

Hills, Dykes and Dams

Moor Memories in the Bradfield, Midhope and Langsett Areas



Acknowledgements

This booklet was written as part of the Moors for the Future Partnership's 'Moor Memories' Oral History Project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Peak District National Park Authority, English Heritage, South Pennine Leader (Pennine Prospects), East Peak Innovation Partnership, National Trust, United Utilities and the Sheffield Ramblers.

The following people have contributed to this booklet: Maureen Armes, John Bunting, Dave Burgess, Ben Cherry, Andrew Crofts, Roger France, Fred Goddard, Frank Harvey, George Hill, Terry Howard, Geoff Kaye, John Littlewood, Malcolm Nunn, John Ownsworth, Michael Parker, Gilbert Perkins and Mavis Shaw.

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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 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.

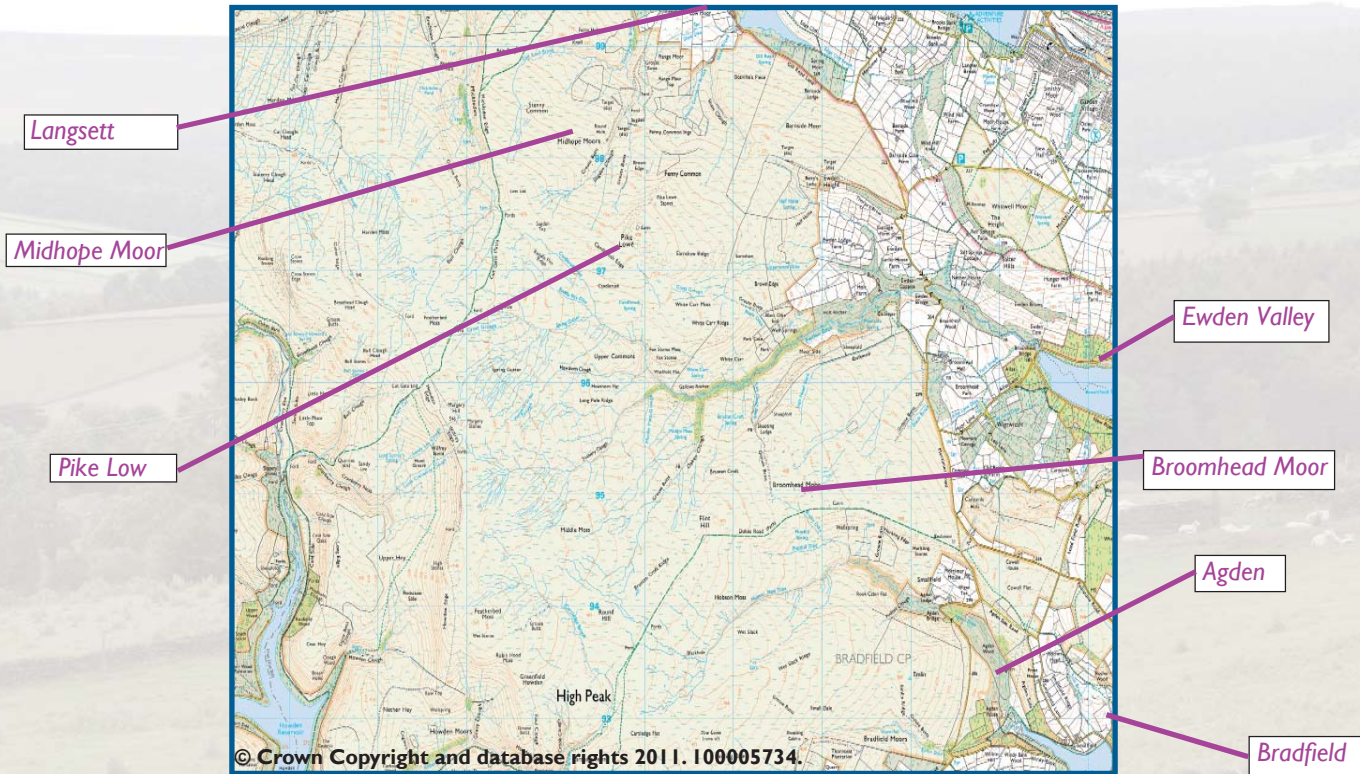
The project collected the stories of people who lived, worked and played in these areas through interviews, written material and pictures to create a lasting archive of a way of life which is fast disappearing. 'Moor Memories' workshops and open days were held where local people could share their experiences and be recorded talking about 'old times'. Several people were interviewed individually 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 earlier. These may be specific memories of, for example, the World War Two tank training camp, the new treatment works at Langsett or collecting bilberries; or more general, relating to childhood, farming and working as a forester or gamekeeper. All 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 Bradfield, Broomhead and Midhope Moors and the villages and hamlets of Bradfield, Ewden, Bolsterstone, Midhopestones, Upper Midhope and Langsett. It includes Pike Low, at 478m above sea level (asl), Mickleden Edge and Cut Gate at 505m asl, and the areas around

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Agden, Broomhead, Ewden, Midhope and Langsett reservoirs. This is a region of rough moorland on the summits with small fields and settlements on the eastern and southern fringes which runs into the urban areas of Stocksbridge and Sheffield. The area is on the eastern fringe of the Peak District National Park and has the boundary between Sheffield and Barnsley, in South 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 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 metalworking 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, John Bunting, Dave Burgess, Ben Cherry, Andrew Crofts, Roger France, Fred Goddard, Frank Harvey, George Hill, Terry Howard, Geoff Kaye, John Littlewood, Malcolm Nunn, John Ownsworth, Michael Parker, Gilbert Perkins and Mavis Shaw.

Changes in the Landscape

Starting in the late eighteenth century, two major factors began the changes which have created the landscape you can see today. One of the factors relates to the ownership and use of the moor and the other to the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

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Before these changes, the area was dotted with small often mixed-use farms, hamlets and a few larger houses connected by track ways and packhorse routes. Running down from the moor were several wooded valleys with streams and small rivers running through. This area is the source of the River Don, the main river which flows through Sheffield. Some of the farms and hamlets were surrounded by moor but others were within the valley bottoms.

Enclosing the Common Land

The Bolsterstone, Bradfield and Langsett Enclosure Awards in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century covered around 20,000 acres of mostly moor. These awards changed the access rights to the moors from common land used by local people to being privately owned by the landed gentry. In parts of the area, the moors were exploited for natural resources such as building stone, ganister (fire-clay), clay and coal but across most of the area, the moors were turned into private hunting estates. Here, shooting parties came 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 of the heather. This process has been carried out for over a hundred years and has had a major effect on the moor as we see it today.

Providing Clean Drinking Water

The high rainfall, boggy moors and steep-sided valleys meant that the area was ideal for building reservoirs to supply clean drinking water for the rapidly expanding population of South Yorkshire, in particular Barnsley and Sheffield. From the 1850s until 1935, reservoirs were built in the Loxley valley (Agden,



View over Bradfield.

© photograph Christine Handley

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Strines, Dale Dyke, and Damflask), Ewden valley (Broomhead and More Hall) and Little Don valley (Langsett, Underbank and Midhope) either for drinking water or to create 'compensation' flows of water which the heavy industries along the River Don needed. This resulted in nine reservoirs being built which flooded farms, track ways, corn (grist) mills and other buildings in the process. These large expanses of water created an attractive lakeland-type landscape. Dam walls, valve towers, overflows, filter beds and treatment works were built as part of the reservoir structures.

These, together with new roads, bridges and small settlements further altered the appearance of the area.

So-called 'tin towns' or temporary accommodation were built to house the men and their families who constructed and then worked at the reservoirs. The settlement at Ewden included a shop row which had the mission (church), a recreation hall and a canteen (pub) as well as a shop. The houses were originally built to last ten or twelve years but lasted much longer. The settlement at Langsett included a chapel, school and shops as well as living accommodation. The last of the huts was still lived in into the 1960s. Branch-line railways were built along the side of the valleys to bring in construction materials although locally quarried stone was also used. There was also a series of workshops and offices housing the masons and others working on the construction.

There have been changes since the reservoirs were built. Only traces of the 'tin towns', railway tracks and workshops now remain. The original treatment works have been replaced by newer modern facilities. Old filter beds



Farming landscape before forestry plantations. © photograph Frank Harvey



Langsett treatment works. © photograph Christine Handley

have been removed and the treatment works at Low Bradfield is now derelict. The new treatment works at Langsett was completed in 1985. It is built on what was a small park, part of the original landscaping, and the site of some of the construction workers' (navvies) huts.

Woodland and Plantations

There was a general programme of tree planting around the steep sides of the reservoirs and feeder streams to stop the land subsiding and protect the water supply. These areas were mainly planted with conifers. In 1946, the Sheffield Corporation Waterworks Committee began a further 20-year programme of planting with a target of 75 acres per year. Many of these plantations still remain although others have already been felled to be replanted with a mixture of conifers and broad-leaved trees. Some of the later plantations were put onto farmland, as farms were closed down, and old ruined farm buildings can be found within them.

There are other plantations on the moors which were first planted in the early nineteenth century as part of the Earl Fitzwilliam estate's land-holdings. These plantations on Thornseat Moor were developed to supply timber for estate building, including at their coal mines. According to Hunter's Hallamshire, these "*large fir plantations*" also provided shelter for black grouse in the mid-nineteenth century although "*the right of shooting these is reserved for the noble owner*". The plantations have continued to be managed on a commercial basis with areas felled and replanted at regular intervals.

Some steep-sided valleys on the fringe of the moor were naturally wooded areas, mostly a mixture of broad-leaved trees such as oak, birch and holly but also some yew. Agden was one such site. The name Agden, 'valley of the oak trees', and Ewden, 'valley of the yew trees', are both Old English or Anglo-Saxon names pointing to a long-standing association with woods. On the 1885 sale notice for the Agden House

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estate, several separate woodlands are shown including one named 'Windy Bank' wood. These woods extended onto the moor and provided some shelter to the house below. Forestry operations were being carried out at Agden in the 1930s when the area below the house was felled. It was later replanted with conifers.

Farming

The number of farms around the area began to decrease as the reservoirs were built. The farms were subject to compulsory purchase by the water companies. The rate of decline in numbers has increased over the last seventy years partly due to the Water Board's policy which closed down isolated farms and houses to prevent potential contamination of the water supply .

The number and type of farms have decreased even further in more recent years. This is due to a mixture of changes in farming practices, economic conditions, EU regulations and as a consequence of disease such as Foot and Mouth. As Geoff Kaye remarks, “ ... *there used to be five farms in Upper Midhope, now there is only one.*” The houses and buildings remain but are converted to homes, no longer used for farming. The associated land is sold or leased separately with individual fields becoming pony paddocks and others being bought or let by farmers expanding their holdings. This has resulted in fewer, larger farms. Other farms have diversified into providing tourist accommodation or speciality food such as ice cream. Changes in the type of farming away from

“Photographs of Agden House show a substantial dwelling (perhaps 300 yrs old) which had a ‘ha-ha’ in front of it and a yew tree in the corner of the garden. Gamekeepers lived in it until the estate was sold in 1892. The house was demolished in the 1970s as it didn’t have mains water and sewerage and the Water Board (Sheffield Corporation) was concerned that the waste from the house would contaminate the reservoir supply. After the last farming family, the Buckleys left, the house was divided into two and lived in by Water Board workers. The yew tree is still there along with a ruined outbuilding which was used as a store by the water authority.” MN



Agden House and woodland. ©photograph Malcolm Nunn

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arable and the reduction in the number of livestock have altered the way the countryside looks. Some of the in-bye fields (fields made by taking part of the moor and turning it into farmland) on the moorland fringes are now reverting back to moor and rushy pasture, encouraged for nature conservation purposes. Dry stone walls no longer need to be maintained.

World War Two Training Grounds and Decoys

Seeing them today, it is difficult to imagine what the moors in the area were like in the early 1940s. During World War Two, most of the moors were used for military purposes. There was some sheep grazing but other uses and access was severely restricted.

There were army encampments, tank training areas and artillery schools across Midhope and Langsett Moors. New roads, artillery gun platforms, tank firing platforms and a small railway for the tank targets to run on were built as well as the huts to house the soldiers and sentry posts etc. The abandoned North America farm was also used for target practice demolishing the building in the process. Shells fired over the moor created bomb craters of various sizes. They and the other live ammunition sometimes caused fires in the moorland vegetation which on occasions reached the peat level. The worst of these was over Midhope Moor below Pike Low. According to local residents a stray flare set the vegetation alight, the peat caught fire underneath and got burnt off. These incidents resulted in a damaged and scarred moor with areas of stony ground and many more humps and hollows than previously. However, it is now difficult to see many of the remaining features such as the tank platforms and craters as the vegetation has recovered over the last sixty years.



Tank platform, Midhope Moor.
© photograph Dave Burgess



Collection of Ordnance from Midhope Moor.
© photograph Dave Burgess

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Around Agden, Strines and Emlin Moor, decoy areas were laid out to mimic the industrial heartland of Sheffield. There was a network of lights and beacons installed and stone huts built to store equipment such as the batteries needed to power the lights. As Malcolm Nunn related, “... troops who guarded the reservoirs were also responsible for lighting the powder charges which were linked together to mimic the lights of the city. The troops detailed to light the charges often used to call at the farmhouse [Agden] to ask grandfather to show them the way up onto the moor as they didn't know where they were going.”

In addition, the reservoirs were heavily protected against bombing raids and sabotage. There was a range of defences which first included booms of drums on the reservoirs and smoke defences at the side which allowed smoke to drift across obscuring the view. Around 1943, after the Dambusters' raids, catenary defences were built across several of the reservoirs. These defences were made up of vertical steel ropes with concrete blocks attached to their ends suspended from steel cables running across the reservoirs. The steel cables were attached to pylons on the hillsides at either side of the reservoir. The pylons, placed on concrete plinths, were anchored against the wind by four steel guy ropes. These defences were a feature of the landscape for about ten years as they were not dismantled until 1953. Around the same time the huts used for the army encampment at Midhope were also demolished. The huts were used as accommodation for homeless and refugee families after the troops moved out in late 1944 and 1945. A few of the current local residents were born there. Today there is little trace of the huts and only the concrete footings of the catenary defences remain in the fields which are now used as pasture.

“We could fight for it but we can't walk on it.”

As longstanding ramblor and voluntary warden, John Bunting, observed when talking to a local landowner at Langsett about being prevented from walking over the moor because it was private land “... I trained as an anti-tank gunner on Langsett Moor” and he [the landowner] said, “You made a right mess of it too.”



Concrete foundation for catenary defences.
© photograph Christine Handley

Managing and Working on the Moors

Gamekeeping

Gamekeepers had worked on the Bradfield moors since the early nineteenth century but had not really managed the moor exclusively for grouse. It was from the 1820s onwards, after the Bradfield Game Association (a shooting syndicate) was formed, that the moors started to be managed intensively for grouse. This management was continued by the large landowners, such as Earl Fitzwilliam, the Duke of Devonshire and the Rimington-Wilson family after the Game Association closed at the end of the nineteenth century.

The gamekeepers' 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 end of September. 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 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 gamekeepers' 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 before the shooting season so it is important to get their living conditions right. Their preferred food is young heather shoots but 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 small areas in rotation. The process of burning is described by John Littlewood, "*... burn anything from 50m x 25m but usually 25m by 100 to 150m at one time depending on area. First thing was to pick the spot you would burn to [fire-break] ...*

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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 ..." 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.

Most of the gamekeepers' time is spent out on the moors. This almost always used to be on foot and the biggest change has come with the introduction of motor vehicles including quad bikes. As John Littlewood recalls, *"... first started, we used to carry everything ... walk everywhere over the moor and then as we progressed we got a 4-wheel drive bike, a Haga cat to carry all the equipment ... could get about quicker."*

John's first job as a gamekeeper was with the Fitzwilliam Estate in the 1970s. He 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. He got the job when one of the two gamekeepers covering the moors retired and they appointed John as gamekeeper and forester. He worked with the remaining keeper, Derek Bladon, who he assisted with the other duties such as maintaining the shooting butts and heather burning outside the shooting season.

Farming

Farming here as elsewhere has become more mechanised in the last seventy years. The fields are no longer ploughed by horses, cows milked by hand or scythes used to harvest crops. The change, described by local people, was gradual, often dependent on how progressive or well-off the farmers were. As Geoff Kaye



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

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remarks, “ ... *All the work ... was done by hand, it was hard work in the old buildings but ... didn't want to spend any money upgrading them.*”

George Hill describes how even into the 1970s, he and his father were still able to lead cattle and sheep down the main road through Langsett as there was so little traffic before the Stocksbridge bypass was built. This would be practically impossible today with the volume of heavy goods and other vehicles passing through on the busy main A road. Several of the old drove roads which farmers used to move livestock to market run across the area. Indeed livestock auctions took place at some of the local public houses with the animals being paraded in the road outside into the twentieth century. One such public house was the Blue Ball Inn at Brightholmlee.



George and Joel Buckley harvesting the crops.
© photograph Malcolm Nunn.

Many of the farms on the edge of the moor were small dairy farms with up to twenty cows. Frank Harvey working on a mixed farm at Brightholmlee in the 1950s recalls “...*[they] required hand milking 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].*” Some farmers sold their milk and eggs directly to people in the Sheffield area as Malcolm Nunn describes his grandfather doing in the 1930s and 1940s, “... *and took milk [in churns] and eggs down to Hillsborough to sell in his motorbike and sidecar*” Fred Goddard remembers Mr Hay of Old Booth Farm doing something similar around the same time but he used a van and took his milk to Middlewood and into Sheffield.

The cream was separated from the milk and butter was made in the farmhouses. As Maureen Armes and George Hill describe it was hard work turning the churn “ ... *Took some doing turning seemingly for hours because of weight of churn and weight inside ... going too slow [churning] then a bell would ‘ping’ so you would*

know you would have to turn handle quicker and they'd be shouting faster, faster then they would say you are going too fast so have to slow down..” According to George, farm butter had a distinctive taste, one which you either really liked, as his father did, or didn't. At Midhope Hall Farm in the 1950s, when Ben Cherry was the herdsman, he recalls that he milked the cows by machine and took the churns to the farm gate where they were collected by lorry to be taken to the dairy at Stocksbridge.

Other farms were mixed arable and livestock; often with a small dairy herd and a flock of sheep out on the moor. Crops such as potatoes, turnips, barley and oats were grown in the small fields mostly for local consumption. Shire horses such as Clydesdales were used to plough the sometimes steep fields on the valley sides well into the 1950s on some of the farms. Frank Harvey describes how he worked with two horses Bob and Duke, “... whilst there was no need to drive them, just talk to them, nevertheless there was a lot of skill involved in working the horses and plough [to keep a straight even furrow].” He was also responsible for looking after the horses and their tack which he enjoyed doing and was sad when the farmer, Mr Wainwright, decided to give up farming in the late 1950s to take a job with the Water Board.



Mending the footpath after ploughing.

© photograph Frank Harvey

Up to the 1930s the farmer at Midhope Hall Farm had been able to take his cattle up onto the edge of Midhope Moor near Pike Low for summer grazing. Once Midhope reservoir and the boundary wall was built across the access path the practice was stopped. However, the old route was preserved through the trees on the reservoir side and is now a public path. Along the same stretch of reservoir wall is a sheep 'squeeze' or hole at ground level. The hole was filled with loose stones which could be removed to allow sheep access from the reservoir side of the moor back into the farmer's field.

It was more usual for sheep to graze the higher moors as Fred Goddard recalls happening around Broomhead and Bradfield in the 1950s, “ ... [the sheep] belonged to Tommy Goldring from Wortley and the Ollerenshaw family from Derwent, they shared the grazing rights. ... bring them off the moors several times a year for clipping, dipping and putting their marks on them. The dipping in those days had to be done by law, it meant the sheep swimming through a channel filled with a disinfectant liquid, the local policeman from Bradfield usually turned up to make sure they all went through.” Sheep rearing on the moors intensified but has since been restricted and 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. However, there are still a few sheep farmers with flocks on the higher moors. John Littlewood was a gamekeeper and sheep farmer in the 1980s at Midhope and recalls the changes brought about by ESA. The sheep could no longer be kept on the moors all year round so the farmers had to rent land to grow hay on in summer and keep the sheep on in winter. Prior to that he says, “ ... [they] only came off for shearing and tugging.”

A traditional sheep farmer's year.

“The sheep lambed out on the moor around April time. They were gathered off the moor in June for shearing, marking the lambs and dipping. Put back on the moor until the end of September when most of the ewe lambs would be taken off and they would be dipped again. Then in November, the sheep would be brought down for ‘tugging’ (ewes with the rams). They would be kept in the in-bye fields for about six to eight weeks before going back onto the moor. If the winters were very harsh the farmers would feed them hay and mineral blocks.” JL

Large areas of the moor are now covered by bracken which needs to be managed to prevent it swamping the heather, shooting butts and track ways. The bracken problem has got worse during the twentieth century and herbicides as well as cutting are now used to try to keep it under control. The Fitzwilliam Estate tried to control the bracken on their land in the 1960s using a ‘swipe’ which was driven over the ground and smashed the vegetation down. It did have some success but as John Littlewood says, “ ... it was

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a slow process ... done annually over a period of three to four years ... gradually weakened the bracken and allowed the heather and grasses to take over". Traditionally bracken was used as winter bedding for cattle as an alternative to straw. Farmers had their own particular patches of bracken which they harvested annually. Several of the people interviewed can remember farmers going onto the moor in early autumn and cutting the dried bracken with scythes. Ben Cherry says that at one of the local farms, once the bracken had been used as animal bedding it was spread onto the potato field. He thought that the natural fertiliser produced from the rotting bracken and animal dung helped to produce the best potatoes he had ever tasted.



Bracken frond.

© photograph Ian D. Rotherham

Forestry

The Sheffield Corporation Water Board had a tree nursery and depot at Wigtwizzle on Broomhead Moor where they would grow the trees for planting on the hillsides by the sides of the reservoirs. There was a team of men based at the tree nursery who grew the trees from seed. They were started off in greenhouses and cold frames before being 'lined out' and transplanted into furrows in the open ground of the nursery. They would then be grown on until they were big enough to be planted.



Planting the tree seedlings at Wigtwizzle Tree Nursery.

© photograph Frank Harvey

Frank Harvey who worked for the Forestry Commission at

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Wharncliffe from the late 1950s until he retired knew the team based at Wigtwizzle. He describes the techniques which they used to plant the trees up the steep hillsides to create the even spaced straight lines in the plantations, “ ... *happen five [men] in a row ... going up [the hillside] ... If you got a bit off course [keep the row straight] it could knock yours neighbour’s head off ... saplings were carried in a bag hanging by your side ... would then stride it out [planting space] using three strides, or measure the distance between plantings using a six foot long spade [put] in front of you and get into a rhythm going up hill and down dale. However ... often look back ... and see one were a ‘mile out’ and therefore had to go back and re-position them [the saplings].*” Typically, tree-planting would start in March-April and continue for three or four months. Fencing would have to be put up around the new plantations to keep grazing animals out. The foresters would dig down to put chicken wire below ground to keep out the rabbits and then build the fences high enough to exclude sheep and deer. Maintenance work including thinning the trees would be autumn and winter jobs.

Frank, and John Littlewood who worked on the Fitzwilliam Estate plantations, remember felling trees in two-man teams using a six feet long cross-cut saw. This was before the days of the petrol-driven chainsaw. As they describe,



Putting in a stock-proof fence.

© photograph Frank Harvey



Planting trees.

© photograph Frank

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the tree to be felled would first have a wedge shape cut from one side of the trunk by axe. This would be the starting point for the saw. Frank goes on to say that he and his co-worker Bernard Swift would get into a rhythm pushing the saw backwards and forwards “... *which made for relatively easy, if nevertheless physically tiring, cutting ...*” If the tree was particularly large, they would have a ‘time out’ and wedge a half crown (old 2s 6d coin) or ‘two bob bit’ (2/- or old 10p piece) in the cut to stop it rocking back and sealing the cut. Once cut down, the side branches of the trees would be chopped off using a ‘picking axe’ before the main timber trunk was taken to the loading area. By the 1960s this was by tractor. When the trees around Agden House were felled in the 1930s, teams of horses were used to take the tree trunks down to the roadside, a process known locally as ‘snigging’. The felled trees were then taken away on timber ‘drugs’ (long trailers which could be attached to a lorry or large tractor).



‘Snigging’ at Agden. © photograph Malcolm Nunn

The trees (such as Scots Pine and Spruce) being planted in the conifer plantations of fifty or sixty years ago were being grown for what John Littlewood describes as the ‘rustic market’ and for pit props (used in the deep coal mines). They were planted at three feet six inches (about one metre) apart as there was a market for ‘thin’ timber as pit props, fencing and stakes. When the trees were about eighteen years old the foresters would go into the plantation and take off the side branches with billhooks, a process known as ‘brashing’. The trees would also be thinned to give spacing between them of about six feet (two metres)



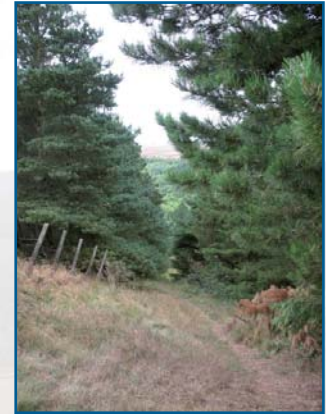
‘Brashing’ at Agden.

© photograph Malcolm Nunn

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and the timber used for fencing. Then after a period of about ten years the same process would happen again until the foresters were left with a standing crop of timber trees which would be clear-felled. Typically this would be after 80 to 100 years. Nowadays, trees are planted about eight feet (two and half metres) apart so the thinning process does not have to be as regular.

The maintenance needed to keep the trees in good condition lapsed in some of the plantations as changes occurred in the ownership of and market for local trees. This has created the typical gloomy conifer plantation of close set spindly trees by the sides of some of the reservoirs. Many of these former Water Board plantations have reached the end of their useful life and are being felled. Some are being replanted with a mixture of broad-leaved trees and conifers. Geoff Kaye helps to maintain the drainage channels through the plantations which allow the heavy machinery to gain access up the hillsides. Nowadays forestry operations are highly mechanised with machines which cut the trunk at ground level, shred the side branches and using 'grabs', load onto trailers in one continuous operation.



*Old farm track leading to the moor.
© photograph Christine Handley*

Reservoir Keeper and Water Treatment Works

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 South Yorkshire. These moors were known as the 'gathering grounds', or 'catchment areas' where the water which falls onto the moor is collected and channelled into the reservoir. The provision of drinking water was originally the responsibility of private companies until the Barnsley and Sheffield Corporation Water Boards took over. They employed teams of Water Board workers to look after the treatment works and the

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gathering grounds 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, individually covering more reservoirs using automatic rain gauges and monitoring systems. The modern treatment works are also much less labour intensive.

In the 1960s, Geoff Kaye's father was a reservoir keeper at Midhope reservoir. His main memory is of him patrolling the reservoir edges to keep people away. He recalls his father telling him that people used to come out from Sheffield to picnic at the side of the reservoir. Whilst most of them were very nice when told to move there were a few who got upset.



Midhope Reservoir, August 2011.

Photograph Christine Handley

Water Board workers were employed to go out onto the moor to check the rain gauges which were fixed into the ground so that the pattern of rainfall could be monitored. Maureen Armes remembers as a girl going with Fred Bridges, one of the Water Board workers, to check the gauges on Langsett Moor. Fred Goddard recalls that he was given the task whilst working as a part-time gamekeeper on Broomhead Moor in the 1950s; the Water Board had asked the gamekeepers to take on the job for them. He describes the process, *"...On the first day of each month the rain gauges were visited; they were held in wooden boxes with an open top. ... use a 'measuring glass' to gauge the volume of water collected and record the figure in a notebook. ... the book with readings in was taken to the Sheffield Corporation Waterworks office in Ewden Village, from there I would think they went to Sheffield."* He adds, *"There were five gauges on Broomhead Moor, the farthest was at Margery Hill just before the Derbyshire boundary"*.

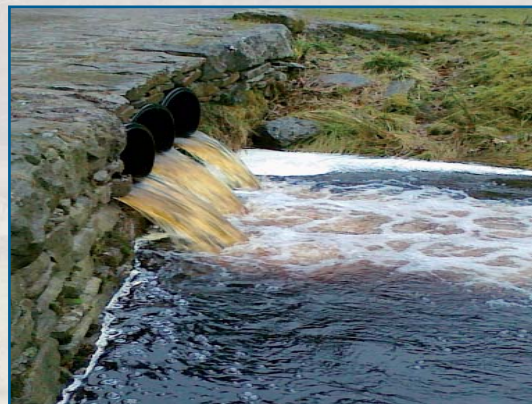
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Maureen Armes' father worked at the Langsett treatment works as did George Hill's relative, Cyril Peaker, who was the valley foreman. The water coming into the reservoir was brown, stained by the peat and the locals called it 'Langsett tea'. The water had to be treated before it was piped into the drinking supply. It was passed through a series of fine sand filters laid out in beds below the reservoir and 'limed' (by adding calcium oxide) to bleach out the peat. This process was quite labour intensive and Maureen recalls that there was a team of around ten people working there. She likens them to one big family. The sand was renewed on a regular basis, raked out, compressed and washed through, the residue peat making a good growing medium. She also remembers that in the summer, insects would appear above the filters and as a child she would catch them in a net and collect them to feed to her pet goldfish. The modern filter system opened in 1985 and the chemical treatment of the water and monitoring for harmful bacteria became more sophisticated. Although, as both Maureen and George commented the old-style, sand filtered, water tasted better.



Maureen at Langsett Reservoir.

© photograph Maureen Armes



Brown-tinged 'peaty' water, known locally as 'Langsett Tea'.

© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

Metalworking, Quarrying and Mining

The area has links with the metalworking and coalmining industries more commonly associated with other parts of South

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Yorkshire. Parts of the area also have links with stone, ganister and clay quarrying and mining. These supplied the raw materials for other local industries concerned with the production of furnace linings, clay pipes and pottery. These links are now largely forgotten as the industries which they supported have closed.

File-cutting was one of the traditional industries of the area. It was one of the trades that the parish apprentices (boys) at the Bradfield Workhouse were put to work at in the eighteenth century. Small one-person workshops were dotted about the fringes of the moors around Bradfield, Bolsterstone and Wharnccliffe. These workshops were attached to cottages or in farm out-buildings. The file-cutter would receive a batch of 'blanks' (smooth sided files). He would then, using a stone-set anvil (see photograph), hand chisel the criss-cross lines across the blank to create the finished article. The bundle was then taken back to the person who supplied the blanks and the file-cutter would get paid for the work. This continued into the twentieth century until automatic file cutting machines were imported from America and the practice was no longer economic.



File-cutter's anvil. © photograph Christine Handley

Quarrying for building stone and ganister and mining for coal and clay were carried out in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on a small scale in the area. Some of the quarries were used to provide the stone to build the reservoirs. The more established quarrying and mining operations were for clay and for ganister or 'fire clay'. The ganister was used to make the bricks which lined the steel-making furnaces and the clay for clay-pipes also used in industry. This brick and pipe-making industry started in the nineteenth century and continued into the late twentieth century at factories in the Loxley valley and near Holmfirth

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at Hepworth Iron Works. Geoff Kaye's first job as an apprentice engineer, was at Hepworth's and he describes how, "*... after two weeks off school ... working life began with a walk over to Langsett at 6.45am to catch the works bus to the factory; this was the routine with a 4.45pm finish and then back on the bus to Langsett and walk home to Upper Midhope. It was very labour intensive ... but now it is all automated and there are no labourers/workers.*"

Others worked in the small drift mines on the edge of the moor. These mines only employed a few people. The conditions were poor but the pay was better as John Littlewood found. In the mid 1960s, he moved from forestry where he was paid £2.50 at 16½ years old for a 45 hour working week to £16 for a 37½ hour week working at the Old Wheel clay mine at Ughill. Until he was eighteen, he was only allowed to work at the surface of the mine and then he could go underground and work as a miner. There were about ten men who worked underground as miners. It was very physically demanding work as the miners worked on piece work. They were paid between 42½p (8/6) and 62½p (12/6) per ton of clay that they dug out using a pick and shovel. The miners dug between eight and twelve tons per day depending on working conditions at the faces. The tunnels to the faces would be about six feet wide but varied in height (between one and two metres) depending on the thickness of the seam.



Farmland at Bradfield

© photograph Christine Handley

Living by and Visiting the Moors

Domestic Life

As Maureen Armes related, even though her father was employed by the Water Board, “Life revolved around farming.” At Langsett this centred on “... the Waggon and Horses pub and farm – all [the village] joined in with haymaking and potato picking. Used to do haymaking off the reservoir banks and round by the filter beds.” Before the reservoir had been built, Langsett House had been the Green family’s farm. It and the complex of farm buildings was then taken over by the Water Board to house the workers and as workshops. As Maureen says, “... My mother and father were the last residents of Langsett House before it was sold [by the Water Authority] and altered. And Helen [her daughter] was born in Langsett House, she was the last baby to have been born there in the village [in 1966].” It was a close-knit community with everyone sharing and supporting each other, “... Uncle Cyril provided tomatoes for all the village courtesy of the water treatment ‘greenhouse’ ... we shared things, like Old Ike Sanderson brought us turnips and we gave him strawberries ... And you never went out and bought cream, used to go round to Mrs Green’s and when she was churning you took your jug and ... if she [Mrs Green] was doing afternoon teas and wanted a cucumber she came round and we got her a couple ... out of the garden. No payment. Then when potato picking was done and we wanted a bag of potatoes we went round (to Mrs Green’s).”



In the garden at Langsett House.

© photograph Maureen Armes

Ben Cherry recalls how meals were produced in a farmhouse kitchen in the 1930s and 1940s from a ‘Yorkshire range’ and a small primus stove which would “beat anything which these TV chiefs could produce today”; “... meals would be served around a large table sitting on stools stored underneath – up to 14 people could be seated there. ... everything was home-baked; the bread was like huge cobs ... Sunday lunch ... usually a big

joint of beef ... the weight ... was so heavy that cook had to have help taking it out of the oven ... accompanied by vegetables such as carrots, turnips and potatoes.”

Outside doors were seldom locked as John Littlewood relates, “ ... when we lived at Loadbrook [1950s], my parents never locked the door unless we went away on a week’s holiday and when I first moved to Midhope [1980s] it was almost accepted that you wouldn’t lock the door.” Car and barn doors were also left open but all this has now changed. As George Hill said, “ ... I went out and came back because the car was locked and the keys were in the house – unusual and asked mother why – ‘have to now as no longer trust people.’”

Water Supply

Despite being surrounded by reservoirs supplying drinking water to Sheffield, many of the farms and villages relied on springs and wells until quite recently and some still do. Fred Goddard relates that “... [my son] lives in one of the cottages at Wigtwizzle that has access to spring water; which now has to be treated via a water filter. ... swears the water no longer tastes as nice as it did beforehand.” George Hill says, “ ... We had taps but also had a well ... remember drawing water out of the well when we were short of water [for] the cattle, wouldn’t use it for ourselves but OK for livestock. ... didn’t have mains water ... until very recently, relied on spring water ... for all the houses on the lane. Some ... still do but since my father died my mother has had mains water put on.” Ben Cherry mentioned that when he was a child at Midhope Hall Farm they got their water from a well, now the farm has mains water. The well is still there in a corner of a field used by cattle. Others said that some of the old houses had troughs in their cellars for storing water and there were public wells with troughs for both humans and livestock to use.



Site of old well.
© photograph Christine Handley

Maureen Armes relates that as a young girl they had a water supply to Langsett House, “... *you know we were the only ones in Langsett with a bath apart from the pub ... we’d a proper bath with taps running into it, so they [villagers] used to come with a bucket of coal to heat the water up and have a bath.*”

Local spring water from Mickleden was thought to be therapeutic, as Maureen relates, “... *Used to think it was ‘health’ water, ... Old Fred Bridge always used to go and fetch a bottle of Mickleden water if he had a cold.*” as did many of the other villagers.

World War Two

A major but short-lived impact on moorland life was the stationing of British and American troops in the area during the early 1940s. As well as the army camp at Midhope, troops stayed in schoolrooms and village halls and officers were billeted with local families or requisitioned local houses such as Broomhead Hall. However, as local residents recall, although movement was restricted and there was food rationing they were better off than many, especially in the cities. They were still able to grow fruit and vegetables and kill pigs and other livestock, sometimes without declaring it to the authorities. George Hill describes being told, “... *on other slightly unauthorised days shall we say killing would coincide with wash day so no-one could see if they were looking from the top of the hill with all washing out and activity in washhouse. People often used to use the washhouse to kill the pig in.*” When the American troops were training on the moors, there was also a supply of chocolate for the children and a barter system for petrol in exchange for fresh eggs and meat.

As well as troops, Land Army and Forest Timber Corps women were housed by local farmers whilst other people looked after evacuees, as Malcolm Nunn relates, “... *some stayed at my grandfather’s farm although they didn’t work there. My mother remembers one of the girls who came over from Grenoside on her motorbike,*

she was the ratcatcher. There were also evacuees staying in the village [Bradfield] at the bigger houses ...”

Christmas Traditions

Ben Cherry, Maureen Armes and George Hill all mentioned how, when they were younger, local carols would be sung to traditional tunes. As Ben describes, *“used to sing in the village pubs at Christmas time. They [the old people] knew all the repeats and harmonies off by heart and to hear them all singing together would make the hairs stand up on the back of your neck.”* Maureen remembers on Christmas Eve that everything stopped at the Water Board at dinnertime and they *“...all went up to Mrs Green’s (Waggon and Horses pub) ... got free sandwiches, then used to sit and sing all the local carols to local tunes...”* The tradition almost died out but has now been revived although according to Ben the modern singing ‘doesn’t come close’ to when the old villagers sang the carols.



Holly thicket.
© photograph Christine Handley

Another of the traditions, which is still carried on, is collecting holly. Maureen describes when she lived at Langsett, how *“... mustn’t take it into the house before Christmas Eve. Because it was bad luck and when brought in shouldn’t take it out again until after twelfth night and had to burn it before [you] take it out. .. Don’t bring it in now because I’ve nowhere to burn it.”* George stills goes and collects holly, *“... important ... just had got to have holly ... put some on my grandmother’s grave and Auntie Edith and Uncle Cyril’s graves and Auntie Marjorie’s and Auntie Irene’s graves. Yes, [the way] to remember these people ...”*

Bilberry Picking and Bilberry Dumplings

There is a long tradition of bilberry picking on the moors in the area. The bilberry plants are quite common on the peat fringes of the moor and they are regarded as a treat by many although some people prefer blackberries. Large numbers of people would come out from Sheffield for the day to pick the fruit

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to make jams and pies. The bilberries were harvested in late summer as Maureen Armes describes, “... *used to be there all day picking bilberries and [then] making jam. ... a nuisance, our Spot [dog], for eating bilberries. You would be separating the bushes and she would be snaffling them. Get midge bitten when you were picking them, terrible, bitten to death. Used to have some stuff to rub on ... Dad used to smoke his pipe to keep the midges away.*”

George recalled that his father bought a bilberry picking machine which he thought originally came from France and Maureen’s father made his own version. The machines which had teeth to pluck the fruit off the bush were not particularly successful, “... *easier to pick by hand off the bush than sort it all out afterwards. ... picks more leaves than bilberries. ... it’d take off bilberries that weren’t ripe so spoil it for the next people that came along. ...*”

The locally named Blue Ball public houses get their name from the bilberry as the inns used to hang a blue ball outside which represented the fruit. One of the local delicacies was the bilberry dumpling; a steamed or baked suet pastry pudding filled with the fruit. The Blue Ball Inn at Brightholmlee was originally called the Dumpling Inn and the nearby Dumpling Hall housed a bakery which made the puddings.

Grouse Shoots

Many of the people interviewed said that whilst grouse shooting still takes place over the moors it is no longer the social occasion involving local people that it once was. Local residents would help with beating and providing meals for the shooting parties. There was more of a family atmosphere and although some



Bilberry on the moors.

© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

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business was done between the men who were out shooting the main idea was to have a good day out. 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.

John Littlewood, who became a gamekeeper, recalls his first experience of grouse shoots in the late 1950s, as a ten-year old, “... *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 was taken there by one of his neighbours, Clifford Wingfield and another chap, Arthur Howe who lived at Moscar, “... *being a young lad they put me between them. We were flanking, lucky in that respect [an easier job] until I got to know the moor then I started beating.*” Geoff Kaye also recalls helping with the shoots in the 1960s, going with his school friends, but his experience put him off as he says, “... *it wasn’t easy work. ... had to walk through bracken up to our necks or crawl underneath – got wet and dirty (don’t know whether gamekeepers deliberately gave us rough patches as we were young lads) ... we got paid but I didn’t carry it on after I started work.*”

The day’s shooting would start about 8.30 to 9am and finish around 4pm for the beaters, flankers and dog-men. The keepers would have a longer day. As Fred Goddard recalls, once the shooting had finished, he and the other gamekeeper would go back to the lodge to sort the grouse out into brace (pairs) before they went off to market.



Moorland management. © photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

Maureen Armes, when living at Langsett, used to help provide the lunches and teas for the shooting parties. She recalls that Mrs Green at the Waggon and Horses public house provided the food for the Pilkington family shoots. As Maureen says, “*When I see the Victorian kitchen programmes packing up the*

picnics for a day out, I think – well I used to do that, it was just like that in Mrs Green’s kitchen packing up for the shoot lunches. ... beautiful horse called Peter, dappled grey, kept all year just so he could pull a beautiful red and blue cart up with the dinners for the shooting parties ... Old Sam Smith used to go up with them to carve up and David or John Green used to drive the cart up ...” Later on, in the 1960s, she used to help out with the food 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 – Derek on his 3-wheeler and Helen in her pram 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.”* She also recalls that members of the shooting party would be ‘drunk as lords at tea-time’ after the shoot had finished but they were sensible at lunchtime.

Walkers and Ramblers

The attitude to people visiting the moors has changed in the last 30 years and especially since the Countryside and Rights of Way Act in 2000. Before then, the moors, forestry plantations and reservoirs were largely ‘out of bounds’ not only to picnickers and walkers but also to many local people. This meant gamekeepers, Water Board workers and the Peak Park wardens had a ‘policing’ role across the moors. You either had to have a specific often work-related reason for being there or you were supposed to stick to the few paths which crossed the moors. This didn’t deter all the walkers; the few who did venture out would often be welcome to call at the local farmhouses as Malcolm Nunn recalls, “... *grandmother used to make meals of ham and eggs for passing visitors (ramblers) and in wartime the scouts came to camp at the farm [Agden House].”*



Ramblers.

© photograph Moors for the Future Partnership

The moors on the edge of Sheffield were the site of many of the ‘trespass’ walks organised by some of the local ramblers who lived and worked in the city. These had begun in the 1930s with the Mass Trespasses across the Edale Moors. After the Second World War and the creation of the National Parks, they assumed that the ‘right to roam’ across the moors would soon follow. However, it took another fifty years to happen after concerted campaigning by the Ramblers’ Association and other groups. Locally 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 landowners ... 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 WW2] we were no more free than ... before ... that’s when I really got interested.*”

Terry Howard relates a story about an unplanned trespass across Bradfield Moor. He was aged about 15, hostelling with a group in the Ewden Valley, and was asked to lead a small group over to Foulstone Delf. They set off and made it to the top of Cartledge. He looked across the expanse of Bradfield Moor and thought “*Where do we go from here? I’ve never been anywhere like this before.*” Fortunately he had been taught how to use a map and compass by his father so he took a general bearing towards Foulstone Delf and the group set off across the moor. And he says, “... *sure enough after an hour or two walking across ... up and down, through bogs, getting thoroughly tired ... we eventually arrived ... they were getting worried [the group was late].*” He goes on to say that it was a good lesson in not taking the moors for granted, “*You’ve got to be careful. You’ve got to know what you’re doing and you’ve got to know exactly where you are and this is what I learned from that experience. You don’t just go and hope for the best. You’ve got*



Midhope Moor.

© photograph Dave Burgess

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to know where you are, basically at each stage. I know that GHB Ward used to say “You’ve never been anywhere unless you’ve been lost”. Well that might be so, the point is, you don’t want to get lost on a moorland in bad weather.”

People who lived on the farms and in small villages such as Midhope and Langsett were more familiar with and had easier access to the moors. They also enjoyed walking on them, as George Hill recalls as a boy, his neighbours Auntie Brenda and Uncle Bernard would take him out for a walk on a Sunday over to North America Farm for a picnic. Sometimes they would go for a longer walk, *“... across to Derbyshire, used to think it was adventurous as a kid because Brenda would say we were out of civilisation. Truly enough when we get beyond Cut Gate, Mickleden first ... then carry on over to Cut Gate ... you couldn’t see any form of human habitation, the only view being the vegetation, truly exciting to think we were in the middle of nowhere. Then go to Rocking Stones, Bull Stones and Slippery Stones – go and climb on them.”* Geoff Kaye also recalls the pleasure of walking over to the highest point at Pike Low and not being able to hear a sound.

Visitors are now encouraged to walk around the reservoirs and paths have been opened up through the forestry plantations. Since the Countryside and Rights of Way Act in 2000, access to the moors has increased. Most areas are now open to walkers all the year. The restrictions that are in place, for example during the bird breeding season or when management work or grouse-shooting is taking place, are there for safety or practical reasons. This enables the moors to be enjoyed by as wide a range of people as possible.



Moorland scene.

© photograph Dave Burgess



Waggon & Horses public house, Langsett.

© photograph Christine Handley

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