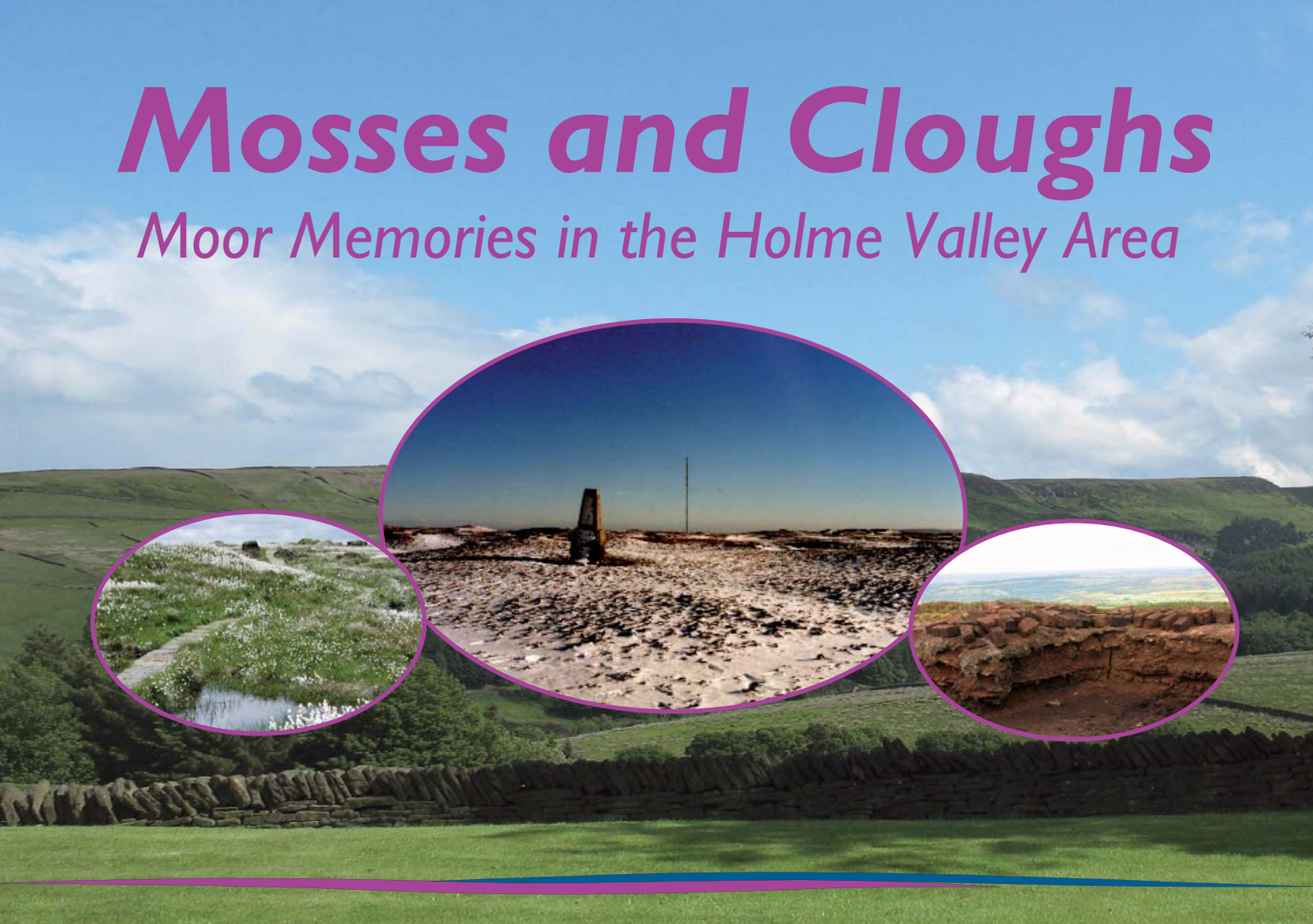
Mosses and Cloughs

Moor Memories in the Holme Valley Area



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The following people and organisations have contributed to this booklet: mb21 website, Derek Bailey, Herbert and Jennifer Beardsell, David Cuttell, Gordon Danks, Kenneth Denton, Gerald Eastwood, Roger France, Gordon Hallas, Carlton Mellor, Derek Nobles, Arthur Quarmby, Clifford Robinson and Shirley Simmonds.

Interviews were conducted by Gordon Danks, Lynne Fox, Christine Handley, Tegwen Roberts and Ian D. Rotherham and transcribed by Michael Parker, John Birbeck, Julia Shergold and Christine Handley.

Designed, written and produced on behalf of the Moors for the Future Partnership's 'Moor Memories' Project by Christine Handley and Ian D. Rotherham (HEC Associates Ltd.)

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Introduction

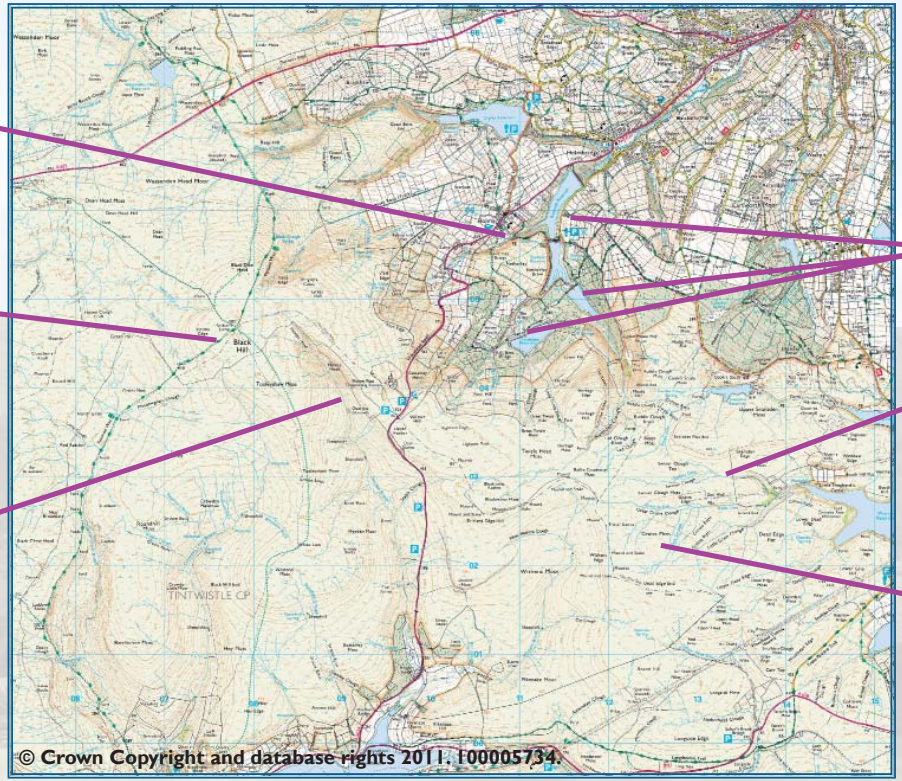
This booklet was produced as part of the Moors for the Future Partnership's 'Moor Memories' Oral History Project. The two-year project was set up to collect and publicise memories of the moors in and around the Peak District National Park. It was organised by the Moors for the Future Partnership with support from the following funding partners: the Heritage Lottery Fund, Peak District National Park Authority, English Heritage, South Pennine Leader, East Peak Innovation Partnership, 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. This was 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'. Several people were interviewed individually and a recording made of their memories. Other people wrote about their experiences and produced 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 earlier. These may be memories of specific events, for example, the 1944 Holmfirth Flood, industrial peat-cutting or the building of the Holme Moss transmitter; or more general, relating to childhood, farming and working as a reservoir keeper. All these contribute towards a rich and vibrant picture of life on and around the local moors.

The Area

The area covered in this booklet is centred on Holme village and the moors bounded by the A616, A628, A635 and Crowden Edge. It includes Black Hill, the highest point at 582m above sea level, Holme Moss with its transmitter, and the areas around Brownhill, Ramsden, Yateholme and Digley reservoirs. This is

a region of wet boggy moors on the summits with steep-sided valleys known as cloughs running down to the reservoirs with their plantations of trees and nearby small settlements. The area is part of the South Pennines within the north-eastern edge of the Peak District National Park and has the boundary between West Yorkshire and Derbyshire running through it.



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 hundred years can be set against a backdrop of wider changes in almost every aspect of British society. The memories reflect the impact of new forms of communication and technology with the Holme Moss TV transmitting station; the change from horse-drawn to petrol/diesel driven transport; and from water and coal power to electricity. They 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 textile and other local industries. The impacts of World War Two on local communities, and the changing attitudes to moorland and reservoir recreation and access are also reflected in these unique and personal accounts.

Contributors

The following people contributed their spoken, written or pictorial memories to enable this booklet to be written: mb21 website, Derek Bailey, Herbert and Jennifer Beardsell, David Cuttell, Kenneth Denton, Gerald Eastwood, Roger France, Gordon Hallas, Carlton Mellor, Derek Nobles, Arthur Quarmby and Clifford Robinson.

Looking over to Hade Edge. *© photograph Christine Handley.*

Changes in the Landscape

Traditionally, Holme village and the adjacent moors were inhabited by farming and textile worker families who, as well as working at hand looms, dug peat for their domestic fuel, kept a few cows or sheep, hens and a pig, and grew oats for their own consumption (as oatcakes and porridge as well as to feed the horses). The higher moors around Black Hill, Holme Moss and Harden and Snailsden Moors were boggy common land available for the local communities to use. A few tracks such as the Salters' route crossed the area.

Starting in the late eighteenth century, two major factors began the changes which have created the landscape you can see today. The first was the Industrial Revolution with the building of large mills and factories and the expansion of towns in the valleys below Black Hill. The second was the local 1834 Enclosure Act which transferred ownership of large parts of the moors away from the local communities to large landowners such as the Spencer-Stanhopes and the Pilkington family.

"The biggest change in the local area is that there is no longer any gross pollution so everything is greener. When Hepworth's Iron Company was on the go you couldn't persuade anything to grow nearby because of the coal-fired kilns etc. When they stopped using coal because [they] went to natural gas, trees etc sprouted on the edge of the site and there are a lot of them now.." KD

Industrial Mills

The new textile mills resulted in a huge increase in the demand for water for the industrial processes which led to the first dams being built in the valleys. The first two were completed in 1840 (Holme Styes and Boshaw Whams) and another in 1845 (Bilberry). These flooded some of the lower lying farming areas. The mills were subsequently driven by steam power fuelled by coal and the resulting pollution from these and the industry further to the west around Manchester created acid rain which damaged the vegetation on the moors. Since the Clean Air Acts (from the 1950s onwards) and the closure of the mills and other factories, the airborne pollution has decreased enabling a programme of moorland restoration to begin.

Enclosing the Common Land

" … need to manage the heather, which is done over a fifteen year cycle using controlled burning that is undertaken between October and April when ground is damp which enables the fire to "skim" over the soil surface leaving seeds and roots unaffected to aid regeneration" RF

The nineteenth century Enclosure Awards altered the ownership of common land so that large parts of what had once been open access land linked to local townships was now in the ownership of the local landed gentry. In some areas, this land could be exploited for its natural resources such as coal. In the moors around Holme the areas were turned into private hunting estates where shooting parties could come to hunt game birds such as grouse. Hunting lodges were built and the moors were managed by gamekeepers and land agents specifically to suit the conditions for breeding grouse and other game. Heather was encouraged to grow and dominate the vegetation. The moor was managed by rotational burning to keep the heather plants young and low-growing, a favourite food of the grouse. This process has been carried out for over a hundred years and has had an effect on the moor as we see it today. Unlike in other areas the people of Holme and surrounding settlements retained their rights to go on to the moor to cut peat to use as their domestic fuel. This practice still continues on a small-scale. Parts of the moors have a 'hummocky' appearance which is the result of small-scale stone quarrying.

Clean Drinking Water

The high rainfall, boggy moors and steep-sided valleys mean that the area is ideal for building reservoirs for the provision of a clean drinking water supply. Ramsden, Riding Wood and Yateholme reservoirs were built in the latter part of the nineteenth century to provide water for the expanding town of Batley. They were followed by Brownhill in 1932 and Digley in 1950. These reservoirs, which also flooded

Peat workings near Hade Edge.

farmland, farm houses and cottages, altered the appearance of the valleys. In place of small farmsteads with fields marked by dry stone walls, were expanses of water, high earth dam walls and associated valve towers and overflow channels. The water company did build a few rows of new cottages for their workers and for the people whose houses had been flooded but these were on the side of the reservoirs. The general policy of water companies in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries were that the moorland 'collecting grounds' (now known as catchment areas) needed to be kept free of all forms of contamination which might seep into the water supply. One of the easiest ways to do this was to remove these at source. So, many of the surviving farms were closed down and buildings demolished, livestock were banned from fields near to reservoirs, and large walls built around the reservoirs to keep unauthorised people out. The open mosaic landscape of farms and moor with only a few trees was being changed and replaced. Water was channeled into the reservoirs by cutting 'grips', straightening stream courses to make drainage channels, and removing silt from the 'catchpits' to maintain a good flow. This drained and dried out the peaty boggy ground and contributed to the erosion of the peat and moorland vegetation.

"The Brownhill string [of reservoirs] is very well set up. When I first started [in the 1970s] you could bypass water round any reservoir or the whole string … if there had been a serious accident, like a plane crash on the moor and a lot of fuel [got] into a stream. …" GHB

Tree Plantations

Tree planting initially took place alongside the reservoirs to help protect the water supply. These plantations were carried out by men employed by the reservoir owners and local water board, Batley Water Corporation. By the late 1950s the Forestry Commission had become involved in the area and new conifer plantations were developed further up the hillsides across from Holme. The plantations were arranged as blocks of woodland, fenced to keep livestock out and grown as close-grown conifers with little light reaching the plantation floor. These blocks of woodland are in stark contrast to the older landscape of open

moors with very few trees. Now some of these trees are being cut down and the areas replanted with more appropriate species or left to regenerate naturally. Clear-felling the plantations is once again opening up the moorland landscape. Local people have pointed out that there are a few older 'plantations' on the moors which pre-date the reservoir and commercial plantations and contain old coppiced trees. These old plantations may contain trees that are hundreds of years old but have gone unrecognised because they are small and stunted in growth.

" … Noticed the slabs around Black Hill when went on a sponsored walk about 2 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." CM

Black Hill and Moorland Restoration

Black Hill with its trig point at 582m above sea level (asl) is supposed to have got its name from the black peaty soil which covers it. 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. This area of moor is now part of a huge moorland restoration project being carried out by the Moors for

Black Hill before (left) and after (right) restoration.

the Future Partnership. According to local people the problem increased from the late 1950s so that, by the time the restoration programme started in 2006, all the concrete foundation around the trig point was exposed. 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 has been excluded from areas that have been re-seeded to allow new vegetation to grow. This is resulting in Black Hill becoming green again.

Black Hill moorland restoration.
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

Local Wildlife

This section highlights some of the distinctive wildlife and vegetation which local residents commented on in the course of the interviews.

One of the local residents became interested in birds after a chance meeting whilst patrolling the moors as part of his duties as a Water Board worker. As Gerald Eastwood recalls, *"[He says] ... I'm not shooting or fishing I'm photographing birds. Then he says 'My name is Mr Lucas'. So I told him like what I was ... he said 'Do you know where the twites are nesting?' Twites, I said. I've never heard of them. There's a few birds up on the moor apiece where I go for the rain gauges and that. 'Ah, would you mind showing me', you know, I thought well right, fair enough. But I must admit he got me interested in the birding life then."* Gerald recounts that he could be walking over the moors to check the rain gauges and *" … all of a sudden you see a bird fly up and wonder what kind of bird that is. And it turns out it may be a grouse or a snipe, or something like that, in the woods; woodcocks …"* He says that birds such as snipe, lapwing, partridge and skylark *'… seem to have just drifted away…'* in recent years and redstarts no longer nest near the reservoir but others such as curlew are still

around. He has also noticed that Canada geese and mallards have become more common on the reservoirs themselves in the last fifteen years.

Another of the local Water Board workers, Herbert Beardsell, remembers seeing mountain hares on the moors. He says, *"I've seen white hares fairly regular over the moors and you can tell them in summer as well because they are a different colour to the brown hare and have different shorter ears. But walking round Ramsden Clough I could almost guarantee … there was like a bit of a stone shelter ... And nearly every time I walked it this white hare was sat there, … just watching and it just used to pop out when I got fairly close … and straight up the hill."* He also recalls that brown hares could be seen but they kept to the lower cultivated ground.

Mountain Hare.
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

Local residents mentioned that some people went onto the moors to pick bilberries. The bilberry plants are quite common on the peat fringes of the moor and they are regarded as a treat by many although other people prefer blackberries. The moors above Holme also contain a rarer plant with edible fruit, the cloudberry which grows on the drier areas of the moor and is quite common in Scandinavia. As Arthur Quarmby says, *" ... I was in Norway recently and I said we had cloudberries, they were surprised. Up on the moors here, [it's] not very common, [the] fruit rather like a blackberry but orange looking/coloured."* Other locals have also found and eaten them. They appear to have been much more common in the nineteenth century as Frederick Lees noted in his 1888 Flora of West Yorkshire. He comments that the fruits are abundant on drier sites and offers two explanations of how the name came about. One refers to 'Knotberries' where 'Knot' refers to a craggy piece of land. The other has a Scandinavian connection being named after the Danish king Knut after he was saved from starvation by eating them, and called 'Cnoutberries'.

Managing and Working on the Moors

Gamekeeping

Gamekeepers have worked on the moors since the middle of the nineteenth century when grouse shooting became fashionable amongst the landed gentry. Roger France says that when he started 'keeping' in the 1950s he managed over 10,000 acres of moor although now, locally, the area covered is more likely to be around 3-4,000 acres. Gamekeeping jobs were often handed down through families as the interview with Clifford Robinson described. Although his father worked at the Hepworth Iron Company, he also had a part time gamekeeper's job. Clifford's great uncle (Uncle Joe) was a full time keeper and on the death of Uncle Joe in 1937, Clifford's father took over his gamekeeping duties on a part time basis and Clifford helped his father out. Clifford took up full time keeping when he was in his forties at Lady Cross. After the keeper there retired, his son was not interested in taking over from his father so the job was advertised and Clifford was appointed.

The gamekeeper's main duty, then as now, 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 beginning of October. Whilst the gamekeepers and their assistants are kept busy looking after the shooting parties during the season their main work takes place over the rest of the year. This work revolves around managing the moorland vegetation, monitoring the health and numbers of the grouse population and controlling predators. Before the moors were opened up for access and recreation, gamekeepers also patrolled the moors to keep people off the private land.

The gamekeeper's key moorland management task is to create a patchwork of heather stands of different ages. The grouse are wild birds and are not raised in pens like pheasants and released onto the moors just

A controlled heather burn.
© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

before the shooting season so it is important to get their living conditions right. Their preferred food is young heather shoots, they *" …take the top ¼ of an inch of the shoot which are more nutritious."* and they tend to nest and shelter from predators in the older taller heather. Locally, the patchwork of heather moor is created by controlled and selective burning of areas over a 15-year cycle. The process of burning, described by Roger France: *" … is undertaken between October and April when ground is damp which enables the fire to 'skim' over the soil surface leaving seeds and roots unaffected to aid regeneration. … Usually customary to burn an area 25 – 30 yards wide and 50 yards in length that covers an oval-shaped area due to the wind; with a preference to burn towards a "safe stop" area where there is little if any flammable material …"* Great care is taken that the fire is not too fierce as the moor is covered in peat which can smoulder and burn to great depths and cause huge amounts of damage to wildlife, killing the grouse and the moor itself.

Areas of the moor are covered by bracken which also needs to be managed to prevent it swamping the heather and the shooting butts and track ways. The bracken problem has got worse during the twentieth century and herbicides are now used to try to keep it under control. Gamekeepers might still use a scythe to cut bracken around the shooting butts just before the shooting season and mow a path to the butts for easy access.

Whilst the grouse are wild, the gamekeepers do monitor the population and check on the health of the birds. If their numbers increase too much in a small area they can be susceptible to disease, especially a parasitic worm which the keepers can now treat with medicated grit they scatter for the grouse to eat. A large part of the gamekeepers' time is spent on the moors. This almost always used to be on foot or

occasionally on horseback. The biggest change has come with the use of vehicles including quad bikes. As Roger France remarks: *" …using 4 x 4s and other vehicles ... can be useful. For example, when undertaking heather burning one can use a machine that can carry an 80 gallon water tank to deal with fire if necessary."*

Farming

Local residents describe the farming around Holme as being small family farms either in the village itself or within about half a mile on the surrounding hills. Some of the farmers and members of their families were also textile workers. They were originally out-workers with handlooms set up on the top floor of the two storey farmhouse or in an adjacent weaving shed. Many continued as textile workers taking a job in the local mill and running their small farms as well. These farms were around 10 to 20 acres in total with a few acres set aside for growing oats and other crops, pasture for a few cattle or sheep and a hay meadow set out in fields. There was a collection of farm buildings and by the early twentieth century a 'new' and 'old' farm house to accommodate an extended family. These farmers would use the high moors to gather materials and cut peat for their fuel. They used horse-drawn sledges to transport moorland material and crops. The sledges with runners on the front and two small wheels at the back were ideal for the rough steep terrain.

Old sledge with runners at front and small wheels at the back. © photograph C.hristine Handley

"They [the sledges] were safe though for the steep hillside, better, safer than a cart. Although it looked 'rustic' ... they were very practical for the steep hills." GHB

"And you put staves up, poles surrounding the sled so that you could pile the hay or whatever inside the sled." KD

There were some larger sheep and dairy farms in the surrounding area. As Clifford Robinson describes, *"Local farms would be either sheep with a few cattle or dairy farms with a herd of usually ten cows. … Prior to the introduction of*

tractors, a farm of 50 acres was considered to be a big farm." Ploughing was done by horses and the cows were milked by hand. Clifford remembers as a schoolboy that the milk was taken round by pony and trap in a large churn with pint and gill measures to be sold in the local towns.

Sheep would be allowed to graze on the moor for most of the year only being brought down to the farm at specific times such as lambing, shearing and dipping. One of the sheep farms belonged to Gerald Eastwood's family but this like many others was subject to compulsory purchase to make way for one of the reservoirs.

'It happened at hay-making time'

Jack Eastwood, Gerald's older brother vividly describes the loss of the family farm and thirteen others to make way for Digley reservoir in an article from the Huddersfield Express and Chronicle written in 1993. He says how, before the days of action groups and campaigns, the process of purchasing the farms and moving people out was over in a couple of months. There was much sadness as about 50 people were moved to make way for the reservoir. Whilst the farmhouse at Upper Townend Farm remained, the land was taken over by the reservoir and the water corporation didn't want farming on their gathering grounds so the family's livelihood was taken away.

In the late 1930s, when they had to move out, the Eastwoods had a flock of 400 sheep plus about 20 cows. They had two working horses and planted crops such as turnips, cabbages and potatoes in the fields nearest the farm. Clifford Robinson and others have remarked that some schools closed or sent parties of schoolchildren to help with the harvest and potato-picking on some farms and this practice carried on until after the mid1940s.

There have been many changes to farming in the local area and today few small farms survive in the current economic climate. Prior to the mid 1940s, local farmers would not feed their livestock silage believing that it would 'turn the insides of the cow rotten' so a hay meadow was needed to supply winter fodder. Now silage is the preferred crop and the herb-rich hay meadow has vanished. The first tractors with studded wheels appeared in the 1940s which signalled the end of horse-drawn transport. Sheep rearing on the

moors intensified but has since been restricted because of moorland restoration projects.

Issues Peat Pit, drying the peat turves in stacks. *© photograph Gordon Hallas*

Peat cutting

The Holme area is one of the last remaining areas in the UK where small-scale peat cutting for domestic fuel is still carried out. Whilst many of the local householders could exercise their rights to cut peat for fuel only a small number now do so. The peat-cutting rights are overseen by Arthur Quarmby, who is the present Constable of the Graveship of Holme. The office of Constable can be traced back to pre-Norman times when the Graveship of Holme was one of the twelve administrative areas of the Manor of Wakefield. There are seven townships within the Graveship of Holme. Each of the townships had their own peat-cutting areas on the common-land of the moors for their domestic fuel. In 1834, when the moors were enclosed by the large landowners, part of the peat-cutting areas were allocated to the local townships in the Graveship and some of these areas are still in use today. Each person who cuts peat has their own working area and any household within the Graveship can apply to cut peat. Arthur will take new householders to the peat cutting areas and show them where they are allowed to cut and notify the local council under the smoke control order rules. There are five designated peat cutting areas although only one is really in active use at the moment. Traditionally, the peat is cut around Easter (March/April) and left on the moor to dry until September when it is brought down to the house to be stored. During that time the peat-cutters will go and turn the

Modern peat cutting, June 2011. *© photograph Christine Handley*

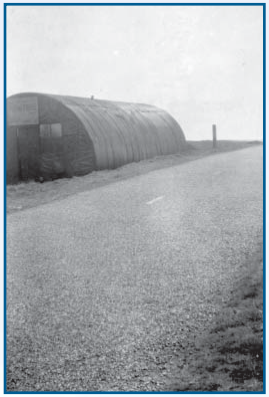
Drying the peat, June 2011. *© photograph Christine Handley*

peat turves and then after Whitsuntide (late May/early June) stack them to allow air to flow through and dry them out. Herbert Beardsell described how as a teenager in the 1960s he and his brother helped their father and a family friend dig the peat and then take the dried turves down to the village using an adapted lightweight wheelbarrow. He says, *"… peat pits were about two miles outside the village [Holme] over rough terrain. You follow the track … end up … basically no track at all."* He and his brother were under strict instructions to let go if the wheelbarrow started to tip so that the handles wouldn't get bent. They used to store all their other peat cutting equipment up on the moors hidden from view. This was part of a longstanding family use of peat as a domestic fuel and only died out with them in the late 1960s because they were *" losing about 50% of what was cut to the walkers."* Some peat-cutters now bring the peat turves down wet rather than dried out and dry them on the walls around their house. This is frowned on by the 'traditionalists' who point out that they are carrying down mostly water.

Other local people have described how they only exercised their peat-cutting rights for a few years in the late 1940s when coal, their main fuel was scarce. As soon as coal became cheaper and more plentiful they stopped cutting the peat as it was too much hard work.

At around the same time, in the late 1940s, there was a short-lived attempt at industrial scale peat-cutting on the high moor at the top of Holme Moss. This was set up by ex-Army personnel to supply peat to local factories in Sheffield and Manchester to supplement the coal supplies for their furnaces. According to a newspaper report they were cutting between 80 and 100 tons per week which was taken to the factories

by lorry. It was said that the peat they were cutting was around fourteen feet deep and with the acreage that they had acquired could have gone on supplying industry at the rate they were cutting for around 150 years. Fortunately for the peat mass the cutting only lasted around two years between 1947 and 1949. This was at a time when UK coal stocks were very low and all types of fuel were considered. Once UK coal production began to rise to meet the demand other fuels such as peat were no longer economically worthwhile.



Hut associated with industrial peat cutting.
© photograph Gordon Hallas

The tradition of peat-cutting carried on around Holme village as it was a useful source of fuel and an alternative to coal or wood in an area where there was no mains gas supply. Many of the houses had open fires for burning peat, coal or wood, as a result they were given exemptions when the local council's smoke control orders were being made. One local resident used the peat he collected as a firelighter for his coal fire.

Water Board Worker and Reservoir Keeper

The reservoirs, earth embankment dams, water overflows, treatment works and valve towers are the most visible and obvious signs of the water industry in the area. However, the whole of the moors both above and below ground play their part in providing a drinking water supply for part of West Yorkshire. The provision of the water supply was originally the responsibility of the Batley Corporation Water Board who employed teams of Water Board workers and a reservoir keeper for each reservoir. Yorkshire Water now operates the reservoirs and has a team of site engineers who look after a wider area and individually cover more reservoirs using automatic rain gauges and monitoring systems.

View from Holme Moss transmitter over the Holme Valley. *© photograph mb21.co.uk*

When Gerald Eastwood started working for Batley Water Corporation at Brownhill reservoir in 1958 the situation was very different. Once he had passed his medical as fit to work next to the reservoir he says *"… the boss, would say, right this week, … you were going to empty the weirs ... We used to set off then and walk from here [Brownhill reservoir] up to Ramsden or wherever ... taking some of the tools with us; well we had some of the tools up top end like when we got up there. And we used to set off ... eight o'clock in the morning, twelve o'clock lunchtime, half past twelve back at it again. ... Half past four or four o'clock when you coming round, we'd take off and walk back down the hill. See ya in the morning – that was it. Pop across home and, you know, that were your day done."* He was then asked to look after the rain gauges. There were both daily and monthly gauges which needed reading, the measurements noted in a book and then head office telephoned with the results. The monthly gauges had to be read on the first of the month and if that fell on a Sunday then the results were telephoned through on the Monday. Collecting information from the rain gauges meant he was out on the moor seven days a week in all weathers. He describes walking a daily circuit of around six miles to read the gauges. This would be finished about half past nine and then he would join the other members of the maintenance gang doing whatever work was down for the day.

Walking across the moors and manually reading the rain gauges was also a job which Herbert Beardsell recalls from the mid1970s when he started work for the Water Authority. By the time he retired in 2006 almost all the gauges were automatically read and were only visited once a year to check that they didn't need to be repaired or had become obscured by surrounding vegetation. He recalls that the Met Office

was very keen that none of the rain gauges were ever moved because they provided a continuous set of rainfall statistics. Only one was moved, due to vandalism, and resited into a more secure compound.

There were other routine jobs which they both described that by 2006 had either stopped or been automated. These jobs included digging out the 'grips', straightening the channels of the streams which ran down the moors and keeping them free of debris. Clearing out the 'catch-pits' or silt-traps which would get clogged up with peaty material running down from the streams was another regular maintenance task. As Herbert recalls, *" …it used to be a summer duty."* Nevertheless at three of the 'catch-pit' locations dry-stone walled huts with stone-flagged roofs were built for the workers to shelter in and to take their breaks. As Herbert says, *"…before we got as well kitted out with flasks and everything, the gang used to camp out … while they were cleaning it [the catch-pit] out. They'd have a fire going all the time and kettle on so when they stopped for their break they could have a brew straight away."* None of these huts have survived. The 'catch-pit' was designed to prevent the silt flowing into the reservoir itself but it wasn't very effective because of the volume of peat coming down and it has been estimated that over an 80 year period, four feet of sediment has built up in the bottom of Riding Wood reservoir. These operations are no longer carried out to the same extent as the aim now is to try to keep water on the moor rather than draining it away as rapidly as possible into the reservoirs.

Keeping the river flowing and healthy

When a reservoir is built the owners are legally obliged to ensure that any rivers and major streams below the reservoir do not dry out. They have to allow a certain amount of water to flow through the reservoir and reach the river or build another reservoir just to maintain the water levels in the rivers. In the Holme area, when the textile mills were operating they used a lot of water from the river and the water company had to maintain specific night and day time flows. In the 1950s and 1960s, the textile mills were allowed to discharge their waste water back into the river. Local people used to know what colour dye the mills had been using from the colour of the river by Honley. When the mills closed down the water company provided an even flow of water through the year. With fewer users and tighter pollution controls the health of the river has improved and a fishery has developed in the last few years. The flow of water is now being varied at certain times of the year to help the breeding populations of fish.

Another of the routine jobs was patrolling the reservoir and the water-gathering grounds on the moors. The reservoir keeper would make a weekly inspection tour of the reservoir edge and a fortnightly inspection of the pipes and valves inside the tower and dam to make sure everything was safe and in working order. They would have to crawl through the pipes and tunnels making a visual inspection, noting down any potential problems. The Water Board workers would be checking for any problems with landslips or any signs of pollution on the moor probably on a daily basis. They would contact the local farmers if they found any dead sheep to ask for them to be removed. In years gone by policing the area around the reservoir and on the moors to keep people away was an additional task. As Gerald recalls, *" …I'd be walking round. There used to be notice boards up, like there still is, it's private, no public access and the like. … when I started work, the gaffer used to say, if there's anybody at the side of the reservoirs and they aren't members of the fishing club, turn them out, or anywhere on the [gathering] ground … if they haven't no paper to say they should be there turn them out."*

Repairing and building walls, mowing the reservoir embankment and controlling bracken were other routine maintenance tasks carried out by the team of Water Board workers based at the reservoir. These jobs are now carried out by teams of contractors. The skill and level of workmanship of the original reservoir builders is illustrated by a story that Herbert relates, *"… they must have been hard to put up when they built them because you couldn't get machines near … were very good walls, … When we repaired them and were putting the toppings on [top stone] we had 3 men doing it. The stones were so big, we've had 2 men lifting on and one over the other side of the wall to station it, you know. And they were, well some of the stones would be well above half hundredweight."* He also recalls that as a young lad it took a considerable physical effort to climb over them!

The workforce was also involved in some large-scale projects, for example maintaining the water supply

between reservoirs. In one instance in the late 1960s, this involved pumping water through surface pipes from Ramsden Clough to Snailsden reservoir. This was a 24-hour operation with water pumped into the weir by the workers' cabin at Ramsden and then pumped on to Snailsden. The workers stayed in the cabin overnight to monitor the two large pumps which took the water over 700 feet high up over the moor. Herbert recalls his uncle saying that he could see the pipeline from Holme and spouts of water kept coming up from the pipes before they were secured properly. Once the costly operation had finished, the pipes were taken away but the line of concrete posts and iron hoops which the pipes were attached to can still be seen if you walk across the moor. Another smaller pumping operation involved half a mile of pipes being laid out across the moor but was less complicated as it only involved a rise of 20 feet over the moor. This operation was needed because Holme Styes reservoir was taken out of action and water was piped from Snailsden to compensate. The water from Holme Styes which had been built to supply drinking water to the Holmfirth area was just used to maintain the supply to the River Holme by that time.

Holme Moss Radio and TV Transmitting Station

The first Holme Moss mast and transmitting station was built between 1948 and 1953; designed and constructed by British Insulated Callender's Construction Company Ltd. The station is situated at the head of the Holme Valley, around 530m asl., surrounded by peat moor and subject to harsh winter weather conditions.

Holme Moss from above. *© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership*

Due to these conditions, the mast was built to withstand 125mph winds at the top and be able to cope with a ½ inch thick covering of ice on every part of the structure. The peaty soil conditions meant that the site had to be excavated to find a firm ground layer and the concrete for the reinforced foundations and anchor points had to be carefully mixed to minimise any problems with corrosion from the acidic peat which surrounds it.

Holme Moss Transmitting Station in winter. *© photograph mb21.co.uk*

Carlton Mellor's mother worked in the canteen at Holme Moss whilst it was being built and his father worked on the construction. He remembers that the construction workers worked shifts and there was a 'works bus' which took them up to the site from the villages down in the valley. In winter the workers might get snowed in, the longest spell was about a week although this didn't happen to his parents. However, when there was snow and ice about great care was needed as large sheets of ice could drop off the cables and mast without much warning. One particular memory Carlton has is being allowed to watch the 1953 Rugby League Cup final on the monitor at the newly-opened station. This was at a time when few households had their own television and was a special privilege as his parents worked there. He also recalled his mother telling him that on one occasion whilst it was being built she was winched up to the top of the mast in the 'bucket' to admire the view.

The transmitting station's water supply was originally pumped about 700 feet up from near Yateholme reservoir and it was one of the water authority workers' duties to go and read the meter at the station once a month. This carried on into the 1990s when with fewer people working at the station and water consumption decreasing it was no longer cost effective so the station sunk its own bore hole.

The original mast was replaced in the late 1980s to a more modern specification. The mast, at a height of around 760m asl, was a BBC Radio and TV transmitter. It is now an automatic transmitter with a range which brings it within reach of some eleven million people across the North of England.

Bracken and Sphagnum Moss Harvesting

Bracken is now seen as a problem plant on the moors which smothers other vegetation. Before the middle of the twentieth century it was kept under tighter control as it was used and harvested as a crop. One of the general uses of bracken was using the dried fronds for animal bedding instead of hay although this wasn't particularly common in the Holme area as the bracken is prickly and less absorbent than hay so doesn't do the job as well. However, local resident Kenneth Denton recalls another use for dried bracken fronds from the 1940s. Here the bracken was harvested in September/October using a scythe and taken by lorry to the Hepworth Iron Company. It was used as a packing material to protect the clay drainage pipes which the Company manufactured and sent all over the country. The pipes were shipped in wooden crates and the bracken fronds made a good cushion around the edges. Ken can remember this taking place between 1942 and 1944 and may have been one of the last times that bracken was harvested locally on a large scale.

Bracken frond.
© photograph Ian D. Rotherham

Harvesting patches of sphagnum moss also took place into the 1940s. Arthur Quarmby recollects that as part of the war effort he went with his aunt to harvest sphagnum for use in field wound dressings. This goes back to the First World War and 'herbal' remedies as sphagnum is not only very absorbent but also has some antiseptic properties. The practice died out as modern antiseptic sterile dressings were developed. Another small-scale use was by the local florists who gathered the sphagnum when they were making wreaths for funerals or at Christmas time.

Living by and Visiting the Moors

Weather Conditions

The area around Holme and the high moors can be subject to extreme weather conditions as several of the local residents have described and the moors can be dangerous places. The A6024 road by the Holme Moss transmitter is often one of the first to be closed due to heavy snowfall. Staff working at the transmitting station had to be wary of large chunks of ice falling from the transmitter. On one occasion, the driver of the mini-bus which brought the staff from Huddersfield had a lucky escape. He had just walked into the building and turned round to see the mini-bus flattened by falling ice. The transmitter was also built to withstand 85mph winds at ground surface level.

View from Holme village to Holme Moss. *© photograph mb21.co.uk*

Kenneth Denton recalls that the sudden onset of blizzard-like conditions around Black Hill can be frightening and even someone who is local and familiar with the moors can become disoriented and end up walking in completely the wrong direction. This can also be the case in misty conditions as Herbert Beardsell illustrates with a story of a Water Board employee setting off to check one of the remoter rain gauges and taking the wrong route back. He went in the opposite direction, arrived back at Ramsden cottages not knowing where he was and had to be driven back to his base. After that and other similar incidents the policy was changed and two workers had to go out together in poor conditions.

The trig point at Black Hill was used as a checkpoint on a Scout Jamboree Walk in the late 1980s. The

wind was so strong that they had to tie the checkpoint tent's guy ropes to the trig point and they couldn't get the fire hot enough to be able to cook an egg. On other occasions, for example on the Four Inns Walk, walkers have been in danger of hypothermia and in the early 1960s some lost their lives because of the conditions on the moor. An avalanche in one of the cloughs also led to the deaths of a group of climbers.

1944 Holmfirth Flood

Heavy rainfall and high winds can result in landslips and contribute to the erosion of the peat as already described. Sometimes there are more unusual weather events which cause serious problems. Local residents particularly remember a cloudburst over the moor above Holme in the early summer of 1944. Herbert Beardsell's father and his friend, Arthur Hadfield, had been up to the peat cuts on the moor that day, having set off before the weather had turned for the worse. He remembers his father telling him that, *" … [they] had to take shelter in Stony Hill Barn, old fashioned type … open at both ends …; he said the rain came in at one end … and by the time the rain finished it was coming in through the other door – the wind had blown it round in the opposite direction."* The storm was so severe that Bilberry Dam was in danger of collapse when a piece of the embankment gave way. (The first Bilberry Dam had collapsed in 1852 and destroyed much of Holmfirth). The valley began to flood so the local authority brought in a group of Italian prisoners of war to remove one of the weirs at Holmbridge and the main weir at Holmfirth to try to improve drainage down the river and stop the flooding. As Kenneth Denton recalls, *" … I went down to the swimming baths and by the time I got home I was almost swimming again – the water was flooding as high as the wall outside [the Sunday school, about 3 ½ feet high] in the lane"*.

Plane Crashes

There are several sites of plane crashes on the moors around Holme as there are on the other high moors of the Peak District and Pennines. Information about many of these appear in other publications. Local

residents remember three crashes from the 1950s, including one where the rescue team was based at the Holme Moss TV transmitting station.

Derek Bailey recalls some of the crashes from WWII where RAF personnel salvaged as much of the aircraft as possible. He also recalls as a boy that it was the first time that people had encountered Perspex. Some of these earlier crashes were probably due to the poor weather conditions as at the time the planes would be flying without modern navigation systems. The force of the impact drove some of the planes deep into the peat beds so they could not be recovered.

Crash remains of the USAF Liberator. *© photograph Herbert Beardsell*

Many crashes resulted in the loss of life of the aircrews and there are memorials at the crash sites. As the peat has dried out and eroded, remains of the aircraft come to the surface as this photograph of the remains of a USAF Liberator show. There is a memorial plaque next to the remains of the plane which records that it was from the 492nd Bomb Group stationed in Northamptonshire. It crashed on the 9th October 1944 with ten crew, only the rear gunner survived. The memorial also includes a list of the names of the crew. The site of the Fairey bi-plane which crashed at Heyden Head is commemorated by a wooden cross with a ceramic plaque of the flag of the Fleet Air Arm. Please note that remains of air crashes should not be removed.

County Boundary Marker

Before the 1974 local government boundary changes, Holme village was part of the Holme Urban District Council within the West Riding of Yorkshire. The county boundary was then with Cheshire and ran over

the top of the moor by Holme Moss where there was a cast-iron boundary marker with Holme UDC on one side and Cheshire on the other. It was knocked down by a snowplough sent to clear the road and left on the moor. Local resident, Charlie Beardsell, wrote to the local council to ask if it could be re-instated but having got no reply went with his brother and 'rescued' the boundary marker before it could disappear, perhaps to be taken for scrap. They ended up making makeshift carrying poles from plantation tree branches and dragging it down from the moor as it was too heavy to carry. It stood for many years in their mother's garden by the gate at 16, The Village, Holme and is still safely kept in the village.

Cheshire County Council and Holme UDC boundary marker. © photograph Gordon Hallas

Grouse Shooting Parties and the Beagles Hunt

The moors are still used for grouse-shooting although the shooting parties are run on a more commercial basis with local moors rented by syndicates. In the past the shooting rights were held by the large landowners and the grouse-shooting season was part of the annual cycle of social entertaining which took place.

The techniques for shooting have also changed as Roger France, a gamekeeper for over 50 years, describes. Today, you may get four or five shooters walking abreast with dogs but more usually the shooters will be stationed at the shooting butts and the beaters will drive the grouse towards them. The beaters will start from about a mile away and drive the birds to within a quarter of a mile; they are controlled by a system of flags and horns so that the shooters know when it is safe to shoot above the heads of the beaters. The use of shooting butts increased from the late nineteenth century onwards. They could be built in areas which were on traditional flight paths for the grouse and take into account the lie of the land and prevailing winds. This meant that there was less tramping over the moors and shooters could be transported by

carriage or car to the butts for the day's shooting. Previously, pointer dogs would be used to flush out the grouse with the shooters walking over the moor or in even earlier times they would be on horseback following the dogs. Grouse would be shot and recovered as they walked. Horses were sometimes used into the 1950s to transport lunches and equipment onto the moors and bring down the grouse at the end of the shoot.

Heather grouse moor. *© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership*

Clifford Robinson describes a typical day's shooting on the estate he managed as a gamekeeper in the 1980s. The shooting party would meet at his house and go back there for lunch but they didn't stay overnight. The beaters and shooting party would meet about 9 to 9.30am and walk to the shooting butts, arriving about 10am. The day's shoot would finish 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.

Dereck Nobles recalls that the beaters' job could be a very hard one. They had to work the moor going in and out of gullies driving the grouse towards the shooting butts rather than walk across the moor following the easiest paths. They also had to walk in a line keeping pace with their neighbours either side of them so that the grouse moved in front of them. Dereck was in charge of the line and led from the middle so that he could see the top and bottom men. As he says, *" ... the same guys came every year. I had a good team ... they all had their own positions so you just set them off ... ."*

Hares were also hunted over the moors near Holme. The Holme Valley Beagles hunt followed the hounds

on foot hunting hares over Black Hill. The hunt traditionally held a meeting at Black Hill at Christmas time. According to local residents it was very popular with lots of people following the hounds across the moor. One of the Huntsmen's traditions was singing in the local pub after a day's hunting. In the 1970s, a project to collect folk songs recorded members of the hunt and produced *'A Fine Hunting Day – songs of the Holme Valley Beagles'*. This is a collection of songs and interviews with the local huntsmen. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries local people viewed the hunting and shooting trips not only as a way of earning a living for some of them but as social occasions. They could join in with them as long as they kept their distance and didn't cause damage to the landowner's property. At other times there were strict controls over access to the moors.

Recently, pheasant shoots have started to appear. The pheasant chicks are brought into the area and reared in local woodlands before being released. This is quite a different practice to the traditional moorland gamekeeping already described.

Brownhill reservoir. *© photograph Christine Handley*

Fishing Club

Fishing in the reservoirs was another of the sporting pastimes which took place locally. Although at first this was restricted to Water Board workers only as they had passed the medical which allowed them to work with the water supply. As Gerald Eastwood relates, he was asked to become the water bailiff for the club which met at the Rock Inn in Brockholes. He wasn't paid but got free membership of the club and this sparked a life-long interest in fishing. There were originally about forty members of the club and then this increased to fifty. The reservoirs were stocked with rainbow and brown trout.

Fish were introduced into three of the reservoirs but one was less successful as the water was too acidic for the fish to survive. There were also trout and other smaller fish such as sticklebacks and stone loach in the streams above the reservoirs and latterly in the rivers downstream as water quality has improved.

In the 1970s, some of the first ospreys to return to the UK were seen fishing in the reservoir. They were using it as a stopping off point and attracted crowds of birdwatching 'twitchers' eager for a glimpse of a rare bird. This presented a problem for the Water Board workers as at this time they were still expected to keep people away from the reservoir edge. As Gerald Eastwood remarked, *" … I couldn't get up the flipping road for people parked with motor cars and things ..."* However, seeing the osprey was a notable event for Gerald as by then he was a keen birdwatcher.

Swimming

This is one of the activities that the water companies have always discouraged because of the dangers involved. There have been particular problems in the Holme valley area at certain times with groups of mostly teenagers using part of one reservoir for swimming and diving or 'tomb-stoning' from a cliff into a deep pool. There was also a phase when one of the reservoir overflows was used as a slide because of its steep sides and smooth surface.

When some of the local residents were children in the 1950s they used a pool in a stream up on the moors near to Ramsden for swimming. The reservoir keeper at the time would chase them off the moors because of the fears about contaminating the water supply. The keeper seemed to be able to sense that they were there even when they were crouching below a wall, *" … my cousins used to say they'd be shrinking down underneath this wall hoping he couldn't spot them from his house but invariably I think he did and would come storming up and send them off."*

Hill Climbs – Motor Cars and Cyclists

For a few years in the early 1920s, the un-metalled road from Ings Bridge to Holme Moss was used for motor car speed trials or hill-climbing competitions as they were known. As Kenneth Denton recounts in *'The Anatomy of a Village'*, these events attracted *"… thousands of people [who] lined the road … to see famous pioneer drivers tackle the one-and-a-quarter miles… ."* In 1922, Malcolm Campbell recorded the fastest time for the ascent at one minute and twenty seconds driving a 25hp Sunbeam. The record was broken in 1924 by Raymond Mays driving a 1 ¼ litre Bugatti who completed the course in one minute. These popular events were jointly organised by the Bradfield and Huddersfield Automobile Clubs but were short-lived as they seemed to have ended by 1924. Kenneth further records that some of the well-built local lads rode on the back of the cars as ballast in the practice sessions.

Later on, the steep road to the top of Holme Moss presented a challenge to professional cyclists as it was included in several of the routes for the annual 'Milk Race' and 'Tour of Britain'. It was one of the steepest climbs being compared with those of the Alps and Pyrenees but much shorter in length. The local cycling club, Holme Valley Wheelers which was founded in 1924, are still holding regular hill-climbs up Holme Moss in 2011. Local residents also mentioned more informal races from their youth. *"We used to take our push-bikes to the top of the hill and challenge the cars driving down to see who would reach the bottom first."*

Managing the Visitors

Many of the local residents commented about how the attitude to people visiting the moors has changed in the last thirty years. Before then the moors, forestry plantations and reservoirs were largely 'out of bounds' not only to casual visitors and walkers but also local people. This meant both the gamekeepers and the Water Board workers had a 'policing' role as has been described. You either had to have a specific, often work-related reason for being there or you had to stick to the few paths which crossed the moor.

By the 1990s, Herbert Beardsell was involved in providing visitor facilities as part of his Yorkshire Water duties through building the dry stone wall and putting picnic tables into Ramsden car park. The car park is still used and the picnic tables looked after.

Visitors are now encouraged around the reservoirs, paths have been opened up through the forestry plantations and the moorland is open access for part of the year. Roger France remarks that 99% of people are good to deal with and are prepared to listen to the gamekeeper's concerns and events such as those involving fell-running are well-organised and no trouble. However, as Roger France and Gerald Eastwood both mention, conflicts can still occur and damage be done by individuals who don't respect the moors and the moorland way of life. They give examples of fences being cut and gates damaged so that livestock stray into areas where they shouldn't be; horse-riders being frightened and accidents happening between vehicles and walkers.

The area is a popular place for walkers and has the Pennine Way running through it. In the last few years the paths around Black Hill which were extremely muddy have been repaired and flagstones put down for people to walk on. Local residents have remarked that this makes walking easier on 'fresh legs' and if the mist descends they show the route more clearly. This and the moorland restoration work are seen as positive things for the local area.

Black Hill trig point, 2003. *© photograph Gordon Hallas*

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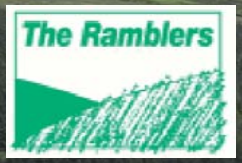

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