian Hurst says, “the seven teams [today in the Peak District] are extremely professional, they’re all unpaid volunteers top to bottom and stand alongside the professional emergency services ...” He goes on, “...it’s evolved over time ... been very proactive, certainly in the early days, ensuring ... team members receive the appropriate amount of training, teams actually purchase the right sort of kit and equipment .. communication systems were improved as well.” He is now one of the incident controllers, “... have search exercises on the moors .. also have known location incidents ... where someone’s gone down with a medical



Ian Hurst with one of the modern rescue vehicles  
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

problem or had an accident ... [team members] have to manage the incident and locate the casualty but also to manage the casualty once you've got there. Are there others in the party that may need some assistance? ... Do we need additional resources like helicopters? We're not managed by the police but we report to the police because they're the body responsible ... for land search and rescue."

He goes on to say, "a lot of calls come through mobile phones now and there's a good side and a bad side.

The good side ... we can respond more quickly, rather than in the old days, [when] the reporter would have to come to a road or local farm and report the incident, and that would take time.

Now they can ring largely ... because not all of our moorlands are covered by a mobile phone network. Also there is a downside where people think, well if I get into trouble I'll just call 999 and ask for mountain rescue and they'll come sort me out, so people that may not be equipped both physically with their equipment and mentally to cope with situations are going into areas that perhaps they shouldn't or wouldn't have done prior." [BEWARE not all our moorlands are covered by a mobile phone network.]



One of the rescue teams on exercise © photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.

Dave Blyth from the Kinder Mountain Rescue Team describes their current training and work, "... three training events each month. ... one first aid, ... very important exercise, ... another training event and a team meeting. ... then as far as call-outs are concerned this year [2010] has been very busy because of the bad winter. We spent the whole of January helping the emergency services. ... one of our vehicles based ... at Stockport ambulance station ... had, for instance, a sledging accident in Bramall Park ... sheet ice on the slopes. I never thought I'd see the day when we had a load of men from Rescue with crampons on in Bramall park. Every team's got stories like that. But then we can

go for months when nothing happens but we're all permanent volunteers, we're on call every minute of every day including Christmas Day. We buy all our own gear. It's very hidden as far as the average person's concerned."

Allied to the Mountain Rescue Service is the Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA). Nick Smith describes how he became involved with SARDA and what this means for handler and dog. "My involvement with SARDA came about when I decided I wanted to run a dog for search purposes through my mountain rescue team [Buxton]. ... the team encourage people to go out and do what's called 'dogs bodying'... involves ... dogs at different stages of training ... people who are prepared to lie out there [on the moor] for up to 3 hours in a bivvy bag, hidden. You can't hide from the dogs but it stops the handlers knowing where they are. And Zac is ... my first search dog. Got to keep your mind totally open as to where somebody might be ... concentrate on working the dog across the wind. It's air scent ... a person will produce a smell ... that to a dog smells human ... [they] don't discriminate. We get a phone call at perhaps 10 o'clock on a Saturday evening, there may be a group that are lost on Kinder Scout or Bleaklow, we don't have anything to give the dog so we've just got to go out and find from scratch. Anybody who's on the moor we'll find them. Luckily the conditions we get called up in, there aren't too many people left up there, most of them have bolted for the valley. So if we do come across anybody we're not looking for it only takes a minute to have a chat to say ... Have you called mountain rescue, are you lost? And if they're the person we're looking for then great if not we carry on ... and when they [the dog] get that scent they will work towards the source of the scent find the person and ...



Nick Smith with Zac talking to Julia Shergold  
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership.



Moor Memories from across the Peak District

run back to the handler, indicate by barking, ... go back to the casualty, come back to the handler bark again, go back to the casualty and they keep shuttling until the handler gets to the casualty.”



*A snow covered Kinder in the 1950s*

© Bill Emmingham.

## Changes on the Moors

Ken Drabble talks about the changes to footpaths along the Pennine Way, “The Pennine Way was just a quagmire, you were up to your knees in mulch. And then we got factory stones from the old mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire and paved it and now you’ve got a footpath that’s about a metre to two metres wide and the vegetation can grow. Wainwright said when he walked the Pennine Way it was a heap of dinosaur droppings. Well it was, but I think it’s better now. We tried all kinds of experiments there, even to polystyrene ... because that’s what they were using in Sweden to put motorways on and floating them. We used chestnut paling. We used a number of ways but eventually the factory, the old factory floors of Lancashire and Yorkshire was the answer.”

John Eardley comments on pollution as a factor in changing the landscape, “... blamed on sheep as to why the grouse and the heather went. I find that hard to believe because I know me neighbours quite well, who’ve had the land, and I’d never have thought they’ve overstocked the land. What the other reason is, I’ve always said it’s acid rain. Yes, it wasn’t landing on other side of valley, it was just on this side of [the] valley ... definitely acid rain ... haven’t yet seen a plant that doesn’t benefit from cutting or grazing – any plant - but what wipes it out is chemicals like that.” He also describes some of the agricultural improvement schemes in the 1980s, “... went through this phase ... they did attempt to plough these hills, the sounder part of the hills, and again there was a big subsidy to put lime on. It was proper lime I’m talking about, big lumps of lime where it was put into a big heap and dropped and then spread out of that heap. Then there was a scheme called the *Farm and Horticultural Development Scheme* which even helped with machinery, tractors any sort of thing that wanted doing, altering buildings, anything that raised productivity. Where we’ve got today, [it] is totally opposite. Then [they were going] for maximum stocking rates. So it just shows you how farming on these hills has changed.”

## Moor Memories from across the Peak District



*Monitoring the footpath erosion*  
© Moors for the Future Partnership.

*Moorland restoration with a flagged path*  
© Moors for the Future Partnership.



Ron Priestley who farmed around Hathersage and Buxton says, “... go back thirty years or a bit more, ... very few walkers on the moors, not like it is today, I mean they are absolutely walking all over them! Very, very difficult to manage it, about four years ago ... a big fire threat ... closed the moors ... for a long time ... change in the wildlife ... during that period was fantastic ... nothing disturbing it, ... give ’em a chance and a breathing space.” He goes on, “Obviously, people used to grumble you’d put too many sheep on the moor, they still do now, but if you’re farming sheep, if you put too many sheep on the moors, your sheep don’t do very well. You can overgraze them, I’m not pretending otherwise, but you’ve got to keep enough sheep to pay the rent and then you’ve got to try and make a bit of profit after that ...”

Don Johnson talks about open access from a walker’s perspective and how this has changed, “Open access was a long time [coming] ... you didn’t get freedom to roam until about 2000. So it was 50 years

... there was a Peak Park formed ... became easier because there's certain parts you could walk on, but there's still a hell of a lot of places you can't walk even today. And of course, you get National Trust and people like that who have certain sections. The whole of Kinder and Bleaklow offers an exciting challenge really." He goes on, "The main change that I've seen in my lifetime ... become much more of an organised playground. In the 1940s ... it was wild and really was wild and tough country and you couldn't rely on anyone except yourself. There were no signposts. But now look at the whole range of things you have, I mean it's not just mountain bikes is it? There's off-roaders that are causing problems on these lovely green lanes, there's people that jump off mountains in a parachute, there's runners. The other basic thing that's changed I think, is this apparent charity runs and charity walks, when 50 and 100 and 200 people are going out. I find difficulty coming to terms with that, yes."

Bill Emmingham highlights another aspect of change, "... I walk so far and then I want to sit down ... then you look up and you could always either see a skylark or blue sky or whatever. And then all of a sudden you see hang gliders coming over and flying above you ... and it didn't seem private any more. And planes going over leaving big white lines. And I have to keep saying to meself now, "Well nothing's going to change Bill, there'll be probably more and more different things coming on before long" you know. And you've got these sort of biplanes now, these little motor biplanes, making a noise and no longer can you just lay there and just hear natural sounds."

The high moors of the Peak District and South Pennines are now part of huge moorland restoration projects being carried out by the Moors for the Future Partnership. Black Hill in the north of the area with its trig point at 582m above sea level is one of the areas which is being restored. Industrial pollution, wildfires and overgrazing have contributed to the loss of its original covering of peat-forming moorland plants, exposing the peat soil beneath. In wet conditions the area was a 'muddy morass' virtually impassable and in dry conditions the peat turned to dust and blew away. According to local people the

## Moor Memories from across the Peak District

problem increased from the late 1950s onwards so that, by the time the restoration programme started in 2006, all the concrete foundation around the trig point was exposed. As Carlton Mellor remarks, “... noticed the slabs around Black Hill when [I] went on a sponsored walk about two years ago. Prior to that my memory of Black Hill dates back to the 1980s, last time I was there. Then it was a black muddy morass and we had to pick our way round very carefully or we would sink in. I never remember it being green.”



Black Hill trig point 1976

© Gordon Hallas.



Black Hill trig point 2003

© Gordon Hallas.

The restoration work will reintroduce the vegetation ‘skin’ that protects the peat and is home to the plants, animals and birds that make up this distinctive landscape. The Pennine Way path has been paved with flagstones to reduce trampling and livestock have been excluded from areas that have been re-seeded to allow new vegetation to grow. This regeneration is being repeated at sites across the Dark Peak and South Pennines.

## Endpoint

Ken Harwood says evenings were his favourite time of the day on the moors, “... as the light was fading, lovely... [could] hear the birds ... nice and fresh, take your time down. Real peace ... the colours of the sunset over the hills and the moors – spectacular ... seemed even more special when you were up on the top of Kinder looking out over the Cheshire Plain.”

Bill Emmingham echoes the sentiments of many with this observation, “I used to love Kinder, used to love it. It were always a challenge. When I used to get on [the] train sometimes at Edale and it were going dark I’d look up at silhouette o’ Kinder and I’d look at it and say “I’ll be here next time, I’ll still have you.” And I used to think that Kinder said back to me “And I’ll be waiting for you.””



Edale valley

© Moors for the Future Partnership.

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*Companion booklets within the Moor Memories Project.*

*'Hills, Dykes and Dams' Moor Memories of the Bradfield, Midhope and Langsett areas.*

*'Mosses and Cloughs' Moor Memories of the Holme Valley area.*

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