

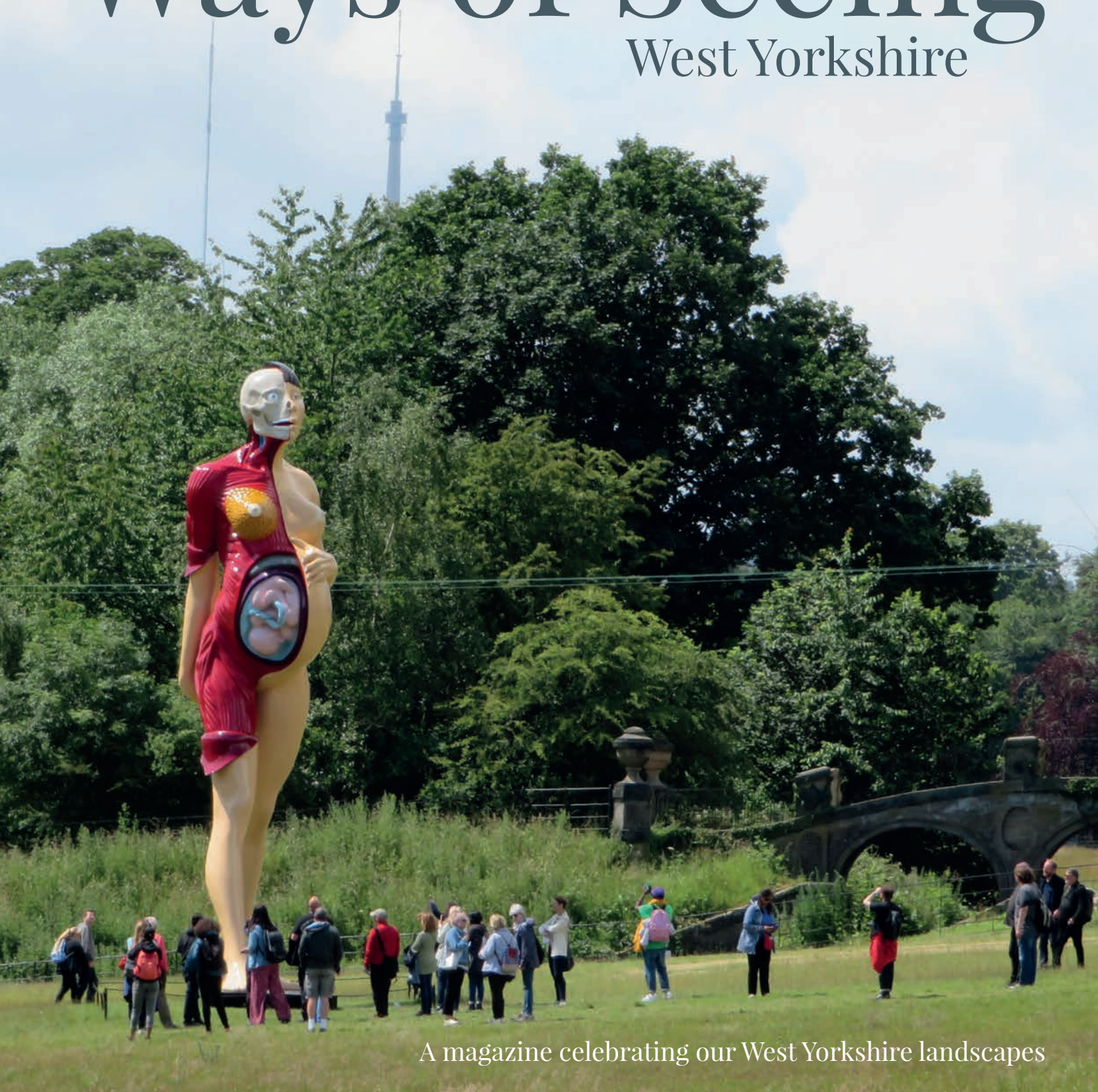
Issue #1

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Ways of Seeing

West Yorkshire



A magazine celebrating our West Yorkshire landscapes

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Contents

| Pages | |
|---------|---|
| 2 - 3 | <u>Acknowledgements Contents</u> |
| 4 - 5 | <u>Editorial</u> |
| 6 - 9 | <u>Light, Landforms & Essences Andy Leader</u> |
| 10 - 12 | <u>Digging In the Dirt Rachael Osguthorpe</u> |
| 14 - 19 | <u>Henry Hardcastle of Shibden Hall Dexter Hughes</u> |
| 20 - 22 | <u>Taking the Plunge Alistair Shutt</u> |
| 24 - 27 | <u>Working in the Landscape Kate Oliver</u> |
| 28 - 31 | <u>Proper-sized Wheels Matt Johnson</u> |
| 32 - 35 | <u>Arcadian Rhythms Andrew Wood</u> |

Editorial

What do earthworms, poppies, sausages, flippers, cameras and T.V. dramas have in common? Aside from sounding like a bad joke, they all provide unique insights into ways of seeing the West Yorkshire countryside.

In this issue we travel from Holmfirth to Wetherby discovering that as well as the big picture, the tiniest details of the landscape can provide focus and inspiration. By dawdling, pausing and breathing in time with their surroundings, our contributors connect with the land.

One person's way of seeing the landscape can overlap with another's - research, agriculture, horizons and moments can co-exist. I have enjoyed reading about the creation of memories and a sense of belonging, and the ways in which understanding the land can help us plan for a sustainable future. Past and future, large and small, building layers in the landscape. I was pleased to read that West Yorkshire can capture hearts and minds, and that you don't have to be born here to call it home.

Most of the voices we hear in this issue are those of white males, but I hope reading these stories will inspire new voices to get in touch and share their experiences. We would love to hear from you, and build a better picture of the countryside around us.

Marion Temple
(Trustee | CPRE West Yorkshire)

Light, Landforms & Essences

by Andy Leader

Andy Leader lives in Holmfirth and runs landscape photography workshops in the Holme Valley.

West Yorkshire was not my home. I came here almost 30 years ago from the purple moors and crumbling clay cliffs of Cleveland, North Yorkshire. I left behind a childhood of dens in the woods, Dutch barns full of warm hay, brambling Septembers and what felt like a part of me. I was so connected to that landscape, that place and that time, that I could not envisage ever replacing such a link. I was lost, like a hefted ewe put on the other side of the hill.

Back then, my relationship with the landscape felt like it was in intensive care, but through outdoor work and spending my spare time walking in West Yorkshire, a spark remained long enough to be reignited when, via Bradford and Leeds, we settled in Holmfirth.

“Adding a camera to your walking boots gives a deeper perspective to walking.”



I've come to know this valley like the back of my hand through walking and photography, but it was during the roundabout dawdles with our young family where my relationship with West Yorkshire began. Time spent carrying children or walking with toddlers is disproportionate to the total distance covered but in between the frequent sweet stops, nappy changes and tantrums, this time created a new connection and appreciation of the surrounding landscape.

Decades later this new connection is as rich and valued as my original childhood one. The unique mix of

West Yorkshires hills, valleys and gritty old mill towns is something to be savoured with every step.

Adding a camera to your walking boots gives a deeper perspective to walking. You find yourself slowing down to watch, study details, wait and maybe take a photo or perhaps decide to revisit another day or time of year when the light and scene will be more what you are looking for. It tunes you into the seasons, weather patterns, light, landforms and the very essence of a place.

I took a camera walking group up out of Holmfirth recently in some



debatable weather, unsure if we'd complete the walk. We looked down on the town from above.

Its wet streets shone in low evening light as dark clouds rolled in. Bright bursts of sun drifted amongst the hills in a developing monochrome scene. My group stood in the shelter of a large Sycamore mesmerised by the magic of light and landscape. "*It is always worth going out*" I said to them.

The Holme Valley has over 200 public paths which give access to this ever changing world and from Holmfirth to Ilkley the unique West Yorkshire

countryside can be accessed and discovered in this way.

The beauty and character of West Yorkshire's rolling landscape is never far away. I've walked every path here in the Holme Valley accompanied by camera and dogs. I have experienced brief winter days when the sun can't melt a night's frost, fallen asleep on the moors and woken to a passing Mountain Hare, watched Short Eared owls watch me, turned back in wind and rain, smelt bluebells in greening woods and felt sad at the purple heather marking another passing summer.



Often the best parts of a walk are when you stop for a moment, where there's time to soak in surroundings. Being a photographer there's always a justification for hanging around at some viewpoint in the middle of nowhere waiting for the sun to catch a bit of wall or a cloud to come across some to blue sky. These are moments when you can really see and appreciate the detail and human interaction in shaping this landscape.

There are easy short walks up out of Holmfirth which provide stunning views in return for a very modest effort. We are now a "Walkers Are Welcome" town too and a group of

volunteers provide guided walks, routes and a warm welcome.

Holmfirth Library is the hub of our Walkers Are Welcome group and now has a dedicated walking room full of maps, routes and information.

holmfirhhikes@gmail.com
www.madeinholmfirth.co.uk




Digging in the Dirt

By Rachael Osguthorpe

“Nobody and nothing can be compared with earthworms in their positive influence on the whole living Nature. They create soil and everything that lives in it.” (Charles Darwin)

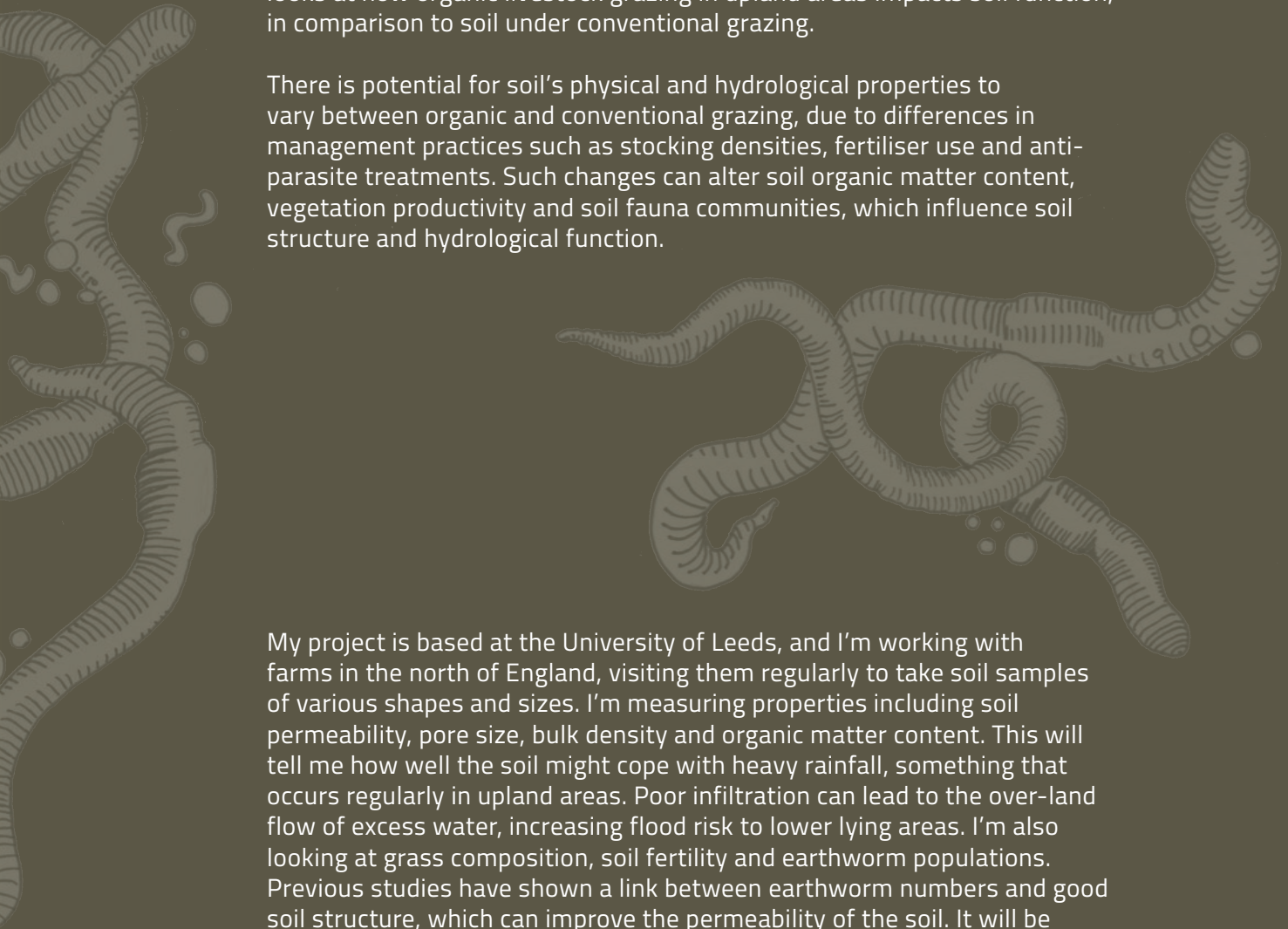
West Yorkshire’s universities are at the forefront of research on a wide range of topics that relate to how we see our countryside, including climate change, land management, tranquillity, community engagement and more. Although their research may be national or international, it’s important that we can bring this amazing body of knowledge to bear on our local work.

In *Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire* we’ll be featuring some of the people pursuing this research, and first up is Rachael Osguthorpe, a PhD student at the University of Leeds, investigating upland soils under different farming practices. Her perspective on the landscape is much more close-up than most of us have the chance for, and it’s one of the most pertinent topics for the future of our countryside.

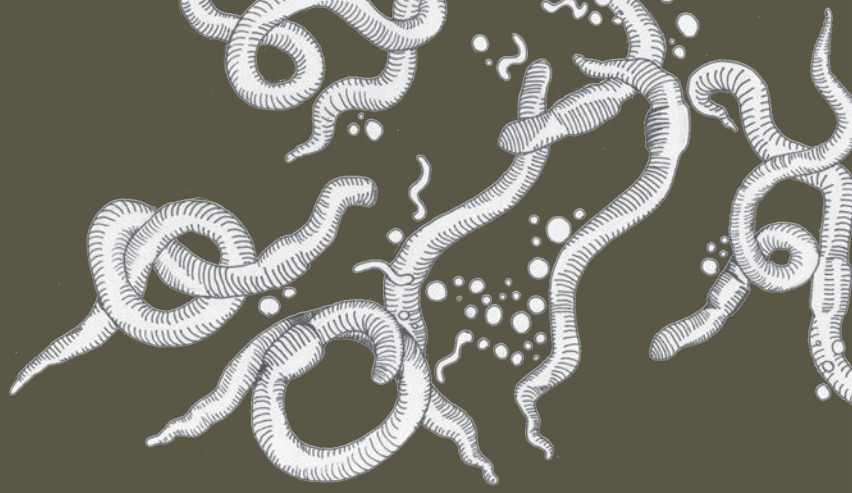


The UK's upland soils play a critical role in supplying and filtering water and mitigating flood risk to urban areas, so it's crucial we understand how different agricultural practices in our uplands affect the soil's ability to secure our water supplies and reduce flood vulnerability. My PhD research looks at how organic livestock grazing in upland areas impacts soil function, in comparison to soil under conventional grazing.

There is potential for soil's physical and hydrological properties to vary between organic and conventional grazing, due to differences in management practices such as stocking densities, fertiliser use and anti-parasite treatments. Such changes can alter soil organic matter content, vegetation productivity and soil fauna communities, which influence soil structure and hydrological function.



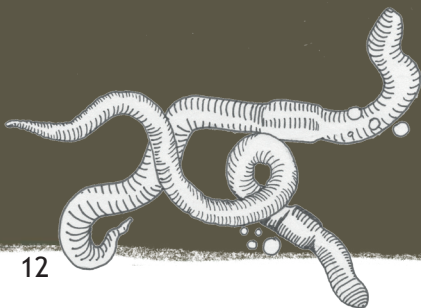
My project is based at the University of Leeds, and I'm working with farms in the north of England, visiting them regularly to take soil samples of various shapes and sizes. I'm measuring properties including soil permeability, pore size, bulk density and organic matter content. This will tell me how well the soil might cope with heavy rainfall, something that occurs regularly in upland areas. Poor infiltration can lead to the over-land flow of excess water, increasing flood risk to lower lying areas. I'm also looking at grass composition, soil fertility and earthworm populations. Previous studies have shown a link between earthworm numbers and good soil structure, which can improve the permeability of the soil. It will be interesting then to see if and how these results correlate, and whether or not it differs between the two management systems.




Soil science is closely tied to natural flood management research, a topic which has recently gained momentum, as climate change brings what appears to be an increase in extreme rainfall events. These events can put extra pressure on upland soils, so there is a need to understand how these soils might respond to changes in climate. Prolonged periods of dryness, such as the one we experienced in 2018, can also be stressful for upland ecosystems that are otherwise accustomed to a much higher amount of rainfall. This can potentially worsen soil erosion and the release of stored carbon, which is problematic given the ever-rising atmospheric CO₂ levels.

I'm hoping that the project's research findings can help to determine ways in which we can enable grazing management in upland areas to continue and thrive, while at the same time reducing dependence on, for example, energy-costly manufactured fertilizers and veterinary treatments, whilst protecting valuable soil functions. I also think it's extremely important that, in order to protect our uplands, we need to continue to work alongside and help farmers, who are already under pressure, as agricultural productivity and economic results are much lower than the national average in these areas.

The good news is that there has been a move towards a more integrated and sustainable approach to upland farming in recent years, and the majority of upland farmers I have spoken with are keen to reduce their environmental impact and increase the sustainability of their farming practices. The trick is to find a way to continue farming in equilibrium with the environment, and that sure isn't easy.





If *you* have a story to tell about the West Yorkshire countryside and would like to feature in a future issue of Ways of Seeing magazine, send us your story via our website.

Henry Hardcastle of Shibden Hall

by Dexter Hughes

Sally Wainwright has made several successful TV dramas set in West Yorkshire, including 'Last Tango in Halifax' and 'Happy Valley'. Her latest creation, 'Gentleman Jack' is about Anne Lister of Shibden Hall.

At a CPRE event at Shibden Hall two years ago, we learned something of Anne Lister's story. It's exciting to see her brought to life through TV drama, and to see how Shibden and other locations around West Yorkshire have been used for filming.

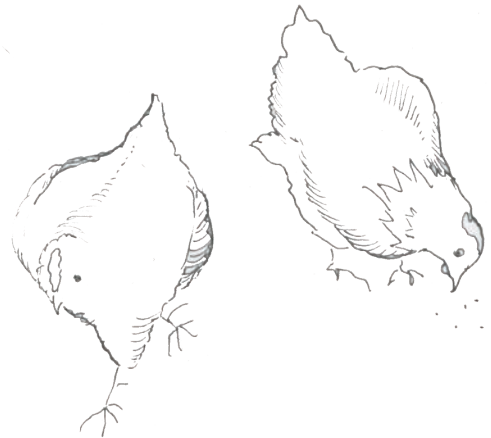
Anne Lister was a remarkable local character, involved in farming, mining, canals and railways, at a time when women were rarely so influential. It's fair to say that she made a big impression both on the physical landscape of the area, through her business activities, and on the cultural landscape as a female entrepreneur. She has earned her place in history for her feminism and for challenging the patriarchal society of the 18th century.

Dexter Hughes is the young actor who plays Henry Hardcastle in 'Gentleman Jack', securing the role with the help of Articulate, a local drama school. Dexter's dad, James, says they were blown away by the professionalism of the production team and the actors. We asked Dexter to tell us about his experience.





"... the cottage the
Hardcastles moved into
was in Ilkley - you could
see for miles."



I started acting when my dad suggested for me to join an acting club. I started going to Articulate in my village. I was in three adverts before 'Gentleman Jack'. During the audition, I nearly gave up, but Stacey (my agent) said that I looked good and I carried on doing it. And I got the part, so I was pretty relieved!

My character's name is Henry, the eldest child of William Hardcastle. In the story, my family were moving to Shibden, where an accident happened and I was flung off the carriage. Anne Lister was searching for the person responsible for the crash. She thought it was somebody powerful with lots of money, who didn't stop to help after the accident. I have my leg amputated after the crash and I don't say anything until Anne Lister comes to check on me. The first thing I say to her is, "Are you a man?", which I think is a bit offensive.



On the first day, I got up really early and we drove to the place. (Here's a secret: They put tiny pink arrows facing the direction to the place to help the cast & crew drive). I noticed Suranne's [Jones, who plays Anne Lister] caravan was three times as big as mine. After getting dressed into my outfit and being checked by the makeup lady a driver came to collect me and take me to where the filming happened. It was down a really windy little track near a valley.

When we got there, there were about 25-30 crew on set all doing different things. I met my stunt double who was called Rachelle and it was funny seeing a lady dressed in an identical outfit to me. I got onto the carriage and they strapped me to a chair so I wouldn't fall off. They gave me my chicken, Sia, who was very tame. Sia was really sensible and it was my favourite part of filming. I was told to stroke it for a while, then when the cart came speeding towards me I had to shout to the driver to warn him. We ran through it about ten times. In-between the cuts, we had to wait around a lot while they reset the scene.



My dad said I've been to Shibden Park lots when I was younger, but I don't really remember what it looked like. I had a scene when I was carried through the stables after the accident. I noticed it's actually a lot older than I thought it was. Filming was done in lots of different parts of Yorkshire. My accident was filmed in Halifax near the ski centre, some scenes were in Shibden Hall and the cottage the Hardcastles moved into was in Ilkley – you could see for miles.

"I like the countryside here because it's very peaceful."

I did learn a bit about what life was like in Anne Lister's time. I noticed there were different ways to heal someone – like how they cut my leg off instead of putting me to sleep and giving me some sort of robotic leg. They used horses for a lot of things, like carriages and riding them normally. I also had to wear trousers without a zip in!

I like the countryside here because it's very peaceful. I always complain when my parents say we're going to the park or for a walk, (I'd rather be wasting time on Xbox) but when I'm there, I love the nature and when we go there, we always see squirrels (my favourite animals).

Another view of Shibden has been published on the Ways of Seeing pages of the [CPRE West Yorkshire website](#).



Taking the Plunge

by Alistair Shutt

If you're into a particular outdoor sport, then you see the landscape with an eye for where you can practise your activity. Alistair Shutt is a Business Strategist originally from Sheffield but now living in south London with his wife and two young children. A recent convert to wild swimming, Alistair tells us here about a trip to Gaddings Dam, near Todmorden.

Gaddings Dam, pictured on a sunnier day, on the path to Stoodley Pike, near Todmorden



Leaving behind the bustle of life in Todmorden, on the border of Yorkshire & Lancashire, the T6 bus takes a circular route following the Rochdale Canal. As it loops back toward the Pennines I feel a sense of home. This “backbone of England” stretches north to the Yorkshire Dales and south to the Peak District, where I grew up.

I arrive 15 minutes later, at the Shepherds Rest Inn, and take a path just up from Lumbutts Village, the start of an easy 3 mile hike toward Stoodley Pike. Following footpath signs and the towering hilltop monument, I run to the top of the moor. Gaddings Dam is right where I had left it, but looks less inviting today than on prior visits with friends & family. I hesitate before stepping down to the disused reservoir, sheltering from the biting wind coming across the exposed hills.

The grim blanket of fog blocking the view unnerves me a little, but this is no time to chicken out. I submerge my shoes, then shorts and launch the rest of my body in to the clear cold water. The fog enhances the wildness and thrill of the swim, but I keep the dam walls in sight so that I do not get disorientated, and I emerge at the sandy landing considered the highest beach in England. It feels like the top of the world.

My elation abates as I continue my swim and see two young women approaching for a swim of their own, complete with flippers. The location isn't quite as I wild as I thought.





In my youth, I trained in the City of Sheffield squad, but got bored of lane swimming. It has taken me almost twenty years to discover swimming again, helped by having children who are always eager to get in the water.

After a particularly fun day last summer in the stunning open pools and wild waters of the Ardèche valley in France - jumping from rocks and floating down the river Chassezac with our 5 year olds - a friend and I made a pact to join the South London Swim Club. This is based at the enormous unheated 91m Tooting Bec Lido near our homes.

At first, I considered buying a wetsuit. “Naah, you don’t need one,” a seasoned club member said. “The dolphins will go inside soon” nodding at the bobbing neoprene-clad bodies I now know to be mostly triathletes “...The rest of us stay on in the winter for the cold water benefits.” I had no idea what she was talking about but was soon hooked on the cold water - the boost to my mental and physical wellbeing from an energizing daily plunge is amazing.

Since then I have been swimming off the West Coast of Scotland in October, competed in the January UK Cold Water Swimming Championships, and taken a freezing plunge in Loch Morlich in February. I have even joined “[The Swimmer](#)”, a half-marathon swim-run across London. I see the possibilities to swim wild wherever I go, all year round.

Gaddings Dam was a real highlight, and its history is fascinating. It was built to supply water to the Rochdale Canal. In the early 2000’s it was purchased by the not-for-profit [Gaddings Dam Group](#) to preserve it “as a heritage site and amenity for the public.” You can find them at the [Todmorden Agricultural Show](#).

Wild Swimming is fantastic. You just need to entertain the idea that it could be desirable to swim in cold water, the confidence to attempt it, and a knowledge of the locations to do it safely. [Swim England](#) aims to make an impact here. It recently reported astonishing rises in regular open water swimming and engagement with their free advice service, Just Swim.

From my perspective there is still much work to do to raise the profile of outdoor swimming as a potential activity, leveraging the power of communities to socialise and extend outdoor swimming experiences. I would love there to be a support network to help people give it a go. One possibility is the ‘[NOWCA Swim](#)’ programme, modelled on Parkrun. Through smart organisation and a nationwide network of volunteers the Parkrun scheme has made running more accessible. I have high hopes that the same can be done for wild swimming, persuading more people to voluntarily launch themselves into reservoirs, wetsuits and flippers or not.



Photo: Janice Hoare, Wakefield

Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire

CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, protect and enhance the places you care about.

Across West Yorkshire, we're running a project to find out about people's favourite places and what they value about them. We'd like you to tell us where your favourite place is and what it means to you, and to upload a photo of it if you have one.

We'll add your favourite place to our map and our website, celebrating what's great about West Yorkshire's countryside.

Read about the Ways of Seeing project on our website and tell us about your favourite place at:

www.cprewestyorkshire.org.uk/your-favourite-place/

or get there by scanning the QR code above.



Working in the Landscape

by Kate Oliver

Michael and Kate Oliver live and work in Ilkley. In 2017, they started their natural sausage company, Primal Cut. We caught up with Kate to find out a bit more about keeping food real in West Yorkshire.

How did you become sausage makers?

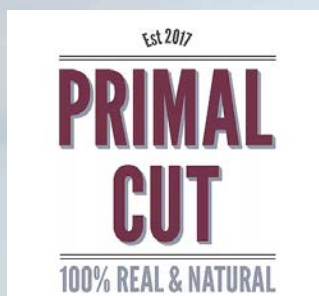
Our family has a mix of dietary requirements. We had been looking for an 'all natural, free-from' sausage product on the market for some time so that we could sit down together and share a meal that suited all of us. We wanted something that was naturally tasty, that could meet simple standards for a healthy lifestyle and that was suited to our dietary requirements. When we couldn't find the right thing, we decided to find a solution.

Our search for the perfect product led Michael to research the art of sausage making. That way, we could be sure it was just right. With the guidance of a fantastic mentor, Alex Chambers, we learnt our trade and began to produce a wheat-free, sugar-free, low-carb sausage that was free from artificial preservatives. In 2017, we launched Primal Cut and started

to sell our sausages at markets around Yorkshire, hoping that people would appreciate the same things that we did in our product – simple and naturally tasty sausages.

What makes your sausages different?

The American healthy eating programme, [WHOLE30](#), has approved the ingredients in our sausages. Just last May our produce was approved by [Coeliac UK](#) as suitable for people with a gluten intolerance, and we can now have a licence to use the cross grain symbol on all of our products. Since we started back in 2017, our range has grown to include bacon and cured meats, also nitrite and sugar free. We have finally found 100% biodegradable trays to package our sausages. Simple, honest real food made from free-range pork and locally sourced ingredients.



Michael and Kate Oliver

Our customers value and appreciate what we are making. We are proud that customers including coeliacs, diabetics, and those on whole food, low carb, weight training or weight loss diets can sit down and share a meal - now that has to be worth something!

How important is sourcing local ingredients for you?

Being connected to our local landscape is important for our business. Local sourcing is important to us as we align to slow food principles for our core raw ingredients. We only use certified free-range pigs although genuine 100% free-range Yorkshire pork is scarce and sadly only a small number of farms are

rearing to these standards. There is a growing consumer awareness about the food chain, that will foster a move away from supermarkets and towards local suppliers and producers we can get to know, like and trust. This connection to our landscape and our food is important for the future of our produce and farming landscape.

Farmers' Markets are a great place to start connecting with food suppliers based in the countryside around you. For producers, farmers' markets provide the opportunity to get direct feedback from their customers, and find out what they are looking for.

What does the future hold for you?

We have had a lot of interest from specialist outlets who support local producers and hope that our deli meats will soon be available in restaurants and hotels across Yorkshire – although we deliver all over the UK – from Truro to Aberdeen.

We believe that a sustainable future is about getting a good balance and better understanding of our food. We need to eat meat less often so that we can afford to eat better quality, free-range meat. We hope that our business can be part of the solution, and keeping connected to our local countryside is an important part of that.

What is your favourite place in West Yorkshire?

Our favourite place in West Yorkshire is Ilkley. It has a fantastic Roman heritage and those Romans taught us Brits how to make sausages. We even named our delicious Prosciutto d' Olicana after the Roman name for Ilkley!

You can find Michael and Kate at Farmers' Markets across Yorkshire, and can find out more about them, their philosophy and browse their online shop at www.primalcut.co.uk





Recipe

Kate has provided us with a recipe for a delicious easy tea perfect for the family. It takes about 30 minutes to cook and serves 4.

Ingredients

3 carrots chopped into chunks
3 red onions cut into wedges
2-3 parsnips chopped into chunks
2 tbsp Olive Oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 pack of Primal Cut Yorkshire or Bratwurst Sausages

For the Sauce and Topping

1 heaped tbsp wholegrain mustard
3 tbsp clear honey (or replace the honey with coconut aminos about 1-2 tsp)
Finely grated zest and juice of 1 orange
10-12 sage leaves
1 ball of mozzarella, torn into pieces

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/fan 180°C/gas 6.
2. Place the onions, carrots and parsnips in an ovenproof dish.
3. Drizzle with oil, season and toss everything together until coated. Spread out in the tin.
4. Pop into the oven and roast for 10 minutes then add the sausages to the dish and bake for a further 10 minutes.

For the sauce

1. Mix together the mustard, honey (or coconut aminos), orange juice and zest.
2. After 10 minutes pour the sauce over the sausages, then scatter the sage leaves and pieces of mozzarella over.
3. Place everything back in the oven for 10 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven and serve with sauteed green vegetables for a healthy meal.



Proper-sized Wheels

by Matt Johnson

Matt Johnson is an scientist living in Wetherby with his wife, two children and their dog. Here he tells us what draws him to the countryside around his home, and reflects on the challenges of a place that is growing fast.

I moved my family to Wetherby in 2013 from Ely in Cambridgeshire. Ostensibly, this was for work, but the temptation to move back to Yorkshire had always been there. Although the sunsets around Ely Cathedral could be spectacular, I never quite got over the feeling there that the sky was falling in, being able to see the horizon in every direction. It lacked the Sheffield hills I'd grown up with.

Wetherby is nestled in the so-called Golden Triangle of Yorkshire. The optimist in me hopes that this name is a reflection of the wonderful countryside, though more likely it is a term coined by estate agents. Wetherby is a stone's throw from Yorks, Harrogate and Leeds, but we also have the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors nearby, and it's only a short drive to the coast, the Lakes or the Peaks. Spoilt for choice! However, it's the amenities on our doorstep that make the most impact on our quality of life.

“... it's the amenities on our doorstep that make the most impact on our quality of life.”



I have lived in Wetherby for a few years now and already see the changes on a town that has pressures to grow. The building growth is needed to both support the demand of people wanting to move to the area, attracted by all the things that attracted me, and the needs of the existing population as families grow, children move out or retirees downsize. That means that there are several large planning applications in process for new estates surrounding the town.

100 yards from my front door is an entrance to National Cycle Network Route 67. For me, this is a local section called the Harland Way that runs on and around the old railway beds left by Dr Beeching. You can cycle north-west to the village of Spofforth with its ruined 14th-century fortified Manor House, or you can turn south-west, skirt through the centre of Wetherby and out onto the fields. From there, it's onwards past the racecourse and to Thorp Arch and Boston Spa. This path is where my children learnt to ride a bike, it's where I enjoy early morning walks with my dog and it's my occasional cycle route to work when I convince myself to get out of bed thirty minutes earlier.

My cycle ride to Spofforth, under old stone bridges or the protective arches of trees is already different to the first ride I made when we moved here. I can see the first completed phase of the new estate and the groundworks for phase two instead of the yellow rape fields that had been there. This estate is dominated by large three, four and five bedroom houses suffering from the modern symptom of small gardens and not enough parking. It's aimed at people like me who are moving a family to the area and commuting into Leeds or York for work and the area needs that. It's not providing affordable homes for the twenty-somethings born in Wetherby who are looking to fly the nest. And neither are the other planning applications. Discussions on social media highlight serious local concerns about the pressure on doctors and schools from these potential new estates. An often unconsidered factor is the impact on parking in town; these new estates are at least half an hour's walk from amenities, and the temptation to hop in the car to go into town will be strong.

My eldest child has just made the migration from a kids' bike to one with proper-sized wheels, and we recently went out on our first long ride along the Harland Way. We headed through town and out past the race course. It's a beautiful time of year and the fields are verdant. In places, the cycle track is narrowed by the encroaching and rampant vegetation and it's fun watching him dodge the nettles. He has an eight-year-old's lack of cynicism that still surprises me. Half-way into the ride, we stop to look at a view towards a village called Walton. The field has got wheat growing and has poppies clustered around the edge. The spire of the local church sits out above the field and the sun is shining. After telling me about poppies and segueing into a brief history of World War I, my son turns to me and says, "Dad, aren't we lucky to be able to get on our bikes and cycle to a place as beautiful as this?"

The countryside isn't sacrosanct for me and I'm more than prepared to sacrifice some fields and a view to give the town the growth it needs. But if we have to give it up, we should make sure it delivers for all the needs of people and also delivers the growth in amenities to support the population. What would make the biggest difference for me in terms of amenities? It's probably a rail connection in Wetherby to take us quickly to Leeds and York. Would I trade the Harland Way for that? I absolutely would not.



Arcadian Rhythms

by Andrew Wood

Andrew Wood is a writer, as well as being CPRE's Planning Consultant. He lives and works in Yorkshire and is an advocate for sustainable futures.

The Yorkshire Sculpture International Festival is on until 29th September, based at various venues in Leeds and Wakefield. Art, and sculpture in particular, has become synonymous with West Yorkshire over several decades – an impressive cultural renaissance – and this is the UK's largest festival dedicated to sculpture.

Considering the vast range of home-grown artists in West Yorkshire, and the many places you can experience it, it may seem lazy to focus our first artistic feature on a famous artist and an iconic venue. But for many people, especially children on school trips, Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is probably one of the most important places for opening up new ways of seeing West Yorkshire and its countryside. And I, for one, had never seen Damien Hirst's work up close until I visited YSP at the beginning of July.

The nature writer Richard Mabey said, after Damien Hirst's early successes with a pickled cow, that Hirst might be better appreciated for his commentary on our treatment of the natural world than simply asking whether dead organisms taken out of context could be regarded as art. *"And if it stirs up discussion and feelings – even of revulsion or rage – doesn't that, by definition, make it art?"* asks Mabey (BBC Wildlife, 2007). Hirst's current YSP exhibition involves four pieces: 'The Virgin Mother', a huge woman shown in cross-section to reveal a foetus within her womb; 'Charity', based on a 1970s Scope collection box; 'Myth', a half-skinned unicorn showing the visceral reality of a horse within the mythical creature; and 'The Hat Makes the Man' which, despite its description, speaks to me of a trio of male tap dancers.





Personally, I see this as old-school landscape art, albeit with a challenge to the definition of picturesque. The major pieces are placed in framed vistas in the well-mannered parkland. The sectioned woman interacts – perhaps more comfortably than Hirst envisaged – with the neo-classical footbridge over the cascading weir. The charity collection box – an apologetic young girl with a leg brace – stands alongside the path as might a charity fundraising agent these days, but with none of the enforced bonhomie.

These objects are clearly intended to be incongruous in this setting, and therefore to make them grotesque, yet somehow they appear quite at ease. Perhaps this comes about because Bretton Country Park (home of YSP) is such an easy-going landscape, it can take the stress out of anything. Perhaps it is a credit to YSP's success in creating a venue where, it seems, anything goes. Overhearing people as they observe these works, though, does suggest they're not sure how to react. They tend to pause in contemplation for a few moments, and then gradually their conversation returns to their own lives – a niece who 'loves this kind of thing' or an older relative awaiting a hip replacement. They seem more relaxed when trying to determine the gender of the passing sheep. *"I thought they were its b***s."* *"No, they're t**s you idiot!"*

In any case, Hirst's work here has faced head-on the assumption that the landscape is a gentle place. I think he is saying that nature is simultaneously playful and brutal, and that humans consider themselves exempt from nature at their peril. There can be few more important messages than this. Being connected to nature is crucial to our mental and physical wellbeing. If you're looking for that connection then, for all YSP's calm beauty and its huge popularity for a day trip, there are few better places than here to start.

www.andrewthewood.com





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](#).

Keep an eye out for the Autumn 2019 issue of *Ways of Seeing*. Amongst other things, we'll be looking at West Yorkshire from the water, seeing how we light the countryside and sharing views from a local artist.



