

Winter 2025 : Issue 169

Yorkshire **DALES** review



Rights and Responsibilities

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CAMPAIGN • PROTECT • ENJOY
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Friends of the
DALES
YORKSHIRE DALES SOCIETY

Front Cover: View towards Thwaite from the Pennine Way in Swaledale. Photo courtesy of Ian Harrison


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Individual (Over 60) £300
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Please Gift Aid your membership if you are eligible as we can benefit from additional income.



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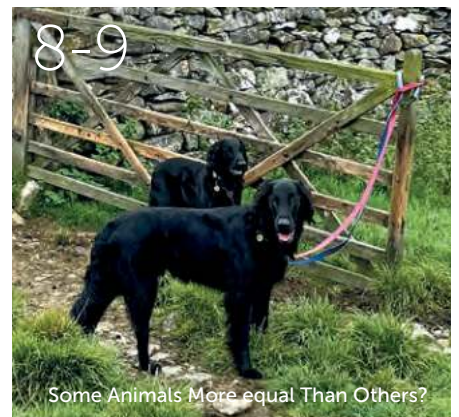
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All Hands to the Pump

It's more important than ever that everyone comes together to protect the unique character of the Yorkshire Dales, while making them welcoming and accessible to all, writes Chair Jonathan Riley.

I am excited to be the new Chair of Friends of the Dales at such a challenging time for nature and the national park. It was a privilege to join the charity in summer 2023 and start working with our previous Chair, Bruce McLeod, and all the staff, trustees and volunteers. The passion of the people involved was instrumental in my desire to get involved.

I wanted to make a difference to the Yorkshire Dales because national park landscapes have been so important to me all through my life. Getting out in the Peak District as a boy was so instrumental in making me who I am and forging my relationship with the land and nature – reinforced since I landed in North Yorkshire in 2005 with an even greater awareness of what is happening to our countryside and nature. With a lengthy career in public transport, it has been great to support our Dales & Bowland Community Interest Company in exploring further improvements in DalesBus services and raising wider awareness of the need for sustainable transport solutions.

We are at a time of great challenge with climate breakdown and nature in a poor state, even in protected landscapes like the national park. I first became involved in environmental issues in the 1980s when the trade union in which I was active sought to press politicians of all persuasions to take them seriously, yet today they still choose not to face up to the reality of what needs to change now. I was horrified while travelling through Essex recently when, even after a very wet 12 months, the landscape appeared more like that of south-east Spain – brown, dried out and lacking in wildlife. The Yorkshire Dales are in a much better state but they are a long way from full health.

What Needs to Happen?



The *National Parks Health Check Report*¹ is a wake-up call showing 'alarming and continuing declines in the state of our wildlife and... an urgent need to halt and reverse those declines'. The Yorkshire Dales Management Plan admits there has been too little progress on many objectives especially regarding wildlife and climate. We must add our voice to call for significant improvement in the state of the Yorkshire Dales – from

biodiversity and water quality to woodlands, peatlands, soil, access, transport and recognising the needs of younger people and the region's diverse population.

Our charity has a good record of strong campaigns including plastic-free tree planting and protecting nature in our verges and we recently secured substantial financial support for weekend bus services. Equally impressive are the brilliant Capturing the Past project and the ground-breaking Creative Campaigners network of young people.

But we live in a time where the traditional model of charity membership is on the decline, which means that the medium-term financial outlook for Friends of the Dales is challenging. Our members are a crucial part of the charity, and I want to really understand what you value and would like to see from us. Crucially I want more engagement with existing and new supporters and followers.

The board has instigated a review of our business model, and we are producing a new plan. We will be focussing on a main campaign, which is yet to be decided upon, to garner interest and support on an issue of great importance for the national park. This, we believe, will help to broaden the scope and type of support and attract new sources of funding.

Up to All of Us

I also want to encourage more people to come and work with us in different ways, making the most of volunteers' interests, skills and passions, whether as trustees, as subject experts helping on campaigns or supporting campaign-related events and our work responding to policy and planning issues. I would welcome feedback so please drop me a line if you feel you can help.

Another especially important theme right now is one of access, inclusion and representation, within which the voices and interests of young people and the diverse population of this region are critical. I have always believed that we own the land as the nation and we need to use that collective will to put pressure on policy makers for greater access and connectivity to our countryside. Only in true partnership can we achieve this and no one party, whatever its historic rights or self-interests, should dictate this. So I believe it's a priority for Friends of the Dales to support the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority and government partners to promote nature recovery and ensure the landscape is welcoming and accessible for all.

My aim is for Friends of the Dales to play a part in making a positive difference to this beautiful region and for our voice to count even more than it already does. We have a great team and great supporters – we need more of both so join me in the campaign to make things better.

Jonathan Riley, Chair

Email Jonathan at jonathan.riley@friendsofthedales.org.uk

¹ www.cnp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/National-Parks-Health-Check-Report-Nature-Recovery-2024.pdf



Unveiling the blue plaque at Malham YHA. From left: Robin Dower, Baroness Hayman, Margaret Hart, James Blake and David Butterworth

Architect of the Yorkshire Dales

Our vice president Colin Speakman was among the guests at a celebration to mark the 75th anniversary of the legislation that paved the way for the creation of national parks in England and Wales.

The event took place at Malham Youth Hostel and included the unveiling of a Yorkshire Society blue plaque to its architect John Dower, who also drafted the report that led to the landmark act that was part of the postwar reconstruction of Britain.

Other guests included Defra minister Baroness Sue Hayman. Former Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Chair Neil Heseltine led a walk, on which he shared his insights into work to increase biodiversity and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. There was also the opportunity to see the work of young people through a Generation Green initiative.

John Dower lived at nearby Kirkby Malham and his wife Pauline worked tirelessly to fulfil his vision in the decades following his death. The event also marked the 70th anniversary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Wordsmiths Wanted

Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line has more than 2,000 members and its magazine plays a key role in keeping them informed and as part of its wider engagement programme. The quarterly publication is now seeking new volunteer contributors who can write articles inspired by

the many features associated with the line's route across the Yorkshire Dales and Eden Valley. If you are interested, please email the editor at editor@settle-carlisle.com



Finding New Ways to Leave the Car Behind

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority recently launched an exciting new project to improve active travel opportunities into and around the national park. Active travel is defined as a journey where all or part of the trip involves some form of physical activity such as walking, wheeling (wheelchair or active mobility aid), cycling and horse riding.

The overarching aims of the project are to reduce car usage and increase physical activity and mental health and wellbeing. It has a particular focus on reducing the number of short car journeys made since 72% of all car journeys are currently under five miles and 50% under two miles. Indeed, if all short car journeys could be replaced by active travel, overall UK car mileage would be cut by one-sixth*.

Planning and feasibility work have taken place across the Dales with a number of 'travel corridors' already identified, which are believed to offer the biggest wins by enhancing existing infrastructures. The project is also keen to identify small improvements that could make a big difference through, for example, installing a crossing point on a busy road or offering a better link from a housing estate to a school, in addition to the creation of new traffic-free rights of way between towns and villages.

Member Champion for recreation management at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Lizzie Bushby, said: 'We would like to see walking, "wheeling" and cycling become easier options for making everyday journeys, for residents and visitors. We are looking to find out where people want to go and how they want to get there.'

The production of the Active Travel Plan has been made possible by a grant of £100,000 from Active Travel England. The aim is to create a draft by March, to be refined and approved by the end of 2025. Once the plan has been finalised the intention is to identify potential funding so that it can be implemented over a 10-year period.

Victoria Benn, Events & Membership Officer

*www.greenchoices.org

Find out more at www.yorkshiredales.org.uk



Active Travel, Kiltsey from Mastilles Lane. Photo courtesy of Sarah King



Drones and Wildlife Disturbance



The website of a drone photography company based in Holmfirth promotes the Yorkshire Dales National Park as the best place for pilots in the county. Gordale Scar, Bolton Abbey and Malham Cove are highlighted as 'key spots' – despite the latter being home to the spectacular, but vulnerable, peregrine falcon. Elsewhere on the internet a club that claims to be the most popular society for drone enthusiasts in the UK cites the nearby tarn as a recommended location.

Yet these sort of ringing endorsements are important reminders of the importance of checking the legality of recreational activities in the UK. In fact, the National Trust, which owns much of the land around Malham Tarn, does not usually permit authorised drone flying on its properties because it could pose safety risks; disturb wildlife, farm animals and the quiet enjoyment of the public; infringe the privacy of its tenants and visitors and damage historic buildings.

The cove is a particularly sensitive location because of the danger to nesting peregrine falcons, which are protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. If drones disturb birds at or near their nest, or when they have dependent young, the operators can be prosecuted. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority does not

permit their recreational use at sites it owns including Aysgarth Falls and asks people not to fly them at Malham Cove.

In past years it has operated a viewpoint with telescopes in association with the RSPB so that the public can enjoy watching these majestic birds of prey safely. The British Mountaineering Club has also promoted temporary climbing restrictions to prevent disturbance. Elsewhere anyone wishing to fly a drone in the national park must have registered it with the Civil Aviation Authority and obtained the landowner's permission.

If you are concerned that someone is operating one inappropriately or illegally, contact North Yorkshire Police on 101.

Author Mark Cocker asks whether motorised technologies should have a place in our national parks on page 12.

More information at:

www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/things-to-do/get-outdoors/where-can-i-go/drone-flying

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/flying-drones-at-our-places

www.register-drones.caa.co.uk/drone-code

Before the Car was King

In 1920 you could take the train to Threshfield and spend the next eight days tramping mainly grit-surfaced, traffic-free Dales roads for more than 90 miles through Beckermonds, Hawes, upper Swaledale, Reeth, Richmond, Leyburn, West Burton and Pateley Bridge before arriving back at your starting point.

In the early sixties fit, young holidaymakers might still choose to walk from Keld to Muker on a country lane despite being able to take the high fells in their stride. By the 1990s most roads had been tarmacked but in places like Buttertubs Pass they could still be a better alternative to field paths. But how many people would choose to explore the national park this way now?

We can gain an insight into the state of Dales roads a century ago thanks to Harold Pawson, who described a journey that he took with five fellow Methodist chapel choir members in 1920 in four exercise books. After his death in 1956, these passed to Dennis Cairns, who published the unedited

account in 1993 together with details of how he and his wife Grace had, over a number of years, attempted to retrace as much of Pawson's route as possible.

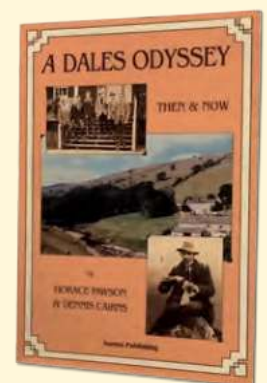
Now our long-standing office volunteer Bernard Peel has written a summary of the two journeys alongside a description of how he himself travelled from his West Yorkshire farm to the head of Nidderdale by bus and on foot before setting off on his own walking tour of the Dales in 1962.

Some things are still the same – like the propensity of the Wharfe and Swale to flood. But the construction of Scar House Reservoir, as described by Harold Pawson, was completed in 1936 and guides with acetylene lamps no longer take visitors with candles on tours of Stump Cross Caverns. Other developments, like the increase in second-home ownership, were already evident in the 1990s and there have been some positive changes since then like the re-opening of the Wensleydale Railway from Scruton to Redmire.

Many visitors would not be prepared to undertake such challenging and arduous journeys today but sadly cuts to the public transport network have eroded the rights of those who want to explore the national park but cannot, or do not, want to do so by car.

You can obtain a copy of Bernard's account from our Executive Director Ann Shadrake – email ann.shadrake@friendsofthedales.org.uk

Dennis Cairns' book, *A Dales Odyssey Then and Now*, is out of print but copies can be obtained on the internet.



Putting the Natural Back in Science



Photo courtesy of Richard Bunce

Mary Colwell, acclaimed author and campaigner, is perhaps best known for her efforts to secure a future for the highly endangered Eurasian curlew through the wide-reaching work of Curlew Action, the charity she set up in 2019. What may be less well known is that for over 15 years Mary has spearheaded the campaign to introduce a GCSE in Natural History. Here she sets out the compelling case for this much-needed qualification – which would be open to all ages – and calls for our support to ensure it is finally introduced in 2026.

One summer afternoon in the centre of Bristol, on a pedestrian-only street by my house, I glimpsed the future. It was only fleeting, but the image has stayed with me. Schoolkids were on their way home, streaming down the cobbled street as they do every day in termtime. They are a noisy, swearing, exuberant, energetic cacophony of litterbugs, the next generation that holds the future in its hands. I find them partly infuriating (the litter) but mostly wonderful (their joy).

On this warm afternoon, one of a gaggle of teenage boys stopped by the gutter, where a profusion of ‘weeds’ was growing. By late June the

street was an exuberance of herb robert, dandelion, goosegrass, daisies and many more urban lovelies, a floral riot of inner-city beauty. As his mates shouted and messed around, he crouched down and stared; he even reached out and touched one. I was too far away to see what exactly had taken hold of his curious soul, but for just a few seconds he was captivated. It didn't last – he was quickly dragged back into the fray, and they moved on. But I saw what I have longed to see, a young mind enthralled by everyday wildlife, so much so that the world slowed down and time was held in stillness, just for a short while.

That urban teenager gave me hope and renewed my conviction that we cannot wait any longer for the establishment of a GCSE in Natural History. All children, wherever they live, have a right to know the joy that nature can bring. All young people have the capacity to be lifted out of themselves and to see the daily miracle that is Planet Earth. Nature is a constant source of wonder – it is a wellspring of creativity; it demands that we give it time to reveal its secrets, requiring us to watch, look, listen, smell, notice change and make connections. The natural world is wondrous, and we need the next generation to be nurtured by it. Understanding and connecting with nature is not

only vital for intellectual development, but it is also good for mental wellbeing, a major crisis in young people today. We also desperately need nature-literate decision makers for the green future that is rapidly evolving. And, last but not least, being open to the full potential of the lessons of nature will help form fully alive human beings, who can take on a challenged and changing world.

In this time of ecological and climate crises we run the very real risk of instilling into the next generation that the world is just a problem to be solved, a source of depression and angst. By doing so we drain it of life-enhancing joy and abandon young people to an ocean of despair. We must reverse that if we are to survive the 21st century. We must teach youngsters the skills they will need to tackle what is coming down the tracks, and indeed is already upon us, because, as the great Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum said, 'In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.'

A Difficult Birth

It took 12 years of campaigning to finally get the GCSE in Natural History accepted by the Conservative government, which announced it in a fanfare in the Natural History Museum in London in 2022 as part of its Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy. We were promised it would be taught in schools in 2025, but that proved to be a false hope. A grindingly slow and frustrating process and unhelpful people ensured that it was stalled at the very last minute. It failed to make it through before the general election was called and now it sits in limbo, almost done but with no mandate. Labour is showing no sign of picking it up. Despairing doesn't come close to how I feel. But I am not giving up, and nor are the many others who are battling for it too, because now we are many voices and the momentum is huge; the more of us the better. I don't know whether it will see the light of day in the form originally envisioned, or if it will be absorbed into a different format, but I do know there is a determination to see something happen, and soon.

Please add your voices and write to your MPs to ask them to lobby for it with the Department for Education. And please keep alive the dream that we will see Britain filled with nature-curious young people, new generations enthralled by life on earth and determined to see it thrive.

Mary Colwell, author and campaigner



Photo courtesy of Richard Bunce

Outdoor Classrooms

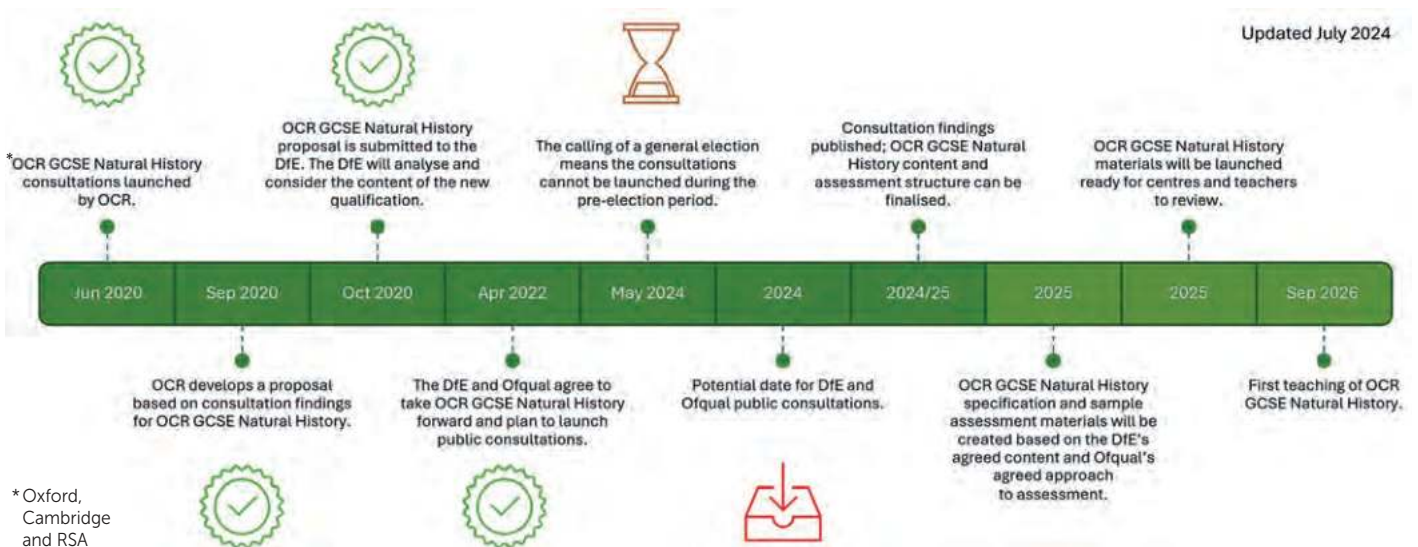
National parks and other protected landscapes would offer incredible opportunities for first-hand field work and online learning for students of the new GCSE Natural History. This would build on government-funded national initiatives such as the Generation Green programme.

The second phase of this – Generation Green 2 – was announced in November 2024. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority secured £48,250 to help 550 young people aged seven to 18 to visit the Dales, working with those living in some of the most underserved communities in the UK and schools with a pupil premium of 30% or more.

These visits will help young people to connect with nature through residential stays, evenings under the stars, farm visits and day visits exploring the special qualities of the national park at sites such as Malham, Grinton and Grassington.

The GCSE Natural History also chimes with the call from Campaign for National Parks for 'every child and young person to have the right to discover a national park, with an outdoor learning experience being a core part of the National Curriculum'.

Read more about the GCSE Natural History at www.curlewaction.org/natural-history-gcse/



Some Animals More Equal Than Others?



Winston and Inca. Photo courtesy of Mark Corner

Dog walking can bring great benefits to owners and their pets – but the behaviour of an irresponsible minority can have devastating effects on farm animals and vulnerable wildlife, not to mention making the Yorkshire Dales an unwelcoming environment for other people. We look at how everyone can enjoy the national park without threatening fragile ecosystems, damaging livelihoods or distressing fellow visitors.

‘What’s wrong with you? He wouldn’t act like that if he couldn’t tell you’re frightened.’

I’ve heard this many times. Sometimes I’m too preoccupied to reply because the animal’s teeth are inches from my face. But I’ve never been ashamed to admit that I’m afraid of dogs and – while just the sight of one running towards me is enough to make my temperature rise – it’s the realisation that the owner is not prepared to put it on a lead or call it to heel that really makes me panic.

A 2023 BBC investigation found that the number of dog attacks in England and Wales had increased from just over 16,000 in 2018 to almost 22,000 in 2022. So there must be a lot of other people out there who are nervous because of previous bad experiences, perhaps as children. Groups from different cultural backgrounds can also have widely varying attitudes to dogs. For example, although Islam teaches that all living things should be treated with kindness and

compassion, some Muslims believe that their saliva or hair is unclean. They are less likely to keep them as pets because they are seen primarily as working animals that are often used to guard properties.

Yet dog walking in the countryside brings great pleasure to owners, many of whom do act responsibly, not to mention their pets. ‘It contributes to my health and wellbeing,’ says vice president Mark Corner. ‘I walk early morning and late afternoon in the Yorkshire

Dales, whatever the weather, which keeps me fit, and I often enjoy the 'golden hours' of sunrise and sunset. People tend to be more sociable when I have the dogs with me, and it often triggers conversation. I believe that owners have healthier cholesterol levels and lower blood pressure and risk of heart disease than non-owners.'

'While dogs will make the best of walking in streets, they obviously enjoy the countryside with its sights and smells,' agrees vice president Malcolm Petyt. 'Their pleasure adds to my own. When close to animals I put the dog on a lead until we are safely past – unless cattle show signs of chasing us, when I let it off to fend for itself while I get myself to safety.'

Keeping Control

However, insurer NFU Mutual reported that farm animals worth an estimated £2.4 million were severely injured or killed by dogs in 2023, up nearly 30% from the previous year. Less than half of the respondents to a survey of owners said their pets always came back when called.

It's equally important to consider the risk dogs may cause to wildlife including vulnerable ground-nesting birds. The charity Curlew Action advises owners to stay on paths and minimise disturbance to potential nest sites by keeping them on a lead during the breeding season from March to July. This reduces the risk of destroying the eggs or flushing the birds away, making the chicks more vulnerable to predation.

Analysis of Environment Agency data by The Rivers Trust and the Wildlife and Countryside Link shows that three insecticides used widely in tick, flea and worm treatments are present in English rivers in concentrations that exceed accepted safe limits for wildlife.



Monty, walking to Muker. Photo courtesy of Prue Harrison

However, these chemicals are too toxic to be used in agriculture. For example, a single flea treatment of a medium-sized dog with the controversial neonicotinoid imidacloprid contains enough pesticide to kill 60 million bees. In rivers the larvae of insects such as mayflies and dragonflies are particularly vulnerable to the effects of these chemicals with knock-on effects for fish, birds, bats and other creatures further up the food chain.

Failure to pick up dog faeces can infect livestock with toxocarasis and liver fluke and cause sheep to abort lambs.

Many of these topics are highlighted in a short film that can be downloaded from the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority website at www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/plan-your-visit 'We run seasonal campaigns to raise awareness of these issues and highlight

the positive behaviours that we all like to see demonstrated by responsible dog owners,' says Communications Manager Mark Sadler. 'The film was created about a year ago for use across our digital channels, particularly our social media, where we can take advantage of our large following and high levels of engagement. We continue to share it more frequently at key points in the year, for example when ewes are in lamb or have lamb at foot, and during the ground-nesting bird season.'

I've been told that people like me shouldn't be out in the countryside. But the film shows how, with courtesy and consideration, we can all enjoy the Yorkshire Dales without causing harm to its delicate ecosystems, endangering livestock or putting our own safety at risk.

Lynn Leadbeater, volunteer

Green Guide to Dog Grooming

Use flea treatments only when required and consider chemical-free alternatives:

- Brush regularly to remove eggs and larvae and use a fine-tooth comb to catch adult insects
- Bathe with herbal shampoos including repellent ingredients like neem oil, lavender and rosemary
- Buy a flea collar impregnated with natural ingredients like cedarwood and eucalyptus

The Three Rs

- Respect the land.
- Respect the community.
- Respect each other.

That's the mantra on the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's seasonal map sheets, which are handed out free to people arriving at its visitor centres at Grassington, Hawes, Malham and Aysgarth Falls and the Hudson House Partnership Centre in Reeth.

Tens of thousands are printed each year and the infographics amplify the messages shared on digital channels. The authority has a following of over 350,000 on social media.



Spaniel on moorland. Photo Pexels

Planting Pollution

A Fresh Perspective



Images shown are stills taken from the video

We have been striving for some time to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic tree guards from the Yorkshire Dales, writes Richard Boothman of Community Supporter Foggy Outline. After initial successes in raising awareness, the campaign had stalled and needed something to help it regain momentum.

In my business, Foggy Outline, we develop online learning material using both live action and animated video. I had the idea of developing a short film to highlight the issue of tree guards. At about the same time the policy & planning committee was talking about how few visitors to the Yorkshire Dales were from different backgrounds. With these issues in mind, I wrote a script about a teenager from the town visiting the national park for the first time. In the story, Amira is, at first, awed by the beauty of the landscape but then notices the hundreds of plastic tree guards that have been used in an area of new tree planting. After becoming aware of the issue, Amira does some research with her family and then talks about it with her teacher and classmates and encourages them to take further action.

We then animated the script, added some still images of real tree guards (mostly taken in our vice president Mark Corner's woodland at Mearbeck) and some music and then tried to find someone to give Amira a voice.

I anticipated that Friends of the Dales could use the video to inform a wider audience about the issue of plastic tree guards, which, of course, is linked to the much bigger issue of plastic pollution in the countryside. But, without a voice for Amira, it seemed unlikely that the film would ever be shown.

Fortunately, after various false starts, Hamnah Khalil, a drama student from Skipton Academy, agreed to record the voiceover. After an interesting morning in our 'studio', we had a series of recordings ready to use. We added this to the animation and suddenly we had a film.





Amira's story can now be seen on the Friends of the Dales YouTube channel as well as on our own website (www.foggyoutline.com). We would like to see the video helping to revitalise the campaign to reduce or eliminate the use of plastic tree guards from the countryside – or, if this objective is too ambitious, at least from the Yorkshire Dales. We hope the film can be used by Friends of the Dales to begin conversations in schools and community groups to raise awareness of the issue and to encourage them to support our campaign.

If you would like to watch the video or share it with others who may not be aware of the problem of plastic tree guards, please go to the Friends of the Dales YouTube channel or have a look at Foggy Outline's website, using the link above.

Richard Boothman, volunteer

We are very grateful to Richard and his business Foggy Outline for creating this excellent video at no cost to the charity. If you know of schools, community groups or young people who would enjoy learning more about the important issue of plastic pollution explored in the video, please ask them to contact Ann Shadrake, Executive Director, at ann.shadrake@friendsofthedales.org.uk

What Would Wordsworth Say?

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er dales and fells,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of alien plastic shells.
Row on row they stood on duty,
A woodland scene without the beauty.

Some just stood there, bleak and bare,
From others – what a wondrous sight! –
Foliage leapt into the air,
Escaping from the plastic blight
While still below, the tube was boss
And gave a home to ants and moss.

I asked a rustic standing near,
'What could these ugly columns mean?'
Immune they seemed to wear and tear,
A fixture in a changing scene.
If tubes with leaves must dot the hills
Then why not stick with daffodils?

'Alas, young sir', my friend replied,
'There was a time they'd work to do,
Protecting tree-lings snug inside
From every creature in the zoo.
Twenty, thirty years, that's when!
They seemed a good idea back then.

'But time rolled on and they forgot
These monuments to sylvan care.
The landscape gained a brand new blot,
The trees were left without a prayer,
Their fate a never-ending friction
In bondage to their guards' constriction.'

**A thing of beauty is a tree,
And I recalled the past decades
When 'Plant a tree in 83!'
Had mobilised the nation's spades.
A tree's not just for Christmas, though.
Those guards someday were meant to go.**

Jim Flood, former Yorkshire Dales
National Park Authority volunteer

Photo courtesy of Foggy Outline



Doing Our Thing:

Author and naturalist Mark Cocker asks that we listen to the curlews and offer them a right to our silence at a time when nature in our national parks is in the least favourable condition.

It was the sounds of curlews in rippling song flight overhead that brought out the sudden and appalling intrusion inflicted on this place by three scrambling motorbikes. They came roaring down the footpath towards us and instantly the background calm and silence, as well as those glorious birds, were all obliterated. Soon there was just the hammer of engine noise grinding at our heels, then the need to jump out of the way as the bikers burned along, back and forth, each pass forcing us aside repeatedly.

It felt like a form of assault to be so harassed at the heart of the Peak District National Park. It occurred to me later that there was a much bigger matter at stake. My encounter represents something that is now a daily, near-universal experience in the British countryside. Motorised technologies, including drones, motor- and quad bikes, 4x4 vehicles, jet skis and paramotors are increasingly used as a way of encountering and mediating the experience of place with speed and noise. So often it happens within the last bits of relatively peaceful land in Britain and it seems almost as if we can't enjoy ourselves unless we've blotted out the place itself.

When I posted my experiences on social media back came an instantaneous response: the same thing happens in the Yorkshire Dales, the South Pennines, Upper Teesdale, Abberton (a Ramsar site¹) and elsewhere in Essex, Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve in

Suffolk, near Milton Keynes, on the Mersey Coast, in the Lake District and along the Trans-Pennine Trail. A burgeoning issue across swathes of coastal Kent and Essex, meanwhile, is the increase in paramotoring – a form of airborne engine-driven parachute.

All of this is troubling and pressing, but the crux of it for me was the bikers' responses when asked if they were concerned about their disruption: 'You do your thing, mate, this is ours.' As if the only issue were the rights of each of us to find satisfaction as we choose, a sort of equal human right to take from the national park what we will regardless of human consent but – and this is the heart of the matter for me – without any regard whatsoever for the entire living community in that place.

Let's be clear. Our national parks were founded in the 1940s on a principle not too distantly removed from the assumptions articulated by those scramblers. The plan was to set aside relatively large areas so that we could benefit from the encounter with so-called landscape beauty and the enhancement of mental and physical wellbeing arising from such experiences. Such wholesome human benefits are a very distant relation to the thrill-seeking speed and noise entailed in dirt biking, but in essence all are about nature's benefits to us.

It may be for these reasons and the fact that national park authorities and their staff are already over-stretched and tasked with encouraging the use of their respective places that there is apparent reluctance to close down any of the above activities. Better we all enjoy it in the ways we can seems to be the reaction, rather than try and adjudicate between different types of usage.

Trail bikers on a moorland track. Photo courtesy of Mark Cocker



Right or Wrong?

Give and Take

I suggest we approach the issue within a different framework. Let us not ask what *we* want. At a time when wildlife populations worldwide have declined by 60 per cent in the last 50 years; when 96 per cent of mammalian biomass on Earth is ourselves and our stock; at a time when we are faced with the Sixth Extinction alongside climate breakdown – could this be the moment for us to step outside the weary pattern of demands upon nature and reverse the process?

Perhaps we should offer, not to make more noise, but to listen. To ask the curlews what *they* would like. I can guess what they would say. We know traffic noise has been proven to inflict deep stress on non-human life, elevating levels of cortisol and other biochemical symptoms of anxiety. In those places suffering recurrent pressure, wildlife evacuates areas near the offending decibels, which can cut off natural communities from their neighbours.

So how about us according the wonderful curlews, as representatives of all nature, the right to our silence within designated landscapes? Or, at least, to a minimum of human noise?

That innovation would sidestep completely the wrangling among ourselves about which activity is permissible. If it isn't quiet, it isn't appropriate. More importantly, it would establish the radical idea that nature is not there exclusively for us. We are in a dialogue and a reciprocal relationship that requires we accord it rights of its own.

As venerable author Roly Smith has pointed out, 'the National Parks Review Panel recommended in 1991 in its report (*Fit For The Future*)

that the term "quiet enjoyment" be included in the Environment Bill to clarify the wording of the second purpose for national parks. Alas, that phrase was removed and many have claimed since that it weakened the Environment Act of 1995.'

The Campaign for National Parks issued a *Health Check* report² earlier this year, the 75th anniversary of the network's inauguration. It found that in those very areas where nature was intended to be given our fullest consideration, just six per cent of national park land was in good health for wildlife. To accord the living community a right to our silence and, at times, to our absence strikes me as a good way to begin to set things straight.

Mark Cocker, author, broadcaster and Guardian Country Diary contributor

Curlew. Photo courtesy of Kate Haslegrave



¹ wetland of international importance

² www.cnp.org.uk/health-check-report



Living Access Spreading the Word

Over the winter months, five of our Creative Campaigners pooled their talents and professional skills to collaborate on an exciting film project to raise awareness about sustainable transport. This is a topic close to many of their hearts as these young people know at first hand the benefits and challenges of using bus and train services to get into (or out of) the Dales for work, fun and adventure.

Our brief to the team was simple: 'Create an imaginative, short (about three minutes) film to inspire young people like yourselves to seek out ways of using public transport to explore the Dales for fun, activity and wellbeing.'

I've kept in touch with the team and arranged filming permissions where needed but otherwise this is an independent project for our Creative Campaigners. I've been so impressed with their professionalism and creativity and look forward to the launch of the film later in the spring. Look out for an update in the next issue of the *Yorkshire Dales Review*.

Ann Shadrake, Executive Director

The Team

This project has been possible only because all the Creative Campaigners are contributing a significant amount of their personal time on a voluntary basis, outside their busy and demanding working lives. Friends of the Dales is recognising this with a modest contribution towards costs. Each of the Creative Campaigners has brought different skills to the film project – and learned new ones – as well as working together on storyboard, scheduling and character portrayal.

Saima Bibi – project co-ordination

Josh Burge – composition/performance of original soundtrack

Jonny Cunningham and Bess Holt – original artwork and animation

Ruth Garrett – live action filming and film editor



1



2

Purpose of Film Project

- ▶ Support the "sustainable public transport" campaign goal of Friends of the Dales
- ▶ Celebrate public transport, whilst highlighting some challenges
- ▶ Enable Creative Campaigners to work collaboratively and imaginatively using their professional skills and talents
- ▶ Create an inspiring and engaging film** using a variety of creative approaches

* Ordinary public train and bus services into/around the Dales
 ** Film - up to 5 mins long, in a format that will suit online viewing but also in person viewing at events/screenings

3

Soundtrack

What would it take to make my heart dance today?
 A little intention and I'm on my way
 I try to open up the door
 To everything that my life has in store

I hope that someday I'll be passing back by your way
 Who says the sky has to be blue?
 My journey is brighter with you

4

1 & 2 – A variety of artistic techniques including dry etching (which doesn't use chemicals and recycles the inside of Tetra Paks) has been used to create images for animation. Photos courtesy of Jonny Cunningham

3 – PowerPoint slide from film project brief

4 – Original soundtrack features acoustic guitar, voice and tin whistle. Photo courtesy of Josh Burge

Don't Switch the Dark Skies Off



Milky Way over Ribbleshead Viaduct. Photo courtesy of Pete Collins

The Yorkshire Dales are home to some of the darkest skies in the country – large areas of unpolluted night sky where it's possible to see the Milky Way, planets, meteors and even the northern lights.

This is one of the special qualities of the national park, gaining it international recognition as an official Dark Sky Reserve, an accolade that also helps to highlight the importance of our individual responsibilities for keeping the skies truly dark.

Badly planned or managed household lighting and lighting activity negatively impacts many species of insect, bird and mammal, affecting navigation, physiology, breeding and general health. Pollution from inappropriately positioned security lighting is often the worst culprit but there are other sources, such as decorative garden lighting and fireworks, which often go unconsidered.

A 2022 study that tracked Arctic migratory geese showed that on New Year's Eve birds

suddenly left their sleeping sites and flew to new areas further away from human settlements. The disturbed birds rested two hours less and flew further, sometimes up to 310 miles non-stop, than they did on nights without fireworks. The unusual behaviours didn't end with the celebrations either, as for all the days studied after the New Year, the geese spent more time foraging and didn't return to their original sleeping sites.¹

In another study published by Butterfly Conservation, it was shown that streetlights reduced the abundance of moth caterpillars in grass verges by 33% and in hedgerows by 47% compared to similar unlit roadside habitats – statistics that are significant and relatable to our lit and unlit household gardens.²

Victoria Benn,
Events & Membership Officer

Look out for our first Dark Skies event on Wednesday 12 February – full details on page 23.

Tips for reducing your lighting pollution footprint

- Don't light it unless it's necessary – if it's decorative, maybe it's time to switch off?
- Light only what needs to be lit – avoid overlighting and ensure the beam is directed downwards or fit a hood over the light.
- Ensure light is no brighter than necessary.
- Use warm colour temperatures – 2700 Kelvins or lower.
- Use switch-off, dimming or PIR sensors – have lights on only when needed.
- Use a lower mounting height where possible – this helps to contain light in a smaller area.
- Limit internal light spilling outside – use curtains/blinds on all windows including VELUX

¹ www.mpg.de/19528005/1121-ornr-fireworks-have-long-lasting-effects-on-wild-birds-987453-x

² www.butterfly-conservation.org/news-and-blog/streetlights-reduce-moth-populations

Natural Remedies



Blackberries. Photo courtesy of David Tribble

Many of us have fond childhood memories of picking blackberries, splashing around in becks and rivers and family picnics in the Yorkshire Dales – but could the trend for giving these ageless pastimes a 21st-century makeover damage the environment while putting lives at risk?

Toasting marshmallows over a campfire, baking scones outdoors, making hot chocolate – you can learn all these skills on a bushcraft course. There was a time when we thought outdoor survival meant knowing how to navigate with a map and compass or being able to coax a Primus stove into action in strong winds. Not any more. Increased awareness of how the countryside can benefit our physical and mental wellbeing has spawned a whole new industry.

On the one hand, as Mary Colwell explains on page 6, it's vital that young people are encouraged to explore the natural world at an early age. On the other, should we be questioning the wisdom of encouraging them to cook treats in the open air when the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority asks visitors not to do this due to the risk of starting wildfires?

If you're a member of a walking club or a keen cyclist, climber or caver, you probably already do all you can to minimise the impact of your activities on the landscape, wildlife and people of the Yorkshire Dales, and may even go out of your way to put something back. The Fell Runners Association, for example, issues guidelines to help race organisers conduct ecological impact assessments and encourages individual members and groups to use local suppliers where possible, minimise waste and cut down on car usage.



A young child learns about foraging. Photo Pexels

But what about all the people who are being encouraged to treat the fields and woods as a natural store cupboard by broadcasters, journalists and restaurateurs? How many know that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is illegal to dig up or remove a plant (including algae, lichens and fungi) without permission from the landowner or occupier? That covers more than 95% of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, with species including bluebells and the lady's slipper orchid enjoying special protection.

for Disaster



Photo courtesy of Danya Gutan

And do foragers take only flowers, seeds, fruits and leaves that are plentiful or do they strip bushes bare? The Woodland Trust advises people to gather no more than they plan to consume so that vegetation can regenerate, reproduce and provide food for birds and animals – and bear in mind that others may soon be raiding the same larder. And then there are safety issues, with foragers warned to ensure they live to fight another day too by investing in a good field identification guide.

What Lies Beneath

It's a similar story with wild swimming. An internet search for recommended locations in the Yorkshire Dales will pull up numerous waterfalls and photographs of people leaping from great heights at places like Loup Scar on the River Wharfe near Burnsall. Yet there have been fatalities at sites in the national park including The Strid near Bolton Abbey and Linton Falls near Grassington. Potential dangers in its beckes and rivers include unpredictable flows and difficulty spotting underwater hazards.

On larger bodies of water there is a greater risk of thermal shock, particularly for anyone passing through the thermocline, which separates the warmer, upper layer from the colder, lower one. This is one of the reasons that the national park authority website warns that tombstoning (jumping upright from a height) is extremely



The Strid near Bolton Abbey. Photo courtesy of Gary Denham

dangerous and can be fatal. Unwary swimmers can also come to grief in white water, which is less dense because of trapped air, causing them to lose buoyancy.

And, as with other sports such as fishing, kayaking, canoeing and windsurfing, enthusiasts should make sure that clothing and equipment including buoyancy aids are cleaned before moving from one location to the next to prevent the spread of non-native invasive species such as the American signal crayfish.

Yet data from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents shows that the number of fatalities from outdoor swimming is still lower than for many other activities including road cycling and angling. It seems that there is no right or wrong way to enjoy the Yorkshire Dales but new ways of spending our leisure time mean it is more important than ever for people to be aware of, and act on, potential risks to their personal safety and the landscapes and habitats of the national park.

Lynn Leadbetter, volunteer

Find more information about responsible foraging at:

- www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/things-to-do/foraging/foraging-guidelines/
- www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/our-policy-on-foraging-for-wild-food

For guidance on safety and environmental protection whilst wild swimming visit:

- www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/plan-your-visit/essential-information/take-care/water-safety-and-swimming
- www.outdoorswimmingsociety.com/category/survive

Author Mark Cocker looks at how outdoor activities can disturb the tranquillity of the national park on page 12



The Price of Fame

Some parts of the Yorkshire Dales face greater visitor pressure than others, particularly during the summer months when tourist honeypots like Malham and Bolton Abbey can be full to bursting. The Three Peaks area suffers more than most, partly because of its popularity for charity challenges.

While the Institute of Fundraising has produced guidance for organisers of outdoor events, the advice below is equally useful for individuals planning to tackle some, or all, of the 24-mile route.

Yorkshire Three Peaks Code of Conduct



The Yorkshire Three Peaks is part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park - a very special place.

The Three Peaks has become an increasingly popular location for fundraising events. **YOU** can help us keep the area special for everyone to enjoy by following the Yorkshire Three Peaks Code of Conduct:

Parking is Limited



- Keep vehicles to a minimum, use local transport to get here or car share where possible.
- Please park considerately and do not obstruct passing places, clearways, private roads, tracks, roadside verges, gateways or pavements.

Be Quiet!



- **Please keep noise to a minimum.** Respect the peace of people living and staying in the area.
- Keep early morning noise (from both people and vehicles) to an absolute minimum and maintain it until you are away from the village.
- Do not use bells or claxons to 'ring home' your participants at the end of their challenge.

Leave No Trace

Litter...



- **Take it home!** Litter places a burden on our small, rural communities and is a blight on the landscape. If you really want to help, pick up any odd bits you see along the way.
- **Remember**, banana skins and orange peel are litter, too – they are unsightly and take years to decompose.

Toilets...



- **Don't get caught short!** Toilet facilities on the Three Peaks route are limited (the only public toilets are at Horton-in-Ribblesdale).
- **Do not** use the mountains as an outdoor toilet. This has significant impact on local water supplies and ecology, and is unpleasant for other visitors. If you do need to urinate, do so at least 30m from streams and burns. If you need to defecate, do so as far away as possible from buildings, streams and farm animals. Bury faeces in a shallow hole and replace the turf.

Stay Safe



- **Be prepared!** Make sure you are well prepared in terms of kit and have a good level of fitness. Make sure you have at least one person in your group who can navigate in difficult conditions. Local mountain rescue teams are all volunteers and should only be called in an emergency.

Give Something Back



- **Support the local community** by using local facilities and services.
- **Donate to path maintenance.** Help us look after this special place by donating a minimum of £1 per walker - visit www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/threepaks

Enjoy yourself – but please respect those who live and work here. Come back and stay some time soon, linger, explore and enjoy the local hospitality, and get to know the place and the people.

Let's keep the Yorkshire Three Peaks special

Horton-in-Ribblesdale
Parish Council



The Call in the Wild



DARTMOOR
PRESERVATION
ASSOCIATION

WEEING (AND MORE) IN THE WILD

Using the toilet outside can feel tricky and embarrassing, but when nature calls, we all have to answer it. Here are some top tips for how to keep yourself clean and comfortable whilst respecting the environment:

WILD WEE 101

1 Find shelter and take position



- Tell your trip leader where you are going.
- Find a sheltered place off the public path.
- If you sit to wee, it can be helpful to squat.
- Move your clothing out of the way and aim downhill.

2 Think about how you would like to wipe



- On short trips, a simple shake may be fine.
- Pack tissues or wet wipes, but make sure to bring them home with you.
- You could pack a reusable cloth to wash at home.

3 Need a poo?



- Don't panic, it happens!
- Get to a place where you can take your time.
- Consider taking a trowel for overnight stays.
- Dig a small hole if you can, away from a water source and cover back up again.

MANAGING YOUR PERIOD

1 Build a period pack



- Pack a small container with the essentials:
- Pads/tampons – a menstrual cup could be a handy alternative
 - Tissues
 - Hand sanitiser
 - Wet wipes
 - Sanitary bags
 - Spare underwear

2 Know your cycle - and your needs



- Track your periods to mentally prepare for your trip.
- Pack painkillers and heat packs.
- Wear comfortable underwear.
- Bring a little comfort food and plenty of nourishment, such as fruit and water.

3 Have an honest conversation



- Talk to your friends to share tips and experience. Most importantly, be respectful towards others. Nobody should feel embarrassed about their bodies.

THE 'BOTTOM' LINE



Prepare

Bring what you need to help you feel comfortable. Tissues, hand sanitiser, wipes to keep you clean in the wild. If you menstruate, bring your period pack on every trip, just in case! Keep a sealed compartment or tub to carry waste.



Don't be afraid to ask for help

Pee, poo, period – it's all natural! If you are worried about being interrupted, need advice, or have to walk far from the group, ask for someone you're comfortable with to come with you. They can guard the area from a closer distance.



Take your rubbish home

Be sure to leave no trace. Bring sandwich bags or sanitary bags with you to store your dirty tissues and wipes. Take this home with you to dispose of after your trip.

Most of us probably know how to deal responsibly with toilet breaks outdoors, perhaps guided by our parents or teachers when we were young. But if you've had limited chances to visit the countryside, you may have missed out on this essential information.

Colleagues in Dartmoor Preservation Association have been working with their national park's Community Engagement Ranger and experienced outdoor enthusiasts to create some exciting new official guidance. This is designed to help young people be confident and responsible in meeting their personal hygiene needs when taking part in outdoor activities, such as walking, backpack camping and climbing. These infographics are designed to be easily shared on the social media platforms that appeal to young people. But the key message of 'Leave No Trace' definitely applies to us all.



Moor Boots recipients.
Photo courtesy of Stride Cornwall

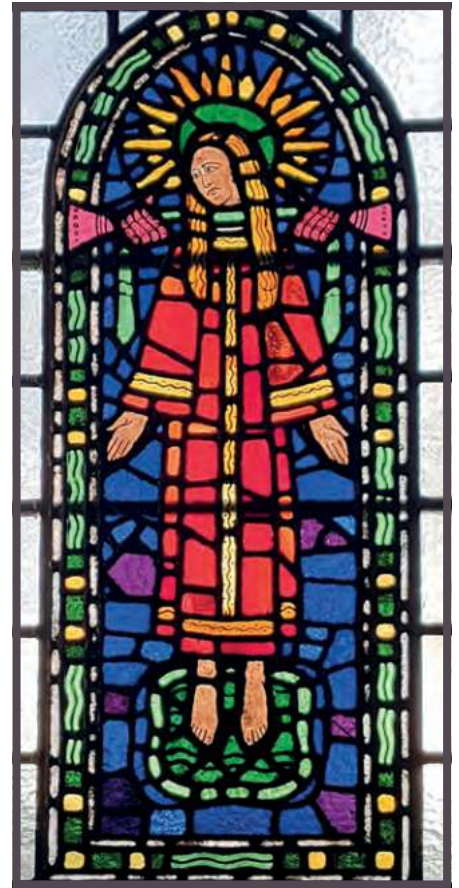


Blacksmiths, Bequests and Burials

Discovering Our Cultural Connections



Drawing by Gordon Sanderson 1911, taken from Brayshaw's *The Red Book*



St Alkelda in Giggleswick

Capturing the Past is a Friends of the Dales initiative that brings together a rich collection of historical material relating to the area now covered by the national park and makes it freely available online. Project Leader John Cuthbert demonstrates how the website, which gives access to over 3,200 items including legal documents, photographs, wills, records and spoken memories, can help you uncover fascinating links between people and places over the centuries.

Capturing the Past contains many references to St Alkelda. The name won't be a surprise to anyone living in Giggleswick or Middleham, but if you're not from these two places, you may not know it. Giggleswick and Middleham are the only places in England where St Alkelda's name is celebrated.

Legend has it that Alkelda was an Anglo-Saxon princess, who was strangled by pagan Viking women during Danish raids at Middleham in about AD 800. In addition, she may have been the abbess of a monastery at Middleham. In 1389, the Lord of Middleham Manor received a crown grant to hold a weekly market and yearly fair on the feast of St Alkelda.

The Middleham area is known for its many springs, some very near the sites of the parish church. With no documentary reference to this saint until the late Middle Ages, it has been suggested that the name Alkelda is a corruption of an Anglo-Saxon word 'haligkelda', meaning holy spring. An alternative suggestion is that she may have been Icelandic, from 'Ölkelda', and her reputation brought to Yorkshire by Vikings, where she became associated with holy springs.

The collection of North Craven Wills and Inventories¹ includes Richard Frankland's will of 1532, which states: 'I bequeath my soul unto Almighty God my maker saviour and redeemer of the world and to our Lady St Mary and to all the holy company in heaven and my body to be buried in the church of St Akylda virgin of Giggleswick and for my mortuary that at right will Also I bequeath to my priest saying mass for me that day I am buried 4d.'

Sir John Mone's will of 1538 states: 'First I bequeathe my soull to allmightie god to our lady saint mary and to all the company of heaven and my bodie to be buried in the churche of Saint Alkeld of Gyglesweke. Also I bequeathe to everie prest that shall celebrate Mass at my buriall 4d and to everie scoler doinge prayre ther that day 1d also I bequeathe to Sir John Nelson (?) in money and my best gowne and best hate to pray for me one yere.'

Note the dates of these two wills. The 1534 Act of Supremacy marks the split between England and the Roman Catholic church. This separation was more political than theological, so most Roman Catholic practices and doctrines remained unchanged. Although Richard Frankland wanted to be buried in a Roman Catholic church and Sir John Mone wanted to be buried in what was now a Church of England establishment, the services and procedures would probably be indistinguishable.

The Giggleswick History Collection – *The Red Book* by Thomas Brayshaw – records the installation of a new clock at St Alkelda's Church in 1892²:

'The offertory in the Morning and the Collection in the Evening will be given to the Clock Fund.'



The tower clock St Alkelda's Church

'Large Turret Clock for Giggleswick Church

'The clock is to be placed in the clock chamber of the Church tower, which will be duly prepared by the Restoration Committee, and will have a large external dial, with black and gold figures, on the East wall of the Tower.'

The Settle Graveyard Project records those buried at St Alkelda's Church. For example³:

'The Bowskills, blacksmiths: Horses dominated passenger and goods transport, farming and other trades until the beginning of the 20th Century and so good blacksmiths were valued members of the community. The Bowskills were Settle's dominant smithing family for decades. John Bowskill, born in 1768, the son of another John Bowskill, ruled the roost until his death in 1822.'

Members of the Settle and District U3A Family History Group undertook research concerning the people who donated funds to furnish the stained-glass windows in St Alkelda's. For example, the Carr window⁴:

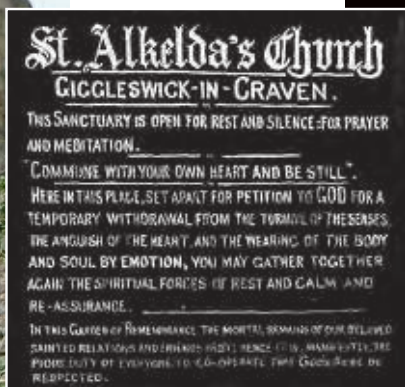
'This window was erected in 1901 by William Carr 1828 – 1905. It was made by the firm James Powell and Sons, Whitefriars, London, and appears in their order book for 1900.'

'It is known as the Carr window because this corner of the church is the site of the Chancel of the Rood, founded by James Carr, priest, in the late 15th century and is also the site of the Carr vault.'

This excellent glimpse into our history is just one of many within the Capturing the Past project. We collect historical images, documents and words from those who lived or are living in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The project was developed by the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership, led by Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

If you'd like to learn more about the history of the Dales, please visit www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk

John Cuthbert, Project Leader



Notice on the gate, Giggleswick church 1938, taken from Brayshaw's *The Red Book*



The Batten Window, 'In loving memory of Annie Batten, who died 5 May 1900'

This article mentions four groups that donated material to Capturing the Past. If you'd like to have a conversation about contributing historical material, please email John Cuthbert at dalescommunityarchives@gmail.com

North Craven Wills and Inventories – www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/north-craven-wills-inventories

Giggleswick History Collection – www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/giggleswick-history-collection

Settle Graveyard Project – www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/settle-graveyard-project

Settle and District U3A Family History Group – www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/miscellaneous-collections-items/stained-glass-windows-in-st-alkeldas-church-giggleswick

¹ type 'Akylda' into the search

² type 'tower clock' into the search

³ type 'Bowskill' into the search

⁴ type 'stained glass' into the search

Rights Without Responsibilities?



The Lie of the Land:
Who Really Cares for
the Countryside?

Author: Guy Shrubsole

Publisher: HarperCollins
UK Publishers

Price: £22

ISBN: 9780008651770

The birth of the national park movement owed much to the Kinder Scout trespass of 1932, which became a rallying cry for those campaigning for greater public access to the countryside. Almost a century later, and faced with climate breakdown and a biodiversity crisis, is it time to revisit the thorny issue of land ownership? Trustee Bruce McLeod finds much to ponder in a thought-provoking new book.

The now familiar indictment that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted nations in the world fuels the passion and plain speaking of Guy Shrubsole's new book, *The Lie of the Land: Who Really Cares for the Countryside?* The need to act immediately in a radical way is informed by the ever more apparent fact of climate breakdown (the UN has now appended 'chaotic' in an attempt to catch our attention). If it is not controversial to argue that the natural world has been catastrophically degraded by the way land has been farmed and managed, most crucially since the 1940s, Shrubsole's solutions to this grim state of affairs will be.

Whether eloquently discussing the 11th Duke of Bedford (whom we can thank for the invasive grey squirrel), grouse moors and the degrading of peat bogs (a gift from the Victorians), the non-native pheasant (50 million of which are dumped annually into the food chain with untold consequences), the draining of the Fens (once the largest wetlands in Europe), the history of land ownership (from the Norman kings onward) or myths about the countryside, Shrubsole emphasises that 'the problem of unsustainable land use is a systemic one. And the solution has to be systemic, too.' This is not about individuals, however powerful the landowner or politician he discusses.

When Shrubsole visits the Dales he focuses on the 25 per cent of the national park that is the huge carbon store called peat bog, which is mainly used for driven grouse shooting. He spies the burning of moorland on estates that have agreed to a voluntary ban in order to protect peat. He goes on to point out that such estates have, as the RSPB discovered using data from Natural England, received 'over a ten-year period more than £105 million of environmental stewardship payments'.

Managing for the Common Good

Shrubsole describes alternatives and tools to fix a system that isn't so much broken (it works for landowners) but is hugely damaging to wildlife and our future. These range from community ownership schemes (as at Langholm in Scotland) and greater rights to roam to a Carbon Land Tax and strategic land use planning. Furthermore, he argues for the creation of a public nature estate. This is not a new idea: in the 1940s it was agreed that the state should protect nature even though food security was much more of an issue then than now. The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 gave Nature Conservancy (now Natural England) the authority that for 'any land that it is expedient in the national interest that it should be managed as a nature reserve, they may acquire the land compulsorily'. Hence the creation of National Nature Reserves. Since around 1951 landowners have fought back and Natural England rarely buys land today.

Despite, for example, 96 per cent of the Dales being privately owned, public ownership of protected landscapes does exist. Collectively the public sector owns around 8.5 per cent of England. The National Trust, a semi-public body, owns about a fifth of the Lake District. It would not be outlandish for the public to take back more: land owned by water companies could be nationalised.

Shrubsole's stark conclusion is that conservation cannot confront private property rights: 'The public needs to be able to assert that some parts of our land – our most important carbon stores, our most precious ecosystems – have to be managed for the common good, rather than trashed for private gain.'

Bruce McLeod, trustee

On his way to the ten-point to-do list in his conclusion, he takes a sledgehammer to the belief that private ownership of land is synonymous with responsible, nature-friendly practices. One of the most compelling arguments in the book is that land, especially carbon-storing peat bogs, is a national asset, vital to our collective future, and thus should be better regulated to enhance public wellbeing.

Take SSSIs: our best habitats and supposedly most protected. Since these sites comprise only 8 per cent of England one would assume they are flourishing. Not so: less than 50 per cent are in 'favourable condition' – faint praise indeed. Whoever 'owns' these sites is clearly doing a poor job. Shrubsole puts this into context: 'The government [] has pledged to protect 30 per cent of England for nature by the year 2030....Yet conservation groups reckon that only 3 per cent of England is properly protected and managed for nature at present.' This after the fire alarm has been ringing for the last few decades. What has got to change, and swiftly, to even get near 30%?

Given that the vast majority of England, therefore, is not properly protected and managed for nature, it stands to reason some hard questions about land management and the rights of landowners should be asked, especially since £9.2 billion (£12.5 billion if adjusted for inflation) of public money has been spent on agri-environmental subsidies over the last 30 years. Calling oneself a 'steward' or 'farmer' or 'custodian of the countryside' is, clearly, not enough. Nor is the philosophy of voluntarism, which has largely guided government policy.



Online Talk: A Nature-based Approach to Flood Management

Wednesday, 22 January

5:00pm

Ousewem is an innovative flood resilience project that identifies and delivers nature-based solutions (NbS) and natural flood management (NFM) to reduce flood risk in vulnerable North Yorkshire communities spanning the Swale, Ure, Nidd and Ouse catchments. The project is funded by Defra and part of the £200 million flood and coastal innovation programmes managed by the Environment Agency. The programmes will drive innovation in flood and coastal resilience and adaptation to a changing climate.

Amanda Crossfield from Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust – one of Ousewem’s delivery partners – will provide insights into its ongoing work using NbS and NFM techniques, which aim to strengthen flood resilience in at-risk North Yorkshire communities whilst enhancing the local environment and supporting a sustainable, adaptive agricultural landscape.

Book via www.trybooking.com/uk/DVYJ

Event: Introduction to the Wonders of the Night Sky

Wednesday, 12 February

6:30pm – 9:00pm

As part of the annual Yorkshire Dales Dark Skies Festival, Paul Neaves, with Keighley Astronomical Society, will join us in Gargrave to offer an introduction to the wonders of the night sky.

This part-theoretical, part-practical event will enable participants to learn astronomy and understand the workings of the night sky with a view to identifying the key stars and constellations.

The session includes using star charts, judging angular distances and creating your own planisphere, concluding with a short guided walk to put it all into practice.

Suitable for age 12 and above (12- to 17-year-olds to be accompanied by an adult).

Please bring your own torch (head torch is preferable), binoculars if you have them (no telescopes please) and warm clothing for the walk.

Tickets: £5 (18 and under – free)

Book via www.trybooking.com/uk/ECIY



The Ousewem team, with Amanda Crossfield on the far left

Event: Inspiring Future Leaders

Tuesday, 1 April – Thursday, 3 April

This April we will be co-hosting a very special two-night residential for aspiring young leaders. Offered through Campaign for National Parks (CNP) Future Leaders Course and funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, this retreat will enable about 20 young people (aged 20-30 years) to hone their skills in storytelling, leadership, teamworking and campaigning.

The first of these residential was held in October 2024 in Dartmoor, supported by colleagues at Dartmoor Preservation Association. A third retreat will be offered in partnership with Cyfeillion Bannau Brycheiniog (Friends of Brecon Beacons) later in 2025.

Based at Hill Top Farm’s bunk barn in Malham, with fabulous landscapes and nature right on the doorstep, young people will be supported to develop their own leadership skills and campaign ideas. We very much hope some of our own Creative Campaigners will attend and share their own impressive talents in collaborative campaigning.

The residential are the centrepieces of a carefully curated course offered by CNP and delivered by experienced facilitators, aimed at enabling young people to become the next generation of national park change-makers. The Dales retreat is a truly amazing opportunity for young people based in the North, especially people of colour, disabled people and neurodivergent people, who are underrepresented in the environment sector.

For more information about the course and the residential email our Executive Director, Ann Shadrake at ann.shadrake@friendsofthedales.org.uk or What’s App 07483 438346

To Enjoy at Your Leisure

If you are missing our usual scheduled talk for March, we would encourage you to head over to our YouTube channel at

www.youtube.com/@friendsofthedales



This now contains more than 30 of our unique online talk videos discussing important Yorkshire Dales environmental issues including:

- raptor persecution
- breeding waders
- limestone pavements
- peatland restoration
- sustainable farming

There’s also one of the highlights of 2024, when our vice president Mark Corner celebrated the *Yorkshire Dales National Park 70 Years On* – looking back at its achievements and forward to the challenges that still lie ahead.

The best way of finding out about our forthcoming events as soon as possible is by checking the events page on our website at www.friendsofthedales.org.uk/events and also signing up to our monthly e-news – see details below.

Catch up via E-News

Sign up to our free monthly e-news and be one of the first to receive our news, new event listings and information about hands-on volunteering opportunities arranged by Friends of the Dales and other environmental charities.

Sign up at: www.friendsofthedales.org.uk

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



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Support us, support the Dales

Friends of the Dales is the leading voice campaigning for a sustainable future for the Dales.

Our charity needs your support to help us protect this amazing, inspiring but fragile place - for years to come.

➔ JOIN US

- More members means more clout when we campaign. Members receive this quarterly magazine and first news of our events programme.

➔ DONATE

- Our charity's running costs are funded entirely by your voluntary subscriptions, donations and legacy gifts.

➔ VOLUNTEER

- Help with our walks and other events
- Shape our charity's future: become a trustee
- Put out our leaflets on your home patch

➔ LEGACY

- Please consider making a gift in your will to Friends of the Dales.

➔ BE 'DALES-FRIENDLY'

- Try out our sociable walks and events (most are free)
- Support Dales businesses and communities
- Look for sustainable ways to visit, like [DalesBus](#)

www.friendsofthedales.org.uk



Please visit our website and follow us on social media. Full contact details and membership rates are on page 2

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LOVE...**



When you've read and enjoyed this magazine please pass it on with our regards.