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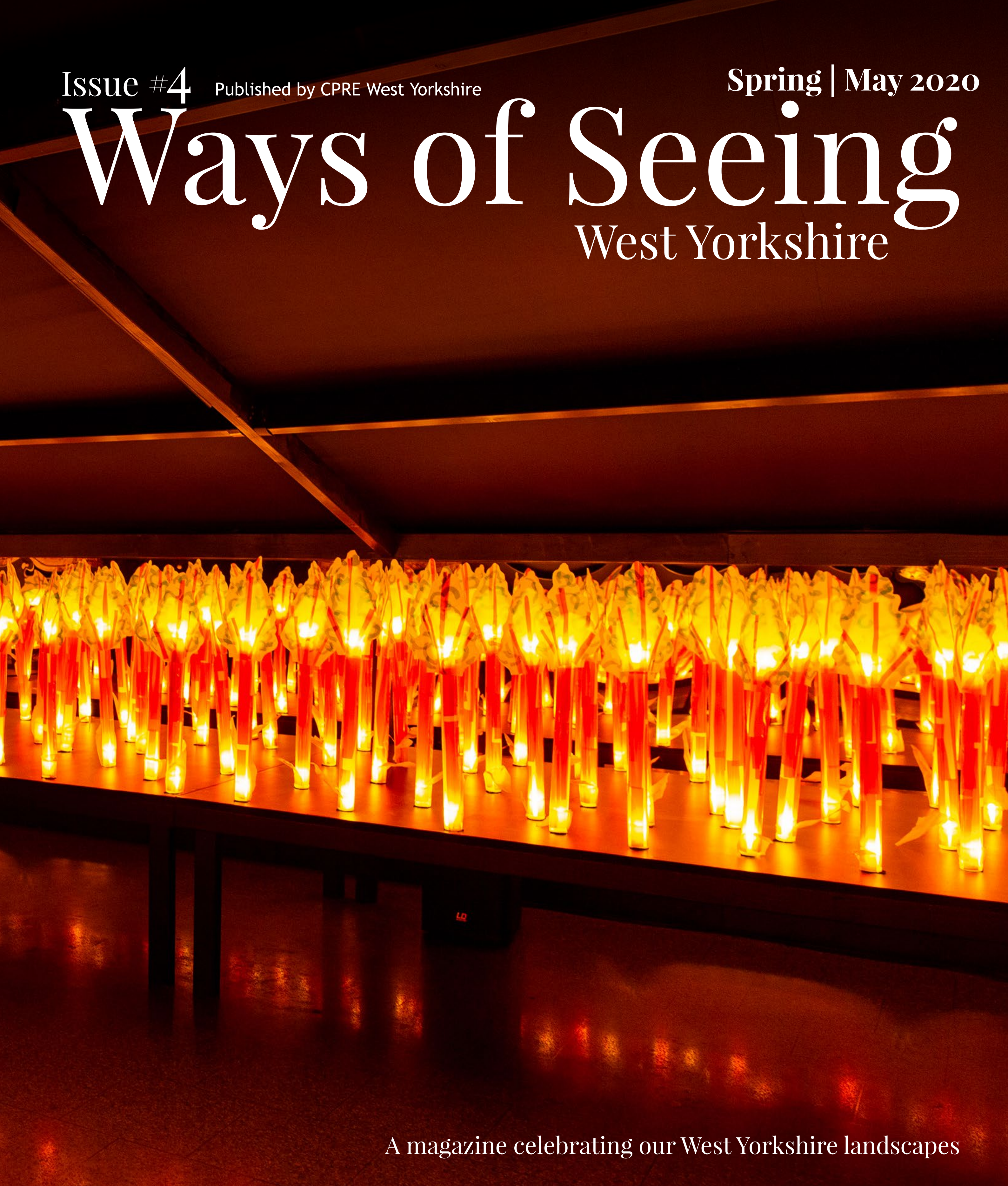
Ways of Seeing
West Yorkshire



A magazine celebrating our West Yorkshire landscapes

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Editorial

Welcome to the fourth issue of ‘Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire’. Spring 2020 has so far brought some of brightest and most optimistic weather in recent memory, in sharp contrast to the dreadfully wet winter that caused flood and storm damage to many homes and businesses in West Yorkshire and elsewhere.

We have all experienced the advancing of Spring this year in a new way. For me, this Spring has seemed particularly vivid. I have noticed the progress of blossoming trees, flowering bluebells, bees waking up to their work, and the breeding rituals of birds.

These are the life cycles of nature that set the rhythm for everything that makes us human. As I have spent more time walking in my local area, I have considered how we are creatures utterly dependent on, and defined by, the ground beneath our feet. The ability of the land to bring us food, water and building materials is not only essential to our survival but also to our creative and spiritual inspiration.

This issue is all about seeing ‘land’ as a source of both sustenance and wonder, and our contributors have all shared fascinating perspectives. David Cooke talks about the future of farming. Owen Wells describes how our peat moorlands can realise their potential to tackle climate change. James Sebright traces the farming and cultural heritage of forced Yorkshire rhubarb. Clare Nadal for the Hepworth, Wakefield, chats with us about artists and landscapes, and Roger Plumtree shares how a neglected patch of land in the Kirkstall Valley is being turned into a lively hub of community food-growing.

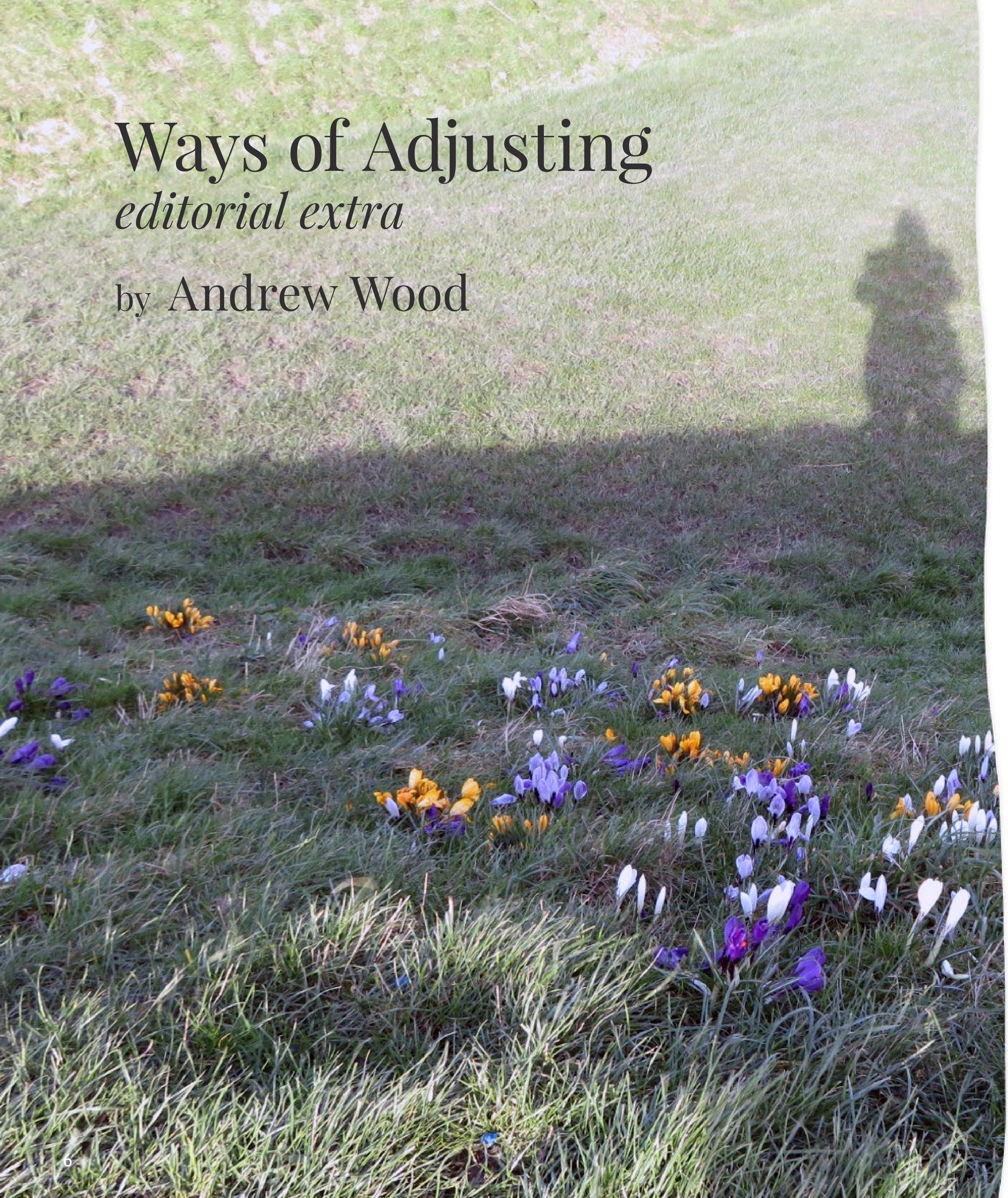
Producing the magazine has inspired us with positivity about the value and the future of West Yorkshire’s countryside, and the people who care about it. At a time when the world seems so precarious, I hope that you will feel refreshed by reading it.

Andrew Wood
(Planning Consultant | CPRE West Yorkshire)

Ways of Adjusting

editorial extra

by Andrew Wood



“My son’s asthma has all but disappeared.” This recent comment on Twitter highlighted the surprising improvement in air quality many of us have noticed since the COVID-19 lockdown brought about a 60% reduction in road traffic. The quieter, cleaner air has given us a glimpse of what life could be like if we could shake our car habit in the longer term. There have even been suggestions that, globally, the reprieve from air pollution might save more lives than the pandemic claims.

It’s a strange thought that a virus could kill some and save others. Your next-door neighbour’s experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic may be wildly different from your own, for better or worse. Lungs punished by air pollution, and bodies weakened by obesity or lack of exercise, are more vulnerable. People with better access to parks and green spaces will tend to cope better with the mental and physical toll of social distancing.

These concerns chime directly with CPRE’s campaigning issues: green space, air quality, active travel, quality and location of housing, are all important to us. Hopefully the greener, healthier places that we campaign for are also places that would cope better with future shocks. There is cause for optimism that local and national decision-makers understand the opportunity they’ve been given to re-design places and economies for the better. But we must be cautious too: the last economic recession prompted the UK government to slash funding for local authorities and for charities, de-regulate planning and set back environmental targets by several years. It really could go either way.

By the time lockdown started, most of this issue of Ways of Seeing magazine was already written, and we decided not to go back to our contributors and ask them about the possible impacts of the pandemic on what they’d told us. Nevertheless, it’s obvious that the impacts will be many and varied. Already, there is news of farm crops going unharvested due to a lack of labourers. Popular areas of countryside close to town are working harder than ever to give us space to exercise and to reassure us that life goes on. Books, music and artworks are already being made, as the more creative among us seek to process and interpret the changing world. These impacts will re-shape our landscapes and our relationships with them.

As the story unfolds, we will adding relevant contributions to the CPRE West Yorkshire website. If you have a story about how the countryside features in your experience of the pandemic, we would love to hear from you.

Kirkstall Valley Farm

By Roger Plumtree

Roger Plumtree is the unstoppably enthusiastic project leader of Kirkstall Valley Farm. The farm is still in its infancy but has great plans, and has already raised start-up capital through crowdfunding. Roger tells us the inspiring story of why opening up pockets of urban countryside is so important, and how the farm is reaching out to people of all ages and backgrounds through the possibilities of growing food, caring for the land and working as a community.

Kirkstall Valley Community Farm nestles on the River Aire floodplain, just off the Kirkstall Road between Kirkstall and Burley. The site has been here a long time, having been designated allotments. Since the 1950s or 60s it was farmed by a chap called Bill Simpson, but it was still owned by Leeds City Council. It also fell within an Enterprise Zone during the Thatcher era, and has been earmarked for development ever since. But fortunately it has remained free from development. Since Bill Simpson died a couple of years ago, and aware of the increasing shortage of green space in the Kirkstall Valley, the Council has committed to keep the land in public use for community benefit.

Seeing the land become available, the Kirkstall Valley Development Trust, which works to bring about community assets, put out a call for interest in a community farming project. A steering group was formed in late 2018 –

eight to ten volunteers with designated roles. I'm the chair of that group. The challenge was, how to transform an overgrown site into a working community farm. Since the lease was signed in November 2019 we've been working on the detailed plan – the layout of the farm, what to grow etc. There are some separate allotments, which will stay. We've had great help from the Probation Service, as low-risk offenders needing a way back into society have done a lot to clear the overgrowth and tidy the site.

Community engagement and participation are the driving force. We have stalls at local markets, the Kirkstall Festival, and we are reaching out to Bramley and Armley, where we sign up volunteers. We also do walks and talks: the last one drew about 70 people despite being a cold, wet February day. As the weather improves our calendar will get busier, both with farm tasks and with social events. At present there is a core group of a few us running the project, but we want it to be really community-led and democratic, so the more people we can draw in, the better.

The connection to schools is vital. People are so disconnected from the land in this densely populated area. The valley does have quite a bit of green space but a lot of people don't know about it. The farm is one of the ways we can bring people to this most immediate, urban countryside that they may have only been dimly aware of until now.

There are three primary schools in the immediate vicinity, and one of them has no outdoor green space at all. My son goes there. I see a huge educational opportunity here: the maths of farming, the practical application of science, climate awareness, and all there is to learn about how food is grown and how it interacts with the soil and the environment. Plus, of course, there's the social skills that come from getting involved with different people across the generations and backgrounds.

In fact, the diversity of people we're already reaching is really heartening. The adjacent communities include lots of Asians and East Europeans, and they're already bringing their children and families along. Participants at our last walk and talk ranged in age from 2 years to 90, and we had some refugees here too. And of course they get to interact with each other, which they might not have chance to otherwise. We've also had a really good experience with the Probation Service. I'd like the farm to be a place where other charities can bring their staff, volunteers and the people they're helping.

Food that is grown by the community has a different role to play in people's lives. Supermarket food is cost-efficient but resource-heavy. At a community farm, the investment that people make is their time, which pays multiple returns because they get food and they also gain social capital through shared endeavour. But we shouldn't underestimate the food potential itself. Robert Netting, an ethnographer, has studied how smallholdings can be really productive, as well as biodiverse.

During Brexit I started thinking about national self-sufficiency. Could the UK feed our population from our own land? We're using 1.5 acres to feed a meat-eater, and about 0.5 acre for a vegetarian. With 66 million people and 44 million acres of farmland, if most of us became vegetarian we could just about do it. But I think it's the monocultures that are the obstacle. I come from an industrial farming background, where I saw that homogeneity and lack of adaptability destroys businesses. A really bad storm can flatten a wheat crop and wipe out a whole farm. You mustn't put all your eggs in one basket. China feeds twenty people per acre, and they achieve this through mixed smallholdings – pools with fish

alongside fruit trees, chickens tilling the soil. We have a huge amount to learn from that type of model.

We may not quite achieve the permaculture ideal here in Kirkstall, but we're certainly aiming for a sustainable, permanent, productive ecosystem. We're managing a community asset, and we need to welcome the wildlife. We have foxes, deer, otters, herons, cormorants, goosanders. They're part of the community and a big part of why people want to come here. Also, flooding is a feature of the ecosystem here on the valley floor. We're researching what's OK to grow on the land that floods and what needs to be higher up. We're raising the structures off the ground, and using trough and ridge systems to control what gets wet and muddy, and what stays drier.

Our big ambition for Kirkstall Valley is to become a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business. CSAs are springing up in many areas – in Leeds we already have them at Meanwood and Swillington – and there is potential for them to pool their efforts and sometimes cross-supplement each other's produce. We had a successful crowdfunding effort to raise our start-up capital, getting £45,000 from about 300 donors. These ranged from very small sums to very large ones, and we also gained about 140 members, so it was a fantastic boost. CSAs are generally more or less dependent on grants, as well as on the produce they can sell, but it's great for members of the community to have a stake in the project. It's not my farm, it's yours!

Of course, the lockdown has presented a challenge. As well as a year of literally establishing the ground works, it was supposed to have a packed social events calendar to really launch the farm to the world and really establish it as a community asset. Those social aspirations have obviously had to be held back, but I'm really pleased to see what we've still been able to achieve.

As an essential service, we very quickly put together a safe distance working framework. Sadly, it's meant we're not yet able to welcome the volumes of volunteers we'd wanted to, but a core of small, closed groups have been able to crack on. I'm very pleased to say we're still broadly on schedule for our first veg boxes in June 2021!

Have a look at the Kirkstall Valley Farm Website if you would like to find out more about the farm and how to get involved. You can follow their progress on Twitter - @KV_Farm

Jonathan Westwood

Tour de Force

Words and Images by James Sebright

James Sebright is a documentary photographer with a particular interest in manufacturing and makers. His past projects include exploring the impact of 30 years of Nissan Motors in Sunderland and documenting the Cham diaspora in South East Asia. James is photographing a range of subjects for Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire, and recently visited two rhubarb producers and the Wakefield Rhubarb Festival.

To accompany some of his pictures, James tells us here about his impressions of what he saw.

Without people, places don't have any meaning, for me. Primarily, I'm interested in people and their interaction with the world – how we change our environment and how it in turn changes us. There's a tension there, a flux, and that's what I'm really interested in. For example, a few years ago I photographed workers in Nissan's Sunderland plant, as part of a project to mark 30 years of Nissan in the region. My focus was what having jobs at Nissan meant to them and enabled them to do in their lives. What brought Nissan to the North-East was the mining skills in the region – the company saw that these were relevant and transferable to car-making. So without the mining heritage - which stems directly from the environment - they probably wouldn't be making cars in Sunderland. I find those links fascinating.

Forced rhubarb production in West Yorkshire is another story of the relationship between people and the land they inhabit. Rhubarb forcing was discovered by accident at London's Chelsea Physic Garden in 1817, and several varieties were developed by a botanist from Yorkshire with a particular interest in the vegetable (yes, rhubarb is a vegetable). The landscape in the Rhubarb Triangle provides just the right combination of soil, frosts and rainfall to make the conditions right. Cheap coal from the region was available to heat the forcing sheds, and residue from wool production, known as shoddy, was used as a fertiliser. The elements conspire. As a result, the area between Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford became the centre of the world for forced rhubarb around 1877.

And it still is - although not at the scale it once was. Rhubarb's day as a major employer has passed. I meet Jonathan Westwood of D. Westwood & Sons, the largest producer in the region, and one of the oldest. There are now about 12 rhubarb producers in Yorkshire, a far




cry from when there were over 200 in the early 20th Century.

Jonathan shows me around and explains the process. The rhubarb is grown outside for two years to build up its root structure and get it acclimatised. Then the roots are cut and moved indoors, into the forcing sheds. On the second year indoors the shoots begin to grow. Growing them in the dark, tending to them by candlelight, means the plants put their energy into producing stalks rather than leaves, reaching for sunlight that they won't find. This puts all the flavour into the tender stalks.

"We lost those sheds over there recently," says Jonathan, gesturing towards a small set of modest looking farm buildings. "The farmer died and his daughter sold the farm to developers; she didn't want to carry it on." As he says this, I become acutely aware of the numerous pockets of new housing that intersperse the countryside. I ask him, "Will your kids keep the farm going?" "They don't really want to," he replies, "so they might sell the farm. We'll have to see."

As Jonathan approaches retirement age, such a decision isn't far away. Yorkshire rhubarb, as a food product, has geographic protection, and is highly prized. Janet Oldroyd-Hulme, another major producer I meet, tells me proudly that the Michelin-starred Connaught Hotel restaurant in London

> “Yorkshire rhubarb, as a food product, has geographic protection, and is highly prized.”

imports the majority of its ingredients from France, and only uses three British ingredients: crabs and lobsters from Scotland, and rhubarb from the Rhubarb Triangle. But while the sale price has stayed static for many years, the costs of growing the rhubarb have escalated. “You don’t make money by farming,” says Jonathan, and of course you do make money by selling your land for housing. It’s strange and shocking to think that this amazing, distinctive product could vanish within a few years as the existing farmers retire.

I grew up in Lancashire in a similar landscape. It’s unspectacular, humble in a way. Growing up there you do tend to want to get away to somewhere else, somewhere less wet and gloomy. But then you encounter something really special and it can draw you back in. These days I live in London, and it’s a thrill to head north with my camera and meet people who have this connection to the landscape. The interesting thing about the rhubarb is that its production is so quiet, inconspicuous – most people wouldn’t know it was happening, not like corn or rape where the fields shout out at you. But when the rhubarb is cut, brought out into the world and taken to the wholesale markets, that’s where it makes a noise. Janet Oldroyd-Hulme says the majority of the rhubarb is sold outside the region (not unlike British crabs and lobsters) so for many local people the whole process passes them by.

The Wakefield Rhubarb Festival is a really big deal for the area, testament to the shared pride of the farmers. Janet Oldroyd-Hulme has set up rhubarb tours, she is a real entrepreneur and seems quite the matriarch of the Rhubarb Triangle. She takes me to an art installation in Wakefield's former Market Hall, a mocked-up forcing shed with rhubarb stalks illuminated by pinpoints of light, and the sampled sounds of production.

I'm struck hard by the fragility of all this, and why it's so important to document it now. I've seen similar situations in other manufacturing environments – it often boils down to a few people and the knowledge and passion that they carry within themselves. It only needs 12 people to sell their farms, and that's the end of the rhubarb. There's the narrative of the housing shortage – "we have to make the sacrifice" – but once the rhubarb has gone, could we ever get it back? What will become of the Festival if rhubarb is no longer grown here? It calls to mind the Durham Miners' Gala which continues long after coal mining ceased. It will be a celebration of a time passed. It's interesting to draw a comparison with extinctions in the natural world: we're outraged by the risk of losing the snow leopard, for example, but only after we've pretty much finished destroying its habitat.

> "I'm struck hard by the fragility of all this, and why it's so important to document it now."

Should we have the same urgency about rhubarb? There's almost a danger that the Rhubarb Triangle as a global brand, the Festival, the geographic protection of Yorkshire rhubarb, create a false sense of security. Jonathan Westwood is a minor celebrity, his rhubarb being endorsed by famous TV chefs including Marco Pierre White and Greg Wallace. I think for many people outside West Yorkshire, the Rhubarb Triangle is a marker on their mental map, something they've heard of and feel they have some knowledge of. If there is a future for the rhubarb, it will probably look quite different from my photographs, so I'm glad to be part of making that historical record.



Rhubarb Cake
by Marion Temple

In early spring the soft fruit bed in my garden looks fast asleep apart from the gently rising brown bumps that remind me where the rhubarb crowns are.

The first harvest from that bed will be the pink stalks of rhubarb which are really useful when the summer fruits are not yet ripe and last autumn's fruits are a distant memory.

I cook with rhubarb in late spring and early summer in much the same way as I cook with apples in autumn and winter. Rhubarb's good for tarts and crumbles but I also really like it in a cake. This works well as dessert at the end of a meal but is also great with a cup of tea or coffee after a brisk walk or over a chat with a friend.

You can adapt many of the versions of apple cake but here's my favourite recipe. It's basically a sponge cake, topped with rhubarb, then finished with sugar and optional spices.

Ingredients

Fruit:
Approx. 300g rhubarb thinly sliced to no more than 10cm long pieces.

Sponge:
100g unsalted butter; 100g caster sugar; 100g self raising flour; 2 eggs.

Topping:
Approx. 75g soft brown sugar; ginger or cinnamon to taste; or small pieces of cut stem ginger for a special occasion.

Preparation

Preheat oven to 180 degrees (slightly less in a fan oven) or gas 4.

Grease or line a 18/20cm round loose bottomed cake tin (or a similar size square or rectangular tin).

Now prepare the sponge cake mixture. The traditional method is to cream the butter and sugar together, add the beaten eggs, then fold in the flour. My non-traditional method is to put all four ingredients in my food processor and whizz. Either way, you're looking for a soft mixture with an even consistency.

Spoon the sponge cake mixture into your prepared tin.

Scatter the rhubarb slices evenly over the top of the cake mixture and press down gently into the top of the mixture so that the rhubarb is safely attached but not buried. Scatter the brown sugar over the top of the rhubarb-covered cake. Sprinkle a little ginger or cinnamon on the top if wanted.

Put the cake into the preheated oven. Test after about 35 minutes using a skewer: if the cake mixture is cooked, the skewer will come out clean. If there's uncooked cake mixture on the skewer, give the cake another 5 minutes or so.

Remove the baked cake from the oven; then remove from the cake tin after about 10 minutes and leave to cool on a cooling rack (if you have one) or on a board.

The rhubarb topping makes this cake moist but you could add a touch of crème fraiche or greek yogurt … or ice-cream if you prefer!

Photograph by James Sebright
Rhubarb at Jonathan Westwood of D. Westwood & Sons

Exploring the Cultural Landscape

A discussion with Clare Nadal

At the end of February, Ways of Seeing met with Clare Nadal, Assistant Curator at the Hepworth, Wakefield. Writing this article up during lockdown, that seems a lifetime ago. It was the end of the Rhubarb Festival, and to coincide with this, the Hepworth had back out on display some photography work by Martin Parr, of the rhubarb industry in West Yorkshire, commissioned by the Hepworth in 2016.

A new exhibition had just opened, exploring the intersecting artistic paths of Henry Moore and Bill Brandt, whose shared interests include themes of labour, society and the British Landscape.

We were keen to understand some of the connections between artists, their art, and their connection to the West Yorkshire landscape. Over a coffee, Clare explained why the Hepworth Gallery is based in the heart of Wakefield. We talked about how the settings of for art in and around West Yorkshire create a wonderful cultural map in themselves, steeped in heritage and social history. In particular, the Hepworth is a very different setting for Sculpture than the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, and the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds.

(Photographs by Katy Mugford)

CN:
Barbara Hepworth, although largely associated with St Ives in Cornwall, was born in Wakefield and remained closely connected with the area. The Wakefield Art Gallery (established in 1934) had a great collection of 20th Century British Artists, and supported new artists, including Hepworth herself, and Henry Moore.

Wakefield Art Gallery needed bigger premises, and the city's waterfront regeneration needed a flagship. The Hepworth family estate saw the opportunity to increase the presence of Barbara Hepworth's work in Yorkshire, and gifted the works and materials that would give the Gallery its identity.

Both Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth wanted their work to be seen outdoors – they didn't like seeing their work in galleries, because it took away the texture and feel of the light and air, and the relationship of the work to its setting. David Chipperfield, the architect who designed the Gallery, really engaged with the need for light, and we have lots of vistas, big views of Wakefield. The Gallery setting means that we look out as much as in – keeping us connected to our surroundings.

WoS:
Yes, the way you can look at the river and the surrounding buildings through the sculpture shapes how you look at the city, not just at the art. It's also interesting to have this urban-rural counterpoint, because going back to previous centuries a lot of the countryside in West Yorkshire was owned by the big industrialists, so you could say the shaping of the cities and of the countryside was done at the same time, by the same people. When these landscapes were painted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although they looked rural, they also represented changes in land management, ownership and industry.

CN:
Art captures the point in time when it was made, and this builds up social layers. For example, Turner understood that he was living and working in a period of great change – his “Rain, Steam and Speed” (1840s) really expresses this. And Martin Parr’s photographs capture a moment too.

The Hepworth didn’t have a prescriptive brief for Martin Parr’s commission, but he was interested in the Rhubarb Triangle, and chose to explore it. His work celebrates ordinary lives and unusual traditions, so this will always lead to a historical narrative. He’s also drawn to interesting uses of colour, and the forced rhubarb has amazing colour.

WoS:
We are interested in how art can uncover more about our own surroundings. Usually the forced rhubarb industry takes place under cover, behind the scenes. Can art change people’s understanding of things?

CN:
Changing the rhubarb and the growing process itself into art, and using art to show the people who grow it, makes people think differently, get more of a sense of inquiry about the world. The rhubarb exhibition in the old Market Hall in Wakefield is a kind of theatre - the dark space, the candles. In other words people see similar conditions to the environment the rhubarb is grown in, but they experience it as a piece of theatre, not just a farming process.

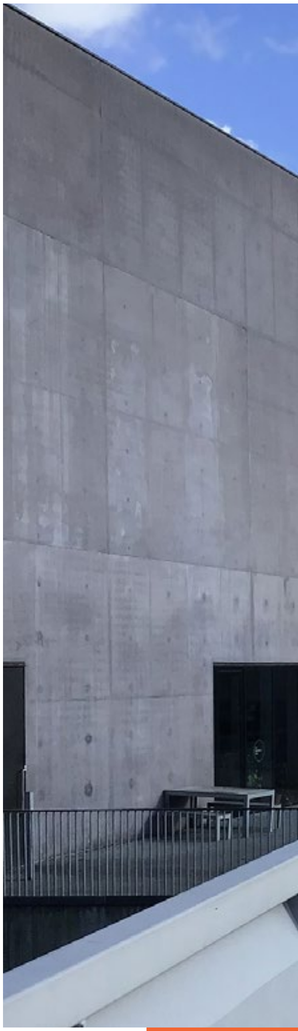
Maybe art can help shine a light on the importance and relevance (even if hidden) of our landscape, just as our landscapes (both physical and social) can inspire art. A focus on the ‘land’ in landscapes has been a preoccupation in art over generations. It says something about home, and belonging, and being rooted. Perhaps that is why it was important for Hepworth to retain her connection with West Yorkshire.

WoS:
And what about the Brandt/Moore exhibition. What role does landscape have there? This is the first Henry Moore exhibition that the Hepworth has put on, and is in partnership with the Yale Centre for British Art. It's interesting to see how the work of Moore and Brandt weave around similar themes.

CN:
The two met in World War Two, and both made drawings and photos of air-raid shelters. They had great common interests with the North, with landscape, with mining communities. Brandt came to the North in 1936/37, working in Halifax and Jarrow, and Moore came during the war, in 1940/41. They were both interested in landscape as a healing thing – a place of home and of recovery from hardship and trauma.

WoS:
Northern landscapes are traditionally seen as challenging and quite bleak, and that is reflected quite a lot in art and literature, but I suppose that connection with community and intimate relationship with the land provides a sense of continuity and purpose. J.B.Priestley did a similar thing in writing about Bradford.

CN
Yes, in fact Priestley's first wife Jacquetta was an archaeologist and a poet, and Moore produced drawings for her book "A Land", in which she describes a mythological landscape narrative built around archaeological evidence. So there's another link there, from the documentary aspect of art – like Brandt's photos - to the psychological aspect of how we connect to nature and history through fiction and imagination.



WoS:
The archaeology comparison is interesting, because when land-use change is happening, archaeological features are systematically recorded. The idea is that even if the features are eventually lost or buried, they have been properly logged so that the story of the land is preserved. With art we don't do that – if a view, a landscape, a tree, a building – has inspired art, it's only in very rare cases that this protects it from being lost. There's no established system for recording the artistic story of a place.

WoS:
Do you think arts and culture organisations would want to speak up more about how new developments impact on how people experience the world, if there was a way for them to do that?

CN:
Certainly I think art is a vital way of seeing the landscape as a cultural tradition, a cultural expression, not just a view. We are actually working on a modern landscape exhibition with the University of Sheffield at the moment, and I think the Sculpture Triangle is interesting because it connects a traditional civic Gallery in Leeds with a modern post-industrial Gallery at the Hepworth and the picturesque rural setting at the Sculpture Park. Hopefully that helps to show that anywhere is open to inspiring art and being shaped by art, and that becomes the story of that place.

CN:
I'm sure they would. Art can be a record of what is happening, but is about ongoing relationships. Barbara Hepworth was all about the interaction between the human form and the landscape – each shapes the other - so I hope we can continue to reflect that in what the Gallery does.

Growing Importance

by David Cooke

David Cooke is a farmer based near Harewood. He was involved in CPRE for many years, including as a Trustee of the West Yorkshire branch and also as an active campaigner in his local area of Leeds. As one of the few longstanding CPRE volunteers whose livelihood stems directly from working the land, we asked David to tell us about his experiences and his thoughts on the future of farming.

We used to have a farm near South Milford that was mostly arable, but when we moved here we changed to arable and sheep. For many years we grew barley, wheat, oats and potatoes, and employed a contractor to do the drilling and combine harvesting. In those early days potatoes were spun out and then picked up by hand . Times have changed! Our arable days are now gone. We do have a small flock of our own sheep but surplus grass is grazed by hill farmers.

Our own Mule sheep are a cross between Border Leicester and Scottish Blackface. We use these because they're really good mothers. Previously we had Suffolks, but they weren't so interested in their lambs. We used to lamb inside early in the year but it is healthier outside. We now lamb in April when my young granddaughter comes to help. We aim for two lambs per sheep – this is about getting the supplementary feeding right, as the number and size of lambs is influenced by the mother's diet. We sell the lambs to markets in Otley, Doncaster, York and sometimes Thirsk.

Depending on the time of year we sometimes have around 250 to 300 graziers' sheep in the fields. But this year the long spell of wet weather has caused poaching of the soil. This is where the sheep break down the waterlogged soil with their feet, and then the grass doesn't grow as well. As a result, we have much reduced stocking at present. For many arable farmers the wet winter has been a problem, as many were unable to get onto the land to sow winter and spring corn at the right time. This could cause a shortage at harvest time, and a rise in prices.

Because of Brexit, farmers will not get the EU Single Farm Payment, which is based on acreage, but an amount reducing to nothing over a period of a few years. This will be a challenge for the smaller farms and the Yorkshire hill farmers who rely on this payment to make a living.

Now there is a new Agriculture Bill coming. The focus for payments will be on care for the land itself, so we will get a payment for environmental work like hedge planting and controlling water flow. This is important and necessary work. There isn't enough information yet for farmers to be able to plan their business.

Because of leaving the EU, there are many other questions. Will there be tariffs on the meat that is sold to the EU market? Will imports be cheaper? Will our high standards be undercut by lower standard imports from outside the EU? Either way, we need a strong domestic market for the meat. It would be shortsighted to allow the livestock side to wither. Price is important especially for the hill sheep farmer. On my neighbour's farm, by rotating a large stock of sheep with an arable crop, the sheep are fertilising the field for the arable crop so it's very low input. If a reduction in British meat farming coincided with availability of cheaper, imported meat grown with lower standards, then that would be the worst of both worlds. Our quality and standards are our greatest asset, and we need to be giving that message to the public.

I first became involved in CPRE in the 1990s, a little before the time that we successfully helped to stop an opencast coalmine at Ledston. My main concern nowadays is about green spaces being eroded, in towns and on the edge of towns. Of course it's true that some farmers see the lucrative chance of selling their land for development, but the land has to be in the right, sustainable place for this to be an option.

Builders should be building more affordable homes and homes for people who want to downsize. The difficulty is that planning has been eroded so it can't push for the right types of homes, and it's struggling to protect green spaces around towns and villages.

What motivates me? I always wanted to farm – I like the independence and being my own boss. You do need a certain type of personality for it. There are much easier ways to make money, and I know my daughters and son never want to take the farm on, but it is a business, and if you're enthusiastic you will succeed. The Agricultural Colleges are doing a really good job in encouraging skill and innovation. There is potential for future generations of farmers – I'm optimistic about that.

CPRE Community Training in Planning & Campaigning

CPRE understand how important it is for communities to be equipped to influence change.

When negotiating the planning system, such as getting involved in a Local Plan, fighting an appeal at a Public Inquiry or wanting to use Neighbourhood Plans to achieve great outcomes, sometimes it helps to have some independent support.

The CPRE West Yorkshire team have now developed materials for a training programme, in conjunction with National and Regional CPRE. This will provide bespoke, modular courses, using CPRE's professional expertise to support local communities and volunteers, in how the planning system works and how to influence it.

Available training includes both foundation level and more advanced material, and can be tailored to your needs. CPRE have committed to subsidising 50% of the training costs, and we are always happy to discuss a range of payment options to help communities get the support that they need.

Originally designed as a mix of online and face-to-face training, we are now offering the training wholly online, until social distancing is no longer required.

For further information or an informal chat about what we can offer, please contact andrew.cprewy@gmail.com

CPRE The countryside charity West Yorkshire

The Living Moor

by Owen Wells

Owen Wells is Chair of the Friends of Ilkley Moor, which was established in 2008 and aims to preserve and improve understanding and awareness of the Moor. The charity is the largest Friends group in the Bradford area.

Here, Owen tells us the intertwined stories of the natural and cultural history of Ilkley Moor, the work of the Friends, and what the future has in store.

Peat bogs are often in the news these days, because they have a vital role in helping address the climate emergency. They are the most important carbon sinks that we have. They cover about 2% of the land mass but hold about 30% of all the terrestrial carbon. A 30 centimetre depth of peat over a given area captures as much carbon as the same area of rainforest. Yet peat is still being dug to be used as garden compost. That makes no sense at all.

"Peat is still being dug to be used as garden compost. That makes no sense at all."

The chain of moors, known collectively as Rombalds Moor, stretches from Skipton Moor in the north-west and includes High Bradley Moor, Silsden Moor, Addingham Moor, Ilkley Moor, Burley Moor, Bingley Moor, Hawksworth Moor, and concluding at Baildon Moor in the south-east. The result is a continuous but varied moorland landscape reaching from the Yorkshire Dales right down to the edge of the Leeds-Bradford conurbation. Ilkley Moor itself falls essentially into two parts: on the lower slopes the land was laid out in Edwardian times as a park; the upper section, above the crags, is a Special Protection Area for ground-nesting birds. Formerly these upper slopes will mainly have been covered in blanket bog.

In the recent past there were thriving peat bogs on Hebers Moss and Crawshaw moss. We know this as sphagnum moss was collected from both these areas to make wound dressings during the First World War. Now there is only one thriving area of active peat bog, on Crawshaw Moss. Here the peat is 2m deep and we can show that this bog has been capturing and storing carbon since the last Ice Age. Our challenge now is to protect and restore the bog habitat, which means keeping people on well-made paths, allowing the peat to rebuild and the mosses to grow. Lower down we need to dig ditches that keep paths dry and trap the run-off from the moor, so that it can accommodate more recreational activity without eroding.

For most of the life of Friends of Ilkley Moor, the focus has been on improving public access, and funding was readily available for this objective. On the top of the Moor our approach has been to maintain a small number of high quality footpaths, two running north to south and one running east to west across the top of the moor. This has been hugely successful. Where once we had a 20 metre-wide strip of eroding peat we now have a 1 metre-wide flagstone path, and the bog is regenerating. And the new paths can carry far more foot traffic. We have also noticed that the less robust subsidiary paths are falling into much reduced use, and that means less disturbance for the birds.

"I believe the success of the Friends stems from tapping into a long tradition of radical concern for the environment and well-being."

Recently, money for paths has dried up, but now it's the environmental importance of blanket bog that is the focus of funding initiatives. Sphagnum moss is the crucial factor, as it has exceptional water absorbing ability, and is the basis of the organic material which built up over the years to form peat. If we want peat bogs to regenerate then we need to nurture the sphagnum. Crawshaw Moss, on the western side of Ilkley Moor, has some good sections of active bog, but you'd be hard-pressed to find it elsewhere. The Environment Agency is also keen to increase the water storage capacity of the bog as part of their flood mitigation strategy for Wharfedale.

Friends of Ilkley Moor sprang up originally amid public concern about the condition of the moor, especially the need to control the spread of bracken, which is a major threat to biodiversity. We're now a registered charity with around 400 members. We've benefitted from Lottery funding, which has made a huge difference because the groundworks we've done are expensive. As with most charities, it's hard to get people to join as members, but we have the largest group of volunteers of any organisation in the area. We typically get a dozen volunteers out for one of our working days, and it's heavy work. I always advocate; don't join a gym, come and dig ditches with us. It's much cheaper and just as efficacious!

I believe the success of the Friends stems from tapping into a long tradition of radical concern for the environment and well-being. At the end of the 19th century, Bradford was the wealthiest mercantile city in the British Empire, and one of the worst-polluted. There grew a movement of self-education and improvement among the workers, there were non-conformist, philanthropic industrialists like Titus Salt, and there was a tram system to enable people to access the countryside from the city. We all know that our spirits lift in the countryside, especially in the spring when there is new greenness, light, more chance to get out and about. But Bradford is now one of the poorest metropolitan districts in the country, and you can see this in the difference between the condition of Bradford's parks and those in Leeds.

There are some really big challenges we need to address. It's a rare pleasure to see Asian walkers on the Moor, despite Bradford's famous ethnic diversity. Meanwhile, downhill bikers, racing at 30mph, take straight lines that become streams, and this is seriously damaging. We have a good relationship with responsible cyclists, but the ones who do the damage are the hardest ones to reach. It would be good to find solutions in partnership with other groups. We are glad that the grouse-shooting lease on Ilkley Moor has been terminated, which is good news for the ecosystem, but on neighbouring moors there is still shooting and the tensions associated with it.

"Downhill bikers ... take straight lines that become streams, and this is seriously damaging ... It would be good to find solutions in partnership with other groups."

We have big ambitions for the future of Ilkley Moor, and Bradford Council is being very supportive. In essence, we'd like to treble the size of the peat bogs, and restore the lower slopes as a durable, viable public park. This will include flood mitigation measures on the four principal streams, using soft dams to slow the flow, and judicious management of the woodland areas where 'benign neglect' would do wonders for the wildlife.

As a story about the creative tension between public access and recreation for well-being, and restoring rare and precious habitats, Ilkley Moor is hard to beat.

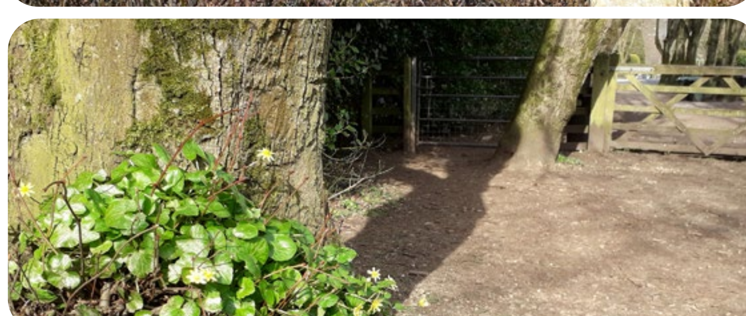
More from the Moor

One of our Trustees at CPRE West Yorkshire is lucky enough to live on the edge of Ilkley Moor. During the lock down, she has been able to take her daily exercise around the pathways and views of this incredible natural resource.

Marion has been taking some photographs for us for those who are unable to visit Ilkley Moor during Spring 2020, recording some of the instances of greening of the landscape over these weeks. We have been tweeting these observations ([@cprewestyorks](https://twitter.com/cprewestyorks)) as a series 'More from the Moor' and thought that we would share some of these with our readers here.

cprewestyorks
@cprewestyorks

#IlkleyMoor
#WestYorkshire
#countryside
#spring
#CPRE
#nature



Mar 24, 2020
A breath of fresh air (accessed responsibly) from this morning. Rocky Valley and a picture of Celandine in the sunshine.

Mar 30, 2020
Spring is coming to Ilkley Moor.
Pussy willow by Ilkley Tarn.

Apr 2, 2020
Our walk this week edged across the border to North Yorkshire. This is Ilkley Moor from the lane to Calvary: The Moor continues to look brown from across the valley as the bracken and heather are still dormant.

Mar 31, 2020
Spring comes to Ilkley Moor.
Bilberries greening up by the Upper Tarn of Ilkley Moor.

Apr 3, 2020
Ilkley's Stations of the Cross: Many local landowners were historically staunch Catholics, some notoriously so like the neighbouring Fawkes family. The Middletons of Ilkley kept a lower profile.

Apr 3, 2020
In the 1850's Robert Middleton commissioned an Italian sculptor to erect this Way of the Cross and Calvary on their land. It's really quiet in here today, and the lack of other background noise amplifies the springtime birdsong.

Apr 8, 2020
Here's Ilkley Tarn this week with the gorse in bloom and the irises emerging from the shallows at the edge – plenty of ducks but no ducklings yet.

Apr 9, 2020
The view north west up Wharfedale towards Addingham taken from above the aptly named Panorama Reservoir on the edge of Ilkley Moor. There were active grouse on the Moor, and a buzzard circling overhead – also a few early butterflies enjoying the warm spring sunshine.

Apr 14, 2020
The first ducklings of 2020 arrived on the Moor's Upper Tarn on Easter weekend. Here they are – if you can spot them. I didn't realise that duck and ducklings could be so well camouflaged! There are 13 ducklings swimming on the Tarn in total: 7 behind the mother duck and 6 out in front of her.

Apr 16, 2020
The warmer weather has accelerated the growth of green leaves and shoots – the views are softer than they were a week ago. In the foreground, a few bilberries grow where the ground is still charred from the fires on Ilkley Moor last Easter. In the distance, the view of the town is starting to be obscured by the growth of spring leaves on the trees.

Apr 22, 2020
The leaves are opening up on the trees so that the scenery is becoming noticeably greener. Here is the Tarn on a calm, warm spring day.

Apr 23, 2020
The viewpoint at White Wells on Ilkley Moor. It's a sign of current times that the seats were all empty around midday on a warm sunny April day.

Apr 24, 2020
While the paths on the Moor are, in general, not busy, many paths are probably getting more use this spring than they would normally get, as we're all restricted to more local walks. The viewpoint at White Wells on Ilkley Moor.

We are CPRE, the countryside charity.

We believe that the countryside is for everyone. We want a thriving, beautiful countryside rich in nature and playing a crucial role in our nation's response to the climate emergency. We work hard to enhance, promote and protect the countryside, including the communities within it.

West Yorkshire's countryside is beautiful, interesting, full of stories. Some of this countryside is under threat from the wrong kinds of development, such as housing schemes that are more about playing the land market than genuinely meet people's needs, and road schemes that only serve to generate more traffic. That's why CPRE campaigns for better, fairer decisions.

Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire is a two-year project to help demonstrate just how amazing our countryside is, and to get to know many more of the people who love it. People whose homes, businesses and families rely on West Yorkshire's countryside. In this way, we hope to give our countryside a stronger voice in the decisions that affect it. We have plenty of work to do.

As a charity, we rely on donations, on partnerships, on people becoming members, and on people choosing to benefit us in their wills. We also depend on wonderful, committed volunteers to manage our organisation, to lead our campaigns and to help us build grassroots support for our work.

If you'd like to know more about giving to CPRE, or volunteering with us, you can contact us via our website.

CPRE The countryside charity
West Yorkshire

If *you* have a story to tell about the West Yorkshire countryside, we would love to hear from you. Please get in contact via our website.

The countryside charity
West Yorkshire