

# VOICE OF THE MOORS

NYMA - PROTECTING THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS  
FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS



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Cover: Winter in Great Fryupdale © Mel Ullswater

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#### Voice of the Moors Editor

Janet Cochrane  
Please email articles/letters/photos to:  
[editor@nyma.org.uk](mailto:editor@nyma.org.uk) - 07570 112010

#### Design

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# CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

## COVID-19

The news that effective vaccines for Covid-19 have been developed and trialled by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Oxford University-AstraZeneca - and cleared for roll-out across the UK - is like a bright light at the end of a dark tunnel. What follows is the mammoth task of organising the vaccination of millions of people. Nevertheless, there is now a hope that 2021 will see a way of bringing to an end the spread of this deadly virus which has claimed over 50,000 lives in Britain alone.

The coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and social restrictions have resulted in an upsurge of people finding a new affinity with the great outdoors. It has resulted in significant new interest in the value of open spaces and the countryside and a positive look towards a greener future. This is now mentioned in connection with forthcoming legislation as part of Covid-19 recovery.

## LEAVING THE EU

By the end of this year we will know whether a new agreement on UK-EU relations has been reached and ratified. The final European Parliamentary Session of the year on the 17<sup>th</sup> December is the last opportunity to give consent to any UK-EU agreement.

In order to accommodate the change in our relationship with Europe two very important pieces of legislation which affect the environment are needed. These are the Agriculture Act 2020 which was given Royal Assent on November 11<sup>th</sup>, and the Environment Bill, first introduced to Parliament in October 2019.

## THE AGRICULTURE ACT

The Agriculture Act will be a framework which provides the government with the powers to deliver future agricultural policies. This includes a new model of farm support to replace the basic payment scheme which is delivered at present under the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Beginning next year farmers will have a seven-year transition period to adapt to the new agricultural system.

Described as a cornerstone of the government's new agricultural policy is the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM) which links farming to the objectives of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Under this scheme farmers and land managers will be paid for delivering environmental benefits based on the principle of "public money for public benefit". Such benefits include clean air, clean and plentiful water, thriving plants and wildlife, protection from environmental hazards, beauty, heritage, engagement with the environment, and adaptation to climate change. Tests and trials on various pilot schemes have begun and will continue until 2024 when the ELM policy is rolled out.

## THE ENVIRONMENT BILL

The second piece of legislation is at a much earlier stage. This is the Environment Bill which was re-introduced at the beginning

of this year; its progress was halted in March because of Covid-19 in March and remained suspended until October. This delay means it has only just reached the committee stage in the House of Commons. The Environment Bill is the principal means by which the vision expressed in the Government's 2018 policy paper 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' will be delivered. One of the things it incorporates is "support for a post Covid-19 greener and more resilient future". It is proposed to set legally binding targets to deliver long-term environmental improvements. A public consultation is expected in early 2022 to examine the targets, which are at an early stage of development. The implementation of the bill has a long way to go.

### PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Many of the UK's environmental laws are based on European laws. The EU environmental law framework is renowned as one of the strongest in the world, so many see it as essential that there is no weakening of this in the transition to UK law. There has rightly been a call for the Environment Bill to provide a non-regression clause that ensures that environmental protection and accountability remain as strong as that provided by EU environment law.

In order to replace the safeguards for the environment which presently come under EU laws, the Environment Bill makes provision for establishing the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), a non-departmental public body described by DEFRA as a "powerful new independent regulator that will hold the government to account including through the courts if necessary". There has been criticism that the OEP will not be as independent as it should be, and that as a regulator it will not have the same effectiveness as the EU system which has recourse to the European Court of Justice in the event of failure by member states to implement environmental law. Another issue is that because of delays in the passage of the bill it means that there will be no established regulator for some time after the transition period ends in December.

### NATURE RECOVERY NETWORK AND GREEN JOBS

In October the government published details of a new initiative aimed at restoring wildlife habitats and improving biodiversity. They announced that: "Defra and Natural England are bringing together partners, legislation and funding to create the Nature Recovery Network (NRN). Together, we will deliver the Network by restoring and enhancing England's wildlife-rich places." Led by Natural England, this programme of action will, it is hoped, meet the challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change over the next 20 years by encouraging businesses, landowners and local communities to work together to restore and protect habitats, species and landscapes.

In their foreword to the policy paper on the partnership programme, Tony Juniper (Chair of Natural England) and Marian Spain (Chief Executive) stated: "if there is one thing we have learned in the last 12 months it is the extent to which our natural world is fundamental to our society. Not only is it at the very heart of public health – whether we consider the dangers of disease



Mixed farming and moorland habitats in Danby Dale and under snow in Bilsdale

*attached to the wildlife trade or the benefits of exercising in green space – but it also provides a host of other public goods. These public goods include flood risk management, carbon capture, healthy soils, crop pollination, natural beauty and thriving wildlife. Our prosperity and wellbeing are dependent upon our natural environment".*

Emma Marsh, Director of RSPB England, one of the partners of the Nature Recovery Network, commented: "This is a once in a generation opportunity to make a step-change in how we protect nature in England. The public wants this. The experience, skills, and ambition are there. We all stand ready to play our part to level up and deliver a wildlife-rich country for the benefit of all. Together, we can leave the natural world in a better condition than we inherited."

In mid-November, we welcomed the Government's further announcement of an £80 million fund to kick-start the green recovery programme, including restoring biodiverse habitat and starting the process of creating new national parks and AONBs. Part of the initiative is to create 'green jobs' such as tree-planting, restoring damaged habitats, and environmental education.

Deeds do not always follow words, but we sincerely hope that the result of these grand ambitions will be to lift heads out of mobile phones to look around and absorb the natural beauty and wildlife which surrounds us and help to keep it safe for future generations.

Have a happy and peaceful Christmas!

**TOM CHADWICK**

# THE NORTH YORK MOORS NATIONAL PARK WELCOMES A NEW CEO

**U**PON arriving at the Authority's offices in Helmsley one of the first things to literally land on my desk was the most recent copy of the Voice of the Moors. So it is with great delight that I pen this article as the new Chief Executive of the National Park Authority.

By way of introduction I grew up in Sheffield and have fond memories of visiting the National Park as a child. A lifelong love of our natural landscapes as well as the calling back to Yorkshire has brought me from my previous career in the farming industry to this role.

In my first few weeks I've been struck by the shared devotion that exists between our staff and organisations like NYMA to preserving the North York Moors as a special place, and I'm very keen to maintain the close relationship that exists between the Authority and friends of the Moors.

This is a time of great challenge for all of us. As well as the personal and emotional stresses caused by the pandemic, there are great uncertainties as we face a challenging economic outlook and phenomenal pressures on public finances. National Parks are being called on to do more across a range of areas - from nature recovery to climate



Tom Hind, CEO of the North York Moors National Park Authority

change. Nonetheless, the role of our National Parks in providing opportunities for escapism, well-being and enjoyment has never been more important, especially to those communities and individuals who aren't blessed with the ability to step out of their front door into some amazing countryside.

Our Authority has a fantastic track record in working with others to achieve more for our National Park. In the last few weeks we've collaborated with North Yorkshire County Council and Yorkshire Water to gain possibly our last EU funding to deliver habitat restoration and other work on the

Rye and Esk rivers under the Blue Corridors project. We've also been working with our close friends in the Yorkshire Dales to obtain Dark Skies status - hopefully we will know the result of our application by the time you read this article.

Finally, over the next year we will be debating the next Management Plan for the North York Moors. This important piece of work is about defining a shared vision for the National Park and identifying the actions we and key stakeholders will undertake to achieve this. I look forward to your input and support in drawing up this vital document.

**TOM HIND**

Photo © Polly A Baldwin

## THE NYMA CONSERVATION AWARD

**I**T'S ALWAYS good to do things for others, whether individuals, communities or the environment. At NYMA we are extremely fortunate that our charity is managed by volunteers, meaning our financial resources can be devoted to fulfilling our charitable purposes.

As stated in our Constitution, NYMA's overall objective is to conserve and enhance the characteristic beauty of the landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the North York Moors. We aim to achieve this by:

- Bringing together people and organisations sharing a love of and concern for the North York Moors.
- Fostering greater understanding and appreciation of the culture, biodiversity, scenery and economic and social concerns of the area and providing a forum for balanced discussion of these issues.

- Supporting research or pilot schemes expected to further the overall objective of NYMA and disseminate the results or outcomes.
- Liaising with the North York Moors National Park Authority and other stakeholders.

One way of fulfilling our aims is through awarding an annual grant for research or practical conservation work, covering both natural and cultural heritage. Past recipients have been individuals and formal or informal community groups, and in alternate years the grant has been supplemented by funding from the National Park Authority.

The NYMA Council has now decided to increase the sum awarded each year and form a 'rolling award' programme. This means that interested parties can apply at any time for as little as £100 right up to £2,000. We know that in some cases

very small grants can be hugely beneficial, while in other cases more funding is needed to purchase equipment or undertake more major tasks. Sometimes, the award acts as recognition of excellent work already carried out.

We would like all readers of 'Voice of the Moors' to bear this in mind, so that if you are thinking of a project yourself or hear of work that others are doing, please consider applying or let others know about the scheme. More information about the award and how to apply and a list of past winners can be found at <https://www.nyma.org.uk/awards/>.



# MAGICAL MOORS MOMENTS NUMBER 4



**Hambleton Hill: Fog banked up in the Vale of York resembles the flow of the ice-sheet**



**Rievaulx Abbey and village, with Ionic Temple top right**



**Scugdale: a line of dots on the moor slopes (near left) define the locations of old jet-workings**

**M**Y FRIEND 'Pilot Pete', as I nicknamed him, had access to a plane: a neat little Cessna. One wintry weekend we planned to fly south from Teesside out over the snow-covered Moors, then if the conditions allowed on towards Holderness and Spurn Peninsula.

On the day the weather wasn't ideal, with a blanket of fog covering large areas of Eastern England, but the countryside looked magical and we really didn't want to miss seeing it from the air. With ground checks and clearance completed, at the end of the runway Pete opened up the engine and soon we were airborne and climbing round towards the Cleveland Hills.

I always think it remarkable that the Moors approached from the south have the appearance of a long slope, contradicting the reality that the tops are actually as high as mountains such as Catbells in the Lake District. In comparison, when seen from the north-west, they present a totally different face; that of a mini mountain range.

Our route took us past the Bilsdale mast, with the herringbone pattern of valleys carved by springs and streams over the millennia revealed by the shadows and bright areas in the snow stretching to the east. Below, in Scugdale, the old jet-workings along the valley-side, defined by a line of black dots, testified to past small-scale mining activity. Beyond, Hambleton Hill peeped above a deep blanket of fog filling the Vale of York and banked up against the slopes of the Moors. With the world of white below, I speculated that this was a fair approximation to the way the landscape might have looked when ice, not fog, filled the lower ground.

Passing over Rievaulx Abbey's ruins, spotted in a momentarily clear patch, we climbed higher above the fog. Now my whole world lay in the confines of a small aircraft flying steadily above an unending absolutely flat world of smooth white, with no visible sign of humanity and a brilliantly clear endless sunny sky above. This, I reflected, was the most isolated and unanchored I have ever felt.

At about 5,000 feet the layer of unbroken fog ahead told us that continuing to Spurn would be pointless. Banking smoothly, Pete brought the plane round to cut back across the Moors. Such are

the vagaries of the English weather that in a few tens of minutes, the once clear view over the Dales had closed over. As I searched for reassurance as to where we were, I felt an unnerving memory welling up inside.

Unanchored isolation tends to concentrate the mind and illogically fuel the imagination. Acutely aware of the engine note, lest it should falter - or worse still stop - I looked intensely for reassurance that the world we left a short while ago would still be there when we got back.

Irrationally, my mind became fixated on the film *The Odyssey of Flight 33*, set in the early days of the jet-age. What if, like the airliner in the story, which passed through a time-warp to find not New York but instead a world inhabited by dinosaurs, nothing I knew would still be there? What, indeed, if the white scene below, so very redolent of the Greenland Ice Sheet, was not a sea of fog, but actually the ice-bound world of the past, where plants and animals had been forced away to the south for a hundred thousand years?

The mind is a powerful force in tense situations. Unnervingly, I recalled the final words of the film, when the pilot - trying desperately to retrace his actions - fails to make it back to the present but falls short into the late 1930s. He explained to the passengers over the tannoy that they have mysteriously travelled back in time, adding: "all I ask of you is that you remain calm ...and *pray*".

Ahead, through a gap in the cloud, as Tees-side appeared and with it an easy run into the airport, a feeling of relief swept over me. A reassuring thump shook the plane. Safely on the ground, I pondered that old adage for those anxious about being airborne, first told to me by an ex-Vulcan pilot: "it's good to be back on *terra firma* - and the more *firma*, the less *terra*".

We might have failed to get to Spurn, but I do believe I experienced the nearest thing to seeing what the Moors might have looked like when ice-sheets stretched down the Vale of York and the landscape was a locked world of permanently frozen ground.

IAN CARSTAIRS

# MIGRANT THRUSHES

**T**HERE ARE five Thrushes to be seen regularly in the UK. Blackbirds, Mistle and Song Thrushes are residents, whilst Fieldfares and Redwings are predominantly winter visitors, though in recent years a handful of pairs has bred in northern Scotland.

If you have a large or rural garden you may well see these two species without leaving home, otherwise both can be seen nearby in the fields, often in mixed flocks, when identification can be easier as their differences are highlighted. If you see a flock of medium-sized birds feeding in a field at this time of year, they are most likely to be thrushes or Starlings (or a mixture).

## FIELDFARE

The Fieldfare is the larger of our two winter thrushes and in years when food is short in their breeding range, up to a million of them may cross the North Sea. They remain on their breeding grounds as long as there is food available. The larger the berry crop, the longer they can remain, but when they do arrive numbers can be large, with, for example, 20,000 being counted coming in off the sea in one hour in North Norfolk. Some birds return annually to the same area, whilst others may appear in completely different places in consecutive autumns.

Fieldfares are gregarious and often form large flocks, sometimes with other thrushes or Starlings and usually in large open fields, feeding on insects and earthworms. If the ground becomes frozen they will move into orchards and gardens looking for fruit and berries. There is also a general southwards and westwards movement as the winter progresses and food supplies run low. Many people think of Fieldfares as fruit-eaters, but they much prefer grubs and worms, switching to windfall apples and berries only when invertebrates are unavailable.

When seen clearly this handsome bird is easy to identify: it is obviously a large (Blackbird-sized) thrush, with a blue-grey head, pale grey rump, red-brown wings, black tail and heavy spotting below. When close to, the spots on the breast can be seen to be chevrons.

## REDWING

The Redwing is also primarily a winter visitor here. Their arrival signals the end of autumn, and their flight calls can often be heard after dark as they seek to remain in contact with one another.

Birds wintering in England come from breeding populations in Finland and Russia, and as with Fieldfares, numbers arriving vary greatly from one year to the next. They are nomadic, travelling large distances in response to food availability and weather conditions, arriving from October onwards, and may then move into gardens. In mild weather they will feed on the ground in



Redwing

open fields, taking earthworms, or in hedgerows taking fruits and berries. During cold weather they can be found in woodland, turning over leaves in a similar manner to Blackbirds.

Redwings are the smallest and daintiest of our thrushes, and have a distinctive chestnut-red area on their flanks and across their covert feathers on the underside of the wing, hence their name. They have a bold off-white stripe on the side of their heads.

They are most commonly seen in rural locations, but if forced into gardens they will feed first on berries; a flock of Redwings can strip a holly or Cotoneaster of its berries in just a few hours. Although Redwings are not common visitors to feeders, they can be persuaded to take windfall apples and other fresh or dried fruit.

Redwings are vulnerable to the effects of very cold weather and, when unable to find food, they can suffer from very high levels of mortality. This susceptibility underpins their nomadic nature, with birds forced further and further west as the weather deteriorates. Even though most of the Redwings arriving here in winter will have bred in areas undisturbed by humans, they remain extremely flighty and nervous birds, only overcoming their customary wariness if they are desperate for food.

During the winter, hundreds of Redwings may gather together to roost in tall conifers or thick shrubberies. The birds call as they arrive (don't confuse them with the noisy roosts of Starlings) but then settle quickly. At dawn, the birds depart in small groups, leaving discretely in search of feeding opportunities.

MIKE GRAY

If you find the lives of our garden birds to be of interest, and would like to join in and count the feathered occupants of your garden, please contact me or visit the BTO Garden BirdWatch website ([www.bto.org/gbw](http://www.bto.org/gbw)). If you know of an organisation no more than 30 miles from York which would like a talk on garden birds call: **Mike Gray 07596 366342** or [gbwmike@gmail.com](mailto:gbwmike@gmail.com).



Fieldfare

# HEATHER IN 2020

**H**EATHER, ling, *Calluna vulgaris* - we so love it; the brilliant, purple, sweet-smelling, buzzing vistas on the moor tops during August. But this year when I visited the nearest one to me at the beginning of August, as I usually do (up from Ingleby Greenhow, over Turkey Nab and onto the Cleveland Way) I was shocked: no obvious pink/purple, no bees, no butterflies, hardly a grouse to be seen or heard; still bare, black eroded strips of peat, other parts with some regeneration but with small dead heather plants, though the cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and the bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) were healthy and flowering, as the latter did well into October. Only the older heather bushes were in flower, bilberry with few leaves and fewer berries, and crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) doing well.

But the heather nearby in its natural habitat as an undershrub of scrub and woodland edge looked healthy and in full bloom. What was wrong? I had not at that time heard of this year's possible excess of the heather beetle (as reviewed in the Autumn edition of 'Voice of the Moors') and saw no sign of it at this stage.

## ECOLOGICAL CHANGES

Local farmers were also talking of adders being unusually seen lower down on the farms and cattle being bitten, as well as honey production being a disaster. I then remembered that in the spring there had been Oyster-catchers and Curlews nesting alongside the Lapwings on the farm - unusual enough to be noticed by me and others. This was often a disaster due to late ploughing and resowing this year because of the wet then dry weather, which meant that nests were often disturbed or destroyed.

These then were my immediate thoughts - a very wet January and February, late burning in March, followed by a dry, hot April



Mixed heathland under restoration at Sutton Bank

and May. No chance of new regrowth on some of the upland vegetation at all. Even the top flowers on the older plants of heather in bloom were dry and shrivelled without opening.

I later wondered whether the lack of winter snow was also having an effect. This covers and protects the plants, kills some pests and keeps the peat moist over time as it gradually thaws, whereas heavy winter rains pour off the moors, eroding them and allowing them to bake dry, unless sufficient efforts are made to retain the water and not drain them.

If the Heather beetle (or a fungus as a botanist friend also suggested) was responsible it was most likely because the whole ecosystem was already out of balance for some reason, which often happens where external effects alter a natural situation.

## AN UNNATURAL ECOSYSTEM

We have to remember that our moors are a man-made, unnatural ecosystem managed for profit; hill sheep, grouse-shooting, tourism and some honey production. Though not quite a monoculture it is not very species diverse and it is botanically species poor - not dissimilar in many ways to a field of oil-seed rape or a South American soya plantation! It is beneficial to some wildlife, especially birds, but not so for others.

So a mixture of climate change causing erratic and unusual weather conditions, and moorland management not keeping pace with the changes, may be the answer. Heather moorland is a fragile ecosystem which may not cope with the changing climate and current system of care.

I am playing 'devil's advocate' here; I love the great heathery expanse of our moors but maybe we have to ask ourselves dispassionately whether we can sustain it all. Not only is it tree-poor, it is itself fuelling some of the human-induced climate change by releasing carbon into the atmosphere when burning takes place. This also dries the peat so that it is no longer the wet, boggy upland that acts as a mechanism for carbon capture and storage - a vicious cycle that needs breaking before it fuels its own downfall.

This is a small study over the summer and autumn of one area of the moor top; it may not be the same all over the North Yorkshire Moors and I would love to hear of other people's observations and conclusions.

ANNE PRESS



Heather, Rowan and other species of a mixed moorland ecosystem

# LINESIDE CONSERVATION AT THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS RAILWAY



A steam train passes through the 'green corridor' of Newton Dale

## CONNECTION, CONNECTION, CONNECTION (DID I MENTION CONNECTION? ...)

The North Yorkshire Moors, its geology and biodiversity, is no stranger to the reader of 'Voice of the Moors' and neither I imagine is the story of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway (NYMR). But to me, it was until recently a landscape that I just 'dipped in and out of'. I am naturally drawn to moorland (must be my Northern Scottish genes!), although the calls of the river, sea, woodland and meadow compete for my attention.

It was with joy then that in November 2019 I found myself starting work as the new Lineside Conservation Officer for the NYMR, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. As part of our 'Yorkshire's Magnificent Journey' project I am looking more closely at the biodiversity of the railway lineside, how we manage the habitats there and how we can best engage our visitors in this incredible landscape. I get to indulge all my passions!

But before I tell you more about our 'living lineside' (as I have dubbed it), let me first ask you to consider 'boxing' as a concept.

Humans like to 'box' things. It may be concepts, art, music, other people or even landscapes. Look out on a view and what do you see? Do you see the individual elements of fields, woodland, moorland, becks, rivers, villages, roads and railways - or do you see a living, breathing, moving landscape of potential?

I don't believe animals and plants see the world in boxes or even habitat types. They don't care for drawn boundaries whether they be for counties or countries. Instead, they see the world for its potential and for its connections - how they can disperse, find their own space, find food, a new mate, a home, survive. Whether you are a tiny leaf-miner living out most of your life within a single leaf, or a goshawk soaring and sky-dancing across miles, connectivity is what you are looking for - the landscape-level pathways for the movement, communication, water, food and nutrients necessitated by survival.

Photo © NYMR

## GREEN CORRIDORS

It has been known for some time that an isolated nature reserve affords little long-term, sustainable benefit to its inhabitants: they are effectively islands. However lovely these oases are, many of our species and habitats are declining at an alarming rate and those small oases are vulnerable to disease, pollution, climate change and development.

Instead, our nature reserves are acting as a type of 'Noah's Ark' - a holding pen for species of plants, animals, fungi and other organisms, waiting until the flood of hard landscaping, monoculture agriculture, development and pollution abates and they can move and flourish once again. But to do that, the nature reserves and wider countryside must be connected. There must be corridors for those species to flow along. In nature conservation we call these 'green corridors' or 'living landscapes'.

Certain landscapes lend themselves immediately to the vision of a 'living landscape' and 'green corridors'. The North York Moors is an obvious living landscape and so are the dales and valleys within it. Newton Dale, home to the 18 miles of heritage railway line linking Pickering to Grosmont and beyond to Whitby, is packed full of treasures.

Photo © Dave O'Brien

Duke of Burgundy





Those treasures persist along the railway lineside in part because the railway has been necessarily isolated from its neighbours. Fenced off with only a few lucky people able to traverse its trackbed, its management has not been that of a commercial woodland or farmland but instead remains much as it was 50 years ago. Low maintenance, hand-tooled management techniques have sustained a magical green corridor linking the lower valley habitats in Pickering and the upland habitats of the moors; it boasts woodland, grassland, fen, valley mire, marsh and moorland edge.

This lineside, together with neighbouring habitats, farms and nature reserves, supports a huge range of species, many of them scarce or even downright rare. Passengers on the NYMR may not know it but they steam through not just the incredible North York Moors National Park but two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), past ponds with protected species, and by ancient woodland. This is truly a living lineside and you can explore it from the relaxing position of the train and, in many places, on foot.

### SURVEYS AND MANAGEMENT

However, as inspiring as it is, the lineside needs targeted management. Volunteers do an amazing job of keeping on top of the station gardens, the fences and drystone walls, and clearing encroaching scrub (maintaining sightlines for engine drivers, motorists and pedestrians as well as reducing fire hazards are a top priority) but 36 miles of lineside (18 miles each side) takes some looking after. The first step to responsible management is knowing what we have got.

This year, despite the setbacks of Covid-19, we have been able to procure a full Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the whole lineside, and woodland surveys of key woodland patches. These will help us create a management plan for the lineside, helping us focus on the key habitats and species that need targeted conservation.

Talks are underway with local bat groups, herpetological groups (that's reptiles and amphibians!) the Whitby Naturalists, the Forestry Commission and the Butterfly Conservation Trust as well as our key partners in the National Park and Natural England. The National Park ecologist and Countryside Worker Apprentices have been invaluable in their support, advice and technical know-how.

Although the project has only been 'live' for a year and Covid-19 has done its best to scupper many of our efforts, we are already making good progress with wildflower meadow management, heathland conservation and heritage boundary restoration.

Key species have made their voices heard and we have started to focus on identifying, raising awareness of and conserving our bats, butterflies (such as the rare Duke of Burgundy), adders and other reptiles. Birds and invertebrates are next on the list to focus on and survey for.

Along the lineside you are never far from the chatter of a Green woodpecker, the call of the Buzzard or the song of a Marsh tit, and if we can succeed in some bird-nesting surveys, we can consider and conserve those species in our work. Our invertebrates are more specialised and harder to locate and identify but no less important – in fact, perhaps more so. Entomologists who would like to investigate the lineside are very welcome to get in touch!

### CONNECTING PEOPLE AND LANDSCAPES

Whilst I am really keen to get started on the management plan and work with our partners and neighbours on cross-site projects and initiatives, I am equally passionate about connecting people to the landscape around them. Living landscapes and green corridors sound grand and something for ecologists and land managers to get stuck into, but the concepts are embedded in the idea that we are all a part of our landscape. Everyone who lives, works and visits here is a part of the landscape: we are all part of the connection.

Your gardens, window boxes and back-yards may not be 18 miles long and you might think a 'green corridor' is beyond your resources, but think of yourself as a stepping-stone in that corridor. Buglife UK asks us to imagine if 9 miles out of every 10 miles of transport links in the country were removed. How would we get around?

That's what it is like for our invertebrates and many other species. Could you be a stepping-stone? For example, the Grosmont Station Group are taking on the concept of 'planting for pollinators'. Each pot and corner can be a valuable habitat and they are looking at how they can be a stepping-stone for invertebrates (and the birds and other beasts that follow them) by planting the right kind of plants and providing a much-needed boost of food and shelter.

Lastly, take time to stop and really engage your senses outdoors. Don't let the grey clouds of winter fool you! They are hiding treasures that you'll miss out on if you let the weather stop you exploring. Connection is not just between landscapes and species but between us and those landscapes and species.

Like everyone else, I have my 'spots' – the places that I feel calm in and where the sounds, smells and movements around me can lull me to rest and inspire me to 'do' in equal measure. But I can't stop in that spot for long - I have to keep walking, see what is around the corner, find out to what or to whom my spot is connected. Connection is the name of the game.

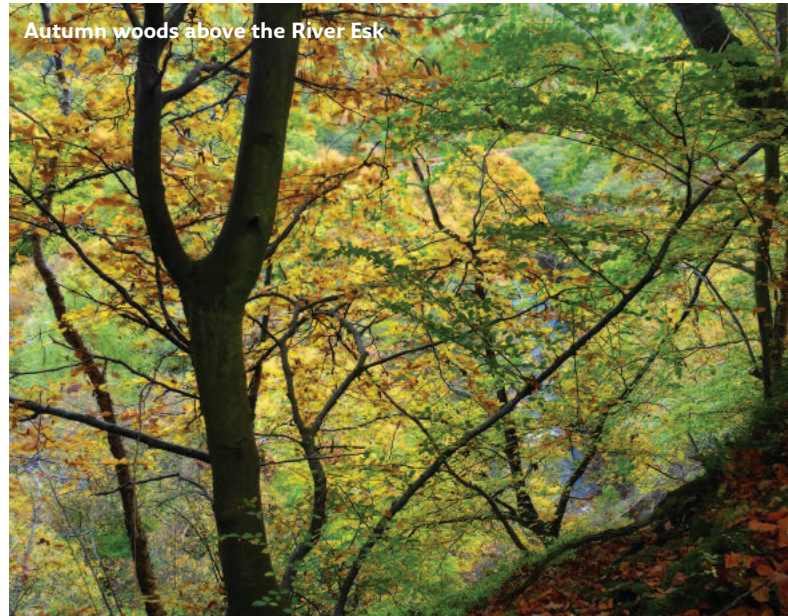
**KERRY FIELDHOUSE**

Lineside Conservation Officer, North Yorkshire Moors Railway

The NYMR is a charity and a fully accredited museum, and runs Britain's most popular heritage railway, with over 350,000 passenger journeys in normal years. Visit <https://www.nymr.co.uk/> to learn more.



Autumn woods above the River Esk



# 30 YEARS OF ACID RAIN IN DANBY DALE



Botton Pond



The headwaters of Danby Beck

**T**IS 20 years since an article appeared in 'Voice of the Moors' on 'Acid Rain on the North York Moors' (Issue 60, Summer 2000). The article described the sampling and testing of rainwater and surface water over a ten-year period. So what has happened since this programme was last reported on? NYMA Chair Tom Chadwick has been central to a study of water quality in Danby Dale over three decades, along with fellow-scientist Phil Brown (also a NYMA member), and here brings us up to date.

## ENVIRONET REPORT ON ACID RAIN 2000

In 1989 a local grouping called Environet was formed, comprised of people from a range of scientific disciplines and technical backgrounds with a common interest in environmental issues. In May 1990, in response to widespread concern about the ecological damage caused by acid rain and locally by air pollution from Teesside, they began a programme of manual sampling to monitor the effects of acid rain on the North York Moors. A year later, funding for developing an automatic acid rain monitoring device was raised through the National Park and the former National Rivers Authority.

A prototype monitoring device was installed at a site in Danby Dale. Unfortunately, this was later abandoned because of insurmountable difficulties with the buffering chemistry (the ability of the device to clean itself thoroughly between measurements) and the accuracy of the data produced, but the manual sampling programme continued. In 2000 a report of the findings of ten years of monitoring was sent to the National Park.

That data clearly indicated significant effects from acid deposition over the catchment area of Danby Beck. Freshwater samples were taken at three fixed locations: the headwaters of Danby Beck, nearby Botton Pond, and Brown Hill Spring on Castleton Rigg. Daily rainfall was also tested over the same ten-year period and showed episodes of high acid levels with some monthly means as low as pH3.6. (For

comparison, the neutral pH figure is 7.) These low recordings were also picked up in the surface-water measurements. Danby Beck – a feeder stream of the River Esk – frequently showed readings of around pH3.6, especially during high flow rates. This high level of acidity is toxic to fish and aquatic invertebrates. Acid water also mobilises aluminium held in the soil, rendering it toxic for all aquatic life and damaging trees and other plants, which become weakened and susceptible to disease.

## PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF ACID POLLUTION ON THE NORTH YORK MOORS

The main chemical precursors of acid rain are sulphur dioxide (SO<sup>2</sup>) and the oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>). The largest sources of SO<sup>2</sup> emissions for the Moors were the large coal-fired power stations of Ferrybridge and Eggborough, commissioned in the late 1960s, and from 1986 Drax, which had the capacity to burn 36,000 tonnes of coal per day. In 1991, for example, Drax emitted 236,500 tonnes of SO<sup>2</sup> into the atmosphere from a stack height of 259m. Plumes from all three power stations, situated about 70km south of the Moors but in the prevailing wind direction, could be seen from Danby High Moor. About 25km to the north lies Teesside which until the 1990s had a high concentration of heavy industry including steel-works and chemical plants.

## GATHERING EVIDENCE

In 2001 the Environet report was sent to the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH). It generated considerable interest, and in 2005 CEH carried out its own snapshot survey of surface waters, including samples from 46 headwater streams, four moorland pools and Lockwood Beck reservoir. The results confirmed that in the area of the North York Moors based on sandstone: "*chronic acidification extends across most of the moorland area, where elevated Aluminium (Al) concentrations and consistently negative Acid Neutralising*

*Capacity (ANC) indicate toxic conditions for fish, invertebrates and other aquatic biota”.*

Other evidence of the effects of low pH included the death of fish in Botton Pond in September 1993. During an acid episode which showed a measurement of pH3.9, the population of a fresh stock of brown trout was largely wiped out and over a fairly short period the rest of the trout also died. In 2005 a survey of the diet of water shrews in Danby Beck was undertaken by local naturalist Derek Capes. He found that aquatic prey, which normally formed 50% of the shrews’ diet, was absent from samples and appeared to have been replaced by terrestrial invertebrates. The indication is that the headwaters of Danby Beck had been depleted of aquatic invertebrates.

Further indications of the impoverished state of Danby Beck have been shown by diatom surveys carried out for CEH in 2009 and 2010 (diatoms are microalgae found in waterways and soils). The surveys describe a low diversity of diatoms and found only taxa which can tolerate extremely acidic environments.

## CONCLUSION

The accumulated evidence of 20 years’ Environet data together with the CEH surveys led to the publication in 2012 of a peer-reviewed paper. This concluded that acidification in the North York Moors is extensive and exceptionally severe, and suggested that recovery may be progressing more slowly than in other upland areas. Despite a reduction in

atmospheric sulphur emissions of 90% since the peak emissions of the 1980s, it appears that high acid levels recorded more recently are the legacy of these earlier depositions.

Following the publication of the paper, Danby Beck became part of the UK Upland Waters Monitoring Network. Regular monitoring of rainwater and surface water at the original three locations continues, meaning that there is now an important database covering 30 years of daily and weekly sampling. Monitoring includes the additional sampling of Danby Beck on a monthly basis, following a careful protocol, with samples filtered on site and sent for analysis to CEH.

A preliminary look at the last ten years’ results suggests that little has changed since the last major review. High acidic episodes are still evident at Danby Beck, especially when heavy rain follows a spell of dry weather, causing sulphur deposited in past decades to be leached out of the soil. Only time – and continued monitoring – will tell how long it will take for this industrial legacy to vanish from the soil and the waters of our becks and ponds to return to their natural state.

**TOM CHADWICK**

Reference: Evans, C.D., Chadwick, T., Norris, D., Rowe, E.C., Heaton, T.H.E., Brown, P. and Battarbee, R.W. (2012) Persistent surface water acidification in an organic soil-dominated upland region subject to high atmospheric deposition: The North York Moors, UK. *Ecological Indicators* 37, Part B, pp. 304-316

## A WINTER’S TALE



**RECALL** a fell run from a good few years ago which was a training run and usual preparation for a competitive marathon event a week ahead. The weather was good, cold with clear blue sky, sunshine and little wind. These conditions were enough of an incentive to do a tour of Baysdale, a section of the Cleveland Way and Westerdale, around eighteen miles of moorland paths and tracks.

Reaching the Shepherd’s House in Baysdale after running along the Skinner Howe path over Little Hograh Moor and Great Hograh Moor, I exchanged a few words with the young forester, a recent

occupant of the cottage. He paused from cutting up some logs for the fire and we eyed some developing cloud encroaching on the blue sky and a change in the wind direction. He commented that we might get a snow shower.

The possibility of snow encouraged a quickening of pace in the ascent from Baysdale Abbey up the path which follows Middle Heads. In what seemed a remarkably short time from leaving the Shepherd’s House the sky became completely overcast and leaden, with the first flakes of snow falling as I made progress towards Burton Howe. By the time I reached the well-defined track of

the Cleveland Way very heavy snow was falling, but thankfully there was no wind. Visibility was reduced to a matter of yards and I considered dropping off the exposed high ground and retreating down the Incline to Ingleby Greenhow.

But for a seasoned fell runner there is always a compulsion to finish what you start. Knowing that the turn down to Westerdale was only about five miles beyond Bloworth Crossing, and there was still no wind, made persuasive arguments to continue with the run. There is something wonderful about running in snow, feeling cocooned in a white world with an intense silence. Any noise is absorbed by the density of the falling snow. It creates a sense of isolation with soft snow underfoot and no other trails but your own fast-disappearing footprints, as the new snow quickly covers up the only evidence that you are the only person around for miles.

The turning down to Westerdale appearing out of the white mist was a relief from any anxiety about the dangers of exposure. Esklets is a safe haven, and the path to Westerdale and finally the road back to Castleton was just plain sailing.

**TOM CHADWICK**

# CROSS-RIDGE BOUNDARIES ON THE CLEVELAND HILLS

**T**HE LIMITATIONS imposed by Covid-19 on archaeological excavation this year encouraged me to return to the study of the prehistoric cross-ridge boundaries which are a particular feature of the Cleveland Moors. Readers of 'Voice of the Moors' will have passed through cross-ridge boundaries while driving along Castleton Rigg, Glaisdale Rigg or over Egton Moor, although they may not have noticed these low and usually heather-covered earthworks.

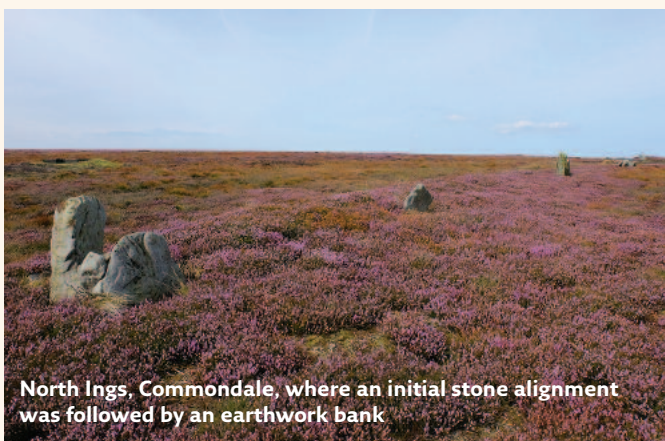
First noted two centuries ago by the Reverend George Young, there are around 16 cross-ridge boundaries on the moorland of the North York Moors National Park, where the topography appears to have encouraged their construction. Elsewhere in England such features are very sparsely distributed, so they are one of a small number of monument types which are specific to the Moors. They deserve to be much better known.

## IDENTIFYING BOUNDARIES

Cross-ridge boundaries are most easily recognised by their topographical settings since they vary markedly in their construction. The boundaries combine contours and marshy areas with artificial constructions to define areas which generally average between 16 to 18 ha in area. A good example can be seen on the tip of Horn Nab, Farndale, which is marked off by a substantial bank and ditch. From the air a number of breaks in the earthwork can be seen: one or two of the gaps may be fairly recent, but others are associated with an ancient causeway across the ditch. The cross-ridge earthworks on Levisham Moor and Horness Rigg also have breaks that are regularly spaced and clearly part of the original plan.



Horn Nab, Farndale



North Ings, Comondale, where an initial stone alignment was followed by an earthwork bank

At North Ings, Comondale, the boundary initially comprised a stone alignment which was later encapsulated within an earthwork bank that runs 0.5 km north from the banks of North Ings Beck to marshy ground at the headwaters of Tidkinhow Slack. The boundary is now probably more gap-toothed than it originally was, as the stones are a convenient size for gateposts and several may have been removed for that purpose.

Other earthworks that appear to contain stone or boulder alignments include Battersby Moor Cross Dyke and Castleton High Stone Dyke. Two somewhat enigmatic moorland features also appear to be cross-ridge boundaries: a length of contiguously-set boulders effectively makes a rough wall on Scarth Wood Moor, Osmotherley, while another length of similar walling can be found cutting part-way across the rigg at Crown End, Westerdale. Another variant construction is apparent, as the archaeologist and geologist Frank Elgee (1880-1944) noted, in the pit alignment on Easington High Moor, Roxby.

## DATE AND PURPOSE OF THE BOUNDARIES

Establishing a date for the cross-ridge boundaries remains problematical. Elgee considered that they were part of a suite of monuments that included little clearance cairns, enclosures, large burial cairns and trackways - the settlements of his 'Urn People' - but these sites are now known not to have all been contemporary. Most of the cross-ridge boundaries do not appear to be directly associated with any archaeological sites, while the juxtaposition of cross-ridge boundary and Early Bronze Age (2000-1800 BC) burial mounds at North Ings and perhaps five or six other sites may be fortuitous.

The suspicion, and at present it can hardly be more than that, is that the boundaries started in the later Neolithic period, perhaps around 3000 BC, and continued in use into the Early Bronze Age (perhaps until 1800 BC), but what was their actual use? Young and, after him, Elgee, thought that the boundaries were defensive. However, the absence of any settlement evidence within the defined areas, and the discontinuous nature of most of the boundaries, suggests that they were not - and could not be. The general absence of association with any sites other than, in some instances, occasional burial mounds also suggests that they were not directly concerned with funerary activities.

## JOHN CROSS RIGG

This year, in place of my regular summer season of fieldwork and excavation on the eastern part of Fylingdales Moor above Ravenscar, I turned my attention to the cross-ridge boundary on John Cross Rigg, also on Fylingdales Moor but a mile or so inland. This is a very little-known monument: charity encourages me to assume that it was seen by an Historic England inspector on the occasion of its scheduling as an Ancient Monument, but the only previous visit by an archaeologist might have been by Frank Elgee, who saw the site on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1928, according to his diary extracts. This massive boundary is variably constructed of between four and six banks with intervening ditches, it extends 0.75 km across John Cross Rigg, and appears to relate to an area of around 24 ha. Its central section is part-engulfed by an area of peat.

At the west end of the John Rigg earthworks a space between the banks is occupied by a pair of standing stones, one being the 'Old Wife's Neck', named from - and indeed possibly



The 'Old Wife's Neck' standing stone, and a companion

selected for - anthropomorphic attributes. The space between the uprights contains a number of stones which may represent the remains of former paving.

The detail of construction of the boundary west of the peat bog was recorded and a pollen sample was retrieved from the old vegetation level sealed beneath one of the banks. If the contemporary vegetation can be identified from the pollen it may be possible to identify the general chronological horizon when the monument was constructed. Sadly, the analysis is yet



Excavation shows that a broad shallow bank (yellow arrow) seals an old turf line (black arrow), through which a deep narrow ditch, now filled with dark peaty deposits (red arrow), has been cut through the yellow clay subsoil (green arrow).

another casualty of Covid-19 restrictions, so we shall have to wait for the answer!

**BLAISE VYNER**

Author's note: The OS Explorer map is essential for discovering these boundaries on the ground. Further details and a bibliography can be found in the paper 'The brides of place: cross-ridge boundaries reviewed', in B.E. Vyner (ed.) 1995 *Moorland Monuments: Studies in the Archaeology of North-East Yorkshire in Honour of Raymond Hayes and Don Spratt*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 101, pp. 16-30

## AIMING HIGH!

**O**UT walking over mountain and moor we all like to reach a summit, it's irresistible! And when we arrive, if there is a cairn or a 'trig pillar', so much the better. But do we ever stop to think what the trig point is for, or how much of it is out of our sight? Triangulation pillars once topped over 6,500 of the high points in Britain's countryside. Today only about 5,500 still exist.

Most were built to the iconic Hotine design, named after Brigadier Martin Hotine who was head of the Ordnance Survey's Trigonometrical and Levelling Division. In 1935 he instigated the complete re-triangulation of Britain, replacing the old system dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The pillar was a solid base on which to fix a theodolite, which was used to measure angles to other visible high points and

create a complete coverage of triangles over the country within which the detail could be inserted. Perhaps surprisingly, there is nearly as much structure below ground as there is above. If not built onto solid rock, the pillar's foundations often had to be several feet deep to establish a stable platform.

On the side of each trig pillar is a metal plate known as a flush bracket which includes an upward facing arrow or benchmark marking an accurate height above sea level. Benchmarks topped with a short horizontal line can also be found carved into stone walls, gateposts, churches and other buildings, all marking secondary survey points, of which there are over 750,000 throughout the country.

Now, with few exceptions, trig pillars are obsolete and many have been lost to

development or coastal erosion. They are still the responsibility of Ordnance Survey although some have been adopted by individuals or outdoor groups.

A few of those remaining have been incorporated into the modern OS mapping system including, in the North York Moors, the trig points on Urra Moor - the highest point on our moorland at 454 metres (or 1,489 feet if you prefer!) - on Danby Beacon and one at Ravenscar. Each of these displays a small plaque indicating its new use.

In the 1930s survey inaccuracy across the whole of Britain was as little as 20 metres but, with modern technology, recent surveys are accurate down to within only 3mm over the same area.

Next time you climb to a trig point, spare a thought for those who built them!

**ALAN STANFORTH**

Trig point on Fylingdales Moor, above Robin Hood's Bay



Flush plate on trig pillar, Rievaulx Moor



Carved benchmark





## THE 'LITTLE SQUIRE' OF FYLINGDALES

Fyling Old Hall in 1913  
by J. Ulric Walmsley

**T**HE semi-autobiographical novels by Leo Walmsley about his late Victorian childhood in Robin Hood's Bay feature many of the area's characters, one of whom he called 'The Little Squire'. This was John Warren Barry JP (1851-1920), described by Walmsley as being small in stature and always wearing a frock coat and bowler hat to church. A later book, 'The Changing Moors: 50 Years of "Progress" in North-East Yorkshire' by John Tindale (Dalesman 1990) gives us another account of Barry by local farmer Tom Morley, whose family moved when Tom was a small boy to Brock Hall, Fylingdales, becoming tenants of the Barry estate. John Barry was described by Tom as:

*"a stiff little chap, always rigged up like a gentleman, white scarf with a gold pin, yellow leather leggings with a strap around them and buckled at the top; polished leather boots. He always wore a hard hat and always had a terrier dog with him which roamed ahead of him as he went round the estate. A lot of the masons and the workers - who weren't over keen on work in them days - used to keep an eye out and the dog gave them ten minutes' warning."*

Tom Morley was in no doubt as to Barry's influence. "We were still at school and after we finished about 4 o'clock time, I'll bet you would meet him between Gilsom Bank Top and Fyling Hall. You had to raise your cap and the lasses had to curtsy, and I'll bet if you didn't, the school gaffer would know next morning and you'd be lucky if you didn't get the cane. I daren't tell father when I got home because he'd say 'You deserve it and I'll give you some more'."

### FROM SHIPPING TO THE CHURCH

John Warren Barry - whom we shall call 'John W' for reasons explained below - was part of a successful family of Whitby ship-owners and ship-builders founded by Robert Barry (1725-1793). Robert's son John (born 1759) bought a large

part of the Fylingdales estate above Robin Hood's Bay from Lord Hotham, whose family had owned it since 1634. John's brother Thomas was the Lloyds of London marine insurance agent for Whitby, whilst John's son - another Robert (born 1792) - realised that the shipping business needed a presence in London so as to be more in touch with the mercantile trade. From his office in Bishopsgate he was able to take advantage of the growing trade in emigration and even the transportation of convicts.

In 1845 the land occupied by the Barry shipyard was sold to the York & North Midland Railway Company, who built Whitby's main railway station on the site. The ship-building business had been run from a large house in Bagdale which faced what we now know as Station Square. This house was for a while the residence of the Whitby stationmaster before being demolished in the 1920s to make way for the bus station.

Each generation of the Barry family had a Robert and a John, making it quite a challenge to research them. Rev. John Barry (John W's father, born 1819) died at the early age of 37 in 1856, leaving four children of whom the eldest, John W, was just five years old. He and his mother and three younger siblings evidently stayed on for a few years in Great Smeaton, Hambleton, where his father had been the incumbent, since in 1860 the children were photographed by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (the author Lewis Carroll), whose father was rector of the neighbouring parish of Croft-on-Tees.

The 1861 census shows John W living at Blisworth, Northamptonshire, with his great-uncle, Rev. William Barry. He was educated at Winchester and Oxford, gaining a BA in 1874. In 1870, aged 19, he inherited most of the Fylingdales estate from his grandfather Robert, the shipping merchant.

## A MEDITERRANEAN INFLUENCE

John W took up residency of what was then known as Fyling Hall, his grandfather's home. The house was medieval in origin but largely rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Sir Hugh Cholmley, MP for Scarborough. By 1881 however he had moved to Park Hill, a villa on the estate built in 1819; he later changed the name of the villa to Fyling Hall, his former home becoming known as Fyling Old Hall (this fine building still stands).

Each ten-year census from 1881 to 1911 shows John W as a single man with servants. He travelled a great deal throughout the Mediterranean in the 1880s, being particularly captivated by Corsica, about which he wrote a 302-page book: 'Studies in Corsica, Sylvan and Social'. Local tradition says he had a disabled Italian lady friend – perhaps he met her on his Mediterranean travels. He re-routed and improved the carriage drive from Fyling Hall to the Scarborough road so that she could travel there more easily than on the very hilly roads from the Whitby direction, but she never actually came to visit him.

His fondness for this region prompted him to incorporate its architecture into farm buildings on his estate, hence even some of the cow byres were extravagantly designed. His crowning glory is the pigsty styled as a Grecian temple which he ordered to be built, and this became a source of local amusement. It was intended as a home for two pigs, giving them a lovely view of the Bay and an upstairs storey where he envisaged they would climb up to bed; the pigs apparently did not appreciate the gesture and resolutely slept downstairs.

Work began on the construction of this eccentric sty in 1889 and took two years to complete, since the Squire would keep changing his mind about its design. Estate worker Matthew Hart and a colleague celebrated its eventual completion by dancing on the roof - until Hart fell off, breaking his nose.

John W and his ancestors made many other contributions to the area. For instance, in 1900 he was appointed to the Board of Conservators of the River Esk Fishery District, and he made donations to the Guardians of the Whitby Poor-Law Union. His grandfather Robert had donated the land and

£2,000 for the building of 'new' St Stephen's Church at Robin Hood's Bay, generosity recorded in the stained-glass window above the altar.

When John W died in 1920, he left £25 for refreshments to be distributed to churchgoers at St Stephen's every Maundy Thursday, described by the Whitby Gazette as a revival of an ancient custom marking the end of Lent and dating back to medieval times. He had no descendants and his estate was sold off piecemeal.

## A PIGSTY NO MORE

The photograph of John W as a child is the only known image of him, although since from the descriptions we have of him he was quite a dandy, it seems likely that he had his photograph taken as an adult or perhaps even his portrait painted. Perhaps in due course an image of him will come to light.

On the former Barry estate, sections of the medieval Park Wall which enclosed the Abbot of Whitby's deer park survive. The wall features prominent stone crosses built into it at regular intervals, confirming its previous monastic ownership, and the very religious Barry family took pride in maintaining it.

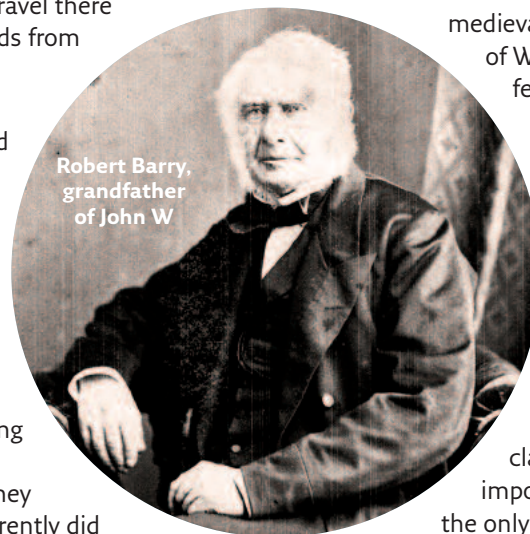
His principal legacy lies in his remarkable Palladian-style pigsty. After his death it housed yet more animal tenants, being used first as a henhouse and later as a dog kennel.

It fell into disrepair, but in 1988 it was classified as being of architectural importance by Historic England, becoming the only Grade II\* listed pigsty in the country.

In 1990 the Landmark Trust - a buildings preservation charity - took a lease on it and gave it a future by renovating it and letting it as a holiday cottage. With the feed-troughs replaced by bedroom, bathroom, living-room and kitchen, fortunate human occupants can now appreciate the marvellous coastal vista once enjoyed by the Little Squire's Large Whites.

**JANE ELLIS**

*Author's note: My thanks go to John Jeakins, former teacher at Fyling Hall School, for information, and to Nick Foggo of The Walmsley Society for the illustration of Fyling Old Hall by J. Ulric Walmsley.*



## Barry children, 1860



## The Palladian Pigsty



# COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO COVID

**O**UR LIVES have been affected by Covid-19 in so many different ways, from the financial hardship experienced by people who have lost business or employment to the emotional distress caused to those unable to see loved ones, take part in their usual sport or hobby, or socialise normally. There must be few of us who don't miss ordinary daily contact with others – human beings are social animals, after all. Yet humans are also enormously adaptable, and during the pandemic we have seen a huge level of inventiveness, both in ensuring business turnover and in responding to the needs of individuals and communities. Many people have found their lives heading in different directions: perhaps discovering parts of the UK they had previously overlooked, or deciding to move to a more attractive part of the country in search of a better quality of life – including more space for home-working. An estate agent friend told me the other day of a house he had valued where a laptop was set up in the en-suite bathroom, because with children not in school and both adults working from home, it was the only peaceful spot!

## ADAPTING TO CHANGE

There are many examples of adaptability in the North York Moors. In 'Moorland Voices' (next page), Clare Haynes explains how her choir has persevered in finding ways of singing together. NYMA's quarterly Council meetings have been taking place in virtual meeting spaces, with many of us learning new skills in order to take part. In normal times, I run guided rides (through Ride Yorkshire) to help people enjoy Yorkshire's wonderful bridleways and byways on their horses, but those had to stop during the lockdowns. To keep people engaged, I ran free online tutorials in map-reading so that riders could discover new routes to enjoy once they could get out and about again.



And NYMA Council members Cal and Dave Moore have set up a book exchange outside their home in Castleton. In Cal's words: "We are very lucky, as in many rural areas, to benefit from a cohesive community with support and resources very much within easy reach (albeit surprisingly for some to comprehend!). Our local GP surgery at Danby provided a book exchange in its vestibule for all to access, but during the restrictions this has been withdrawn. Having a surplus of books at home, we decided to offer them to passing walkers on the bridleway that runs adjacent to our fence, forming a Community Book Exchange where books can be deposited or withdrawn. Included is an assortment of books for adults and children. In pride of place are back issues of 'Voice of the Moors', with a QR code that directs people to the NYMA website!"



Photo © Dave Moore

Another member of NYMA's Council, Ray Clarke, was recently guest speaker at the Scarborough 40 Club, a debating and discussion group. He says: "the evening was less a presentation, more a talk about NYMA. I spoke for 25 minutes then spent nearly one and a half hours responding to comments and questions from participants. They all left knowing a lot more about NYMA! I thoroughly enjoyed myself and look forward to the next event - two other community groups have invited me to their online meetings". Similarly, Appleton-le-Moors resident Jim Hall is a Volunteer Ranger who in normal times gives illustrated talks on walking in the Moors in residential care homes. In order to continue to entertain the residents this year, Jim has been giving his talks over Zoom – complete with video clips of the landscape, music and sound effects such as birdsong and sheep baa'ing.

## BUSINESS DIVERSIFICATION

Meanwhile, local artist Anne Creighton, who lives in Appleton-le-Moors, has found a way to diversify after her income was cut in half by the pandemic.

"It all started when a friend offered me her knitting machine and punch cards which allow for Fair Isle motifs. I had never seen such a complex machine! Thankfully there are tutorials on the internet, and I now make my own designs. Looking over Rosedale I see the splendid aloneness and serenity, along with



Photo © Anne Creighton



the richness of its fauna and flora. There are discordant colours, with the pale purple of the heather, the vibrant green, the rust of the earth and of course the sky. Discordance along with harmonious colours zing together to help bring a design to life. This is what I look for in designing my hats. Then came the pandemic, so I turned my hobby into a small online business, selling my hats on Etsy under the name “grandhatday”. I’ve been very busy ever since on a range of colourful warm hats, including Christmas hats complete with mistletoe and holly!”

Many other businesses have also had to diversify. Beadlam Grange Farmshop, near Helmsley, normally uses their homegrown produce in their on-site café but has switched to selling ‘lockdown meat hampers’ and ‘Farm to Table’ Sunday Roasts and other takeaway meals, while in Castleton Lillie’s Provisional had great success over the spring and summer with an alfresco ‘pop-up’ shop selling fresh produce from their home and front yard. They closed the ‘shop’ in September but continued delivering fruit and veg throughout the Upper Esk Valley, and also prepare and deliver ready meals from a small commercial kitchen just outside Castleton – ‘Lillie’s Delivered’. Catherine Adamson of Lillie’s says “we are still very busy and looking forward to Christmas, having just published our Christmas menu!”.



## HELPING OTHERS

Other organisations have worked to ensure that elderly, isolated people continue to receive good food and some company. Revival North Yorkshire has been providing meals through its ‘Lunch on Legs’ programme and regular phone calls to support elderly residents of the Esk Valley. The community minibus ‘Heather Hopper’, also in the Esk Valley, replaced its regular outings with meal deliveries, using game donated by the North Yorkshire Moors Moorland Organisation, and other food donated or provided at low cost by local businesses including Hodgson’s Fish, Esk Valley Weddings of Danby Castle, and Lealholm Village Shop. Some of the food was prepared in the kitchens of The Downe Arms and The Eskdale, in Castleton. The Eskdale itself has been using the long months of lockdown and restrictions to refurbish their premises and has kept in touch with its supporters by cheery social media posts.

These are just a few examples of what individuals are doing to keep themselves and their communities healthy – and sane! – during the long pandemic. It’ll be several months before we return to anything like normal, so here’s to a continuation of community spirit and enterprise!

JANET COCHRANE



## MOORLAND VOICES - A CHOIR OF THE MOORS

‘**M**OOORLAND VOICES’ is a group of enthusiastic singers who rehearse throughout the year in Appleton-le-Moors Village Hall, where we are glad to follow in the sound-waves of the Ryedale Choral Union, who sang there for many years.

Many of us had previously sung in other groups and over several years had sung in venues from the Moors Inn to York Minster under the name of The Northern Ryedale Singers. But that didn’t seem to sum up who we are, and with members being drawn from many of the moorland villages as well as Kirkbymoorside, we settled on the name ‘Moorland Voices’ in 2018.

We perform at least three charity concerts each year, for instance we sang in support of the Water Works initiative in Appleton-le-Moors in 2018, when the whole village spent the summer raising money for a water project in Africa. Other outings have included a wedding dress festival in Rosedale Abbey, a joint concert with the Norton Salvation Army Band, and annual visits to Duncombe Park Chapel and the Merchant Taylors Hall in York in support of MacMillan Cancer Care Christmas fundraising. We also love to sing at weddings!

Our singers come from a range of musical backgrounds, tastes and levels of experience and our repertoire is eclectic, reflecting this variety. But the enjoyment of singing is something we all share!

Although choir-singing indoors was banned under Covid-19 restrictions some of us began meeting outdoors during the summer – and via the wonders of the internet – to learn new songs for when we meet again. It has been mostly fun, though a battle with technology for many. In common with amateur choirs across this country and beyond, we sought ways of returning to singing together. It was a new world of masks and social distancing, though sadly short-lived, for under the second lockdown we were once again unable to meet. At the time of going to press the rules and guidance for amateur choirs in the new Tiered system was unclear. What is clear is that those who sing find it a joyful, health-giving and stimulating activity. We miss it sorely, but we will be back!

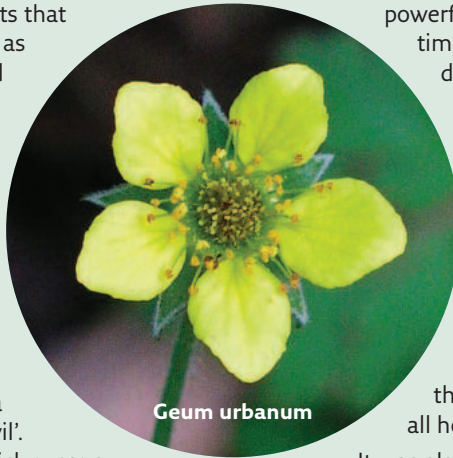
CLARE HAYNES  
Choir Director, Moorland Voices

# SPICY PLANTS - THE AVENS

**A**SWELL AS the more obvious plants that we associate with Christmas, such as spruce, fir and pine trees, holly and mistletoe, there are others that had relevance and uses in the past: those used as spices to brighten up the dull winter food. Two of these were the Avens or Geums: Wood Avens, *Geum urbanum* and Water Avens, *Geum rivale*, of the Rosaceae family.

'Geum' is from the Greek meaning 'to give a fragrance or pleasant flavour' while the derivation of 'Avens' is obscure: it may be from the Welsh 'afon', for river, or from a Medieval Latin word for 'antidote to the devil'.

Wood Avens is also called Herb Bennet, which means the blessed or praised herb.



*Geum urbanum*

## THE AVENS AND THEIR HABITAT

Wood Avens is a perennial plant with a loose basal rosette of long-stalked dark green leaves, the leaflets increasing in size up the stalk ending in a large three-lobed wavy-edged leaf, the apical lobe being the largest. From this arise stiff, branched and slightly hairy stems, each ending in rather small, insignificant yellow five-petalled star-like flowers which ripen into rounded fruits of hooked seeds. It has a long flowering period, May to November, and the rhizome is short and stout, ending abruptly with many fibrous roots.

Water Avens, also perennial, is a more attractive plant, shorter and stouter, the basal rosette of leaves with fewer, smaller lower leaflets and a large terminal trifoliate one. The flowers are nodding and bell-shaped with a purple calyx and fine dull pink/purple petals with a hint of orange, ripening to a head of hooked seeds. It flowers May to September and the rhizomes tend to lie closer to the surface with fibrous roots holding the plant into the ground.

Wood Avens is common in hedgerows, woodland waysides and rich disturbed ground while Water Avens prefers damper and shadier conditions by streams and ditches in woods. But where their habitats overlap they hybridise readily to produce a variety of intermediates, seen in many of the damp woody valleys of the Moors.

## FOOD, MEDICINE - AND PROTECTION FROM THE DEVIL

Although the young leaves of both species were in the past eaten in salads or used in broths or pottages, more recently I found a recipe for them fried in butter and garlic to make a crispy snack! But it is the short rhizome that is most used and prized. Dug up in spring it has a distinct spicy clove-like scent and it was carefully and slowly dried and ground for later use. The rhizome of Wood Avens has a more intense spicy flavour while that of the Water Avens is less so, but slightly chocolatey. These flavoursome roots were used as a spice in food and drink and also placed amongst clothes and linens to give a fresh scent and repel moths and fleas.

Wood Avens, and to a lesser extent the Water Avens, also has a long history of use in herbal medicine, having been considered a

powerful herb in European folklore since Medieval times; it is found in pictures and carvings decorating churches from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Its alternative name 'Herb Bennet' reflects how it was considered a sacred herb, partly because the three leaves represented the Blessed Trinity and the five petals the five wounds of Christ. The clove-like scent was believed to protect against the devil, so the root was worn as an amulet. According to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century natural history encyclopedia Hortus Sanitatis, "Where the root is in the house, the devil can do nothing for it is blessed above all herbs".

It was also considered an antidote to poison, and is linked to a legend of St. Benedict being saved from death by it. In fact, it does contain useful medicinal chemicals: an essential oil (eugenol), tannins, bitters and mucilage and was considered an 'official plant', i.e. one used as a medicine. As an astringent bitter tonic it was used to treat diarrhoea and other stomach complaints; as a digestive, for appetite loss; and for sore throats, catarrh, fevers and chills. As an antiseptic and astringent it was used externally for wounds and skin infections.

So, as well as flavouring Christmas fare it could be of use to calm the stomach after excess and protect against winter 'flus and chills - very useful! But maybe with all the Christmas chores we have no longer time to process the hard root of Herb Bennet to flavour our seasonal goodies - and it has been much easier to use imported ones ever since the discovery of shipping routes to the Far East opened up the 'spice trade' in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

ANNE PRESS



*Geum rivale*

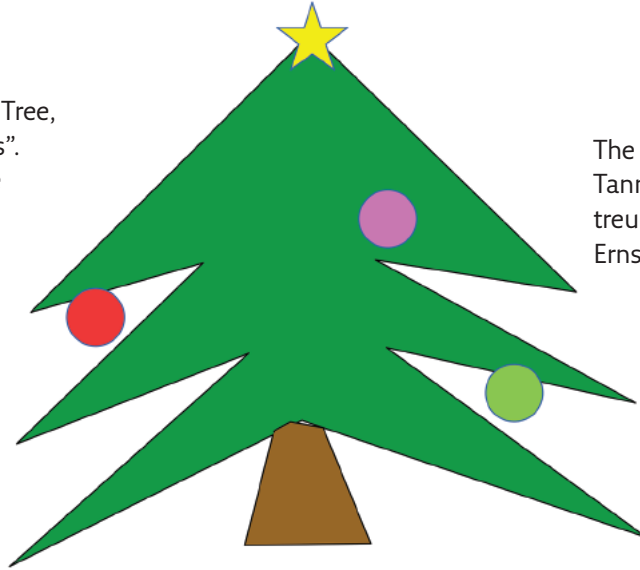


## SKYLARKS

Hello younger readers. Do you recognise the beginning of the seasonal song below?

“O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,  
how steadfast are your branches”.  
This is the English version of the  
original song.

It is the German  
tradition of bringing  
evergreen trees, such as  
pine trees, into houses  
for the Christmas  
period.



The original song starts “O  
Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum wie  
treu sind deine Blätter! written by  
Ernst Anschütz who was German.

This started in Britain  
over 300 years ago and  
was later popularised by  
Queen Victoria and  
Prince Albert about 150  
years ago.

I have started decorating the tree above, but it looks a bit bare. Perhaps you would like to finish it using  
your own crayons and pens? Happy decorating and Happy Christmas!

## CROSSWORD 91 by AMANUENSIS



### ACROSS

- 2, 1 down, 5 They looked to the heavens for guidance (3, 5, 4, 3)
- 8 Support for a driver? (3)
- 9 Scamper about under canvas (7)
- 11 They serve their time (11)
- 15 & 34 down For many it's the highlight of the Big Day! (9, 6)
- 17 Makes beer or 30 down perhaps (5)
- 18 Pull the Spanish drier (5)
- 19 Peer beheaded, that is uncanny (5)
- 22 Inoculant used non-stop (9)
- 26 Entranced by a knocking sound (4)
- 27 Make hole larger for paper (4)
- 32 Creature that always comes first (8)
- 33 Not present (8)
- 35 Another choice of tea interval (11)
- 38 A broken leg supporter used by mathematicians (8)

### DOWN

- 1 See 2 across
- 3 Ratio that has you going round in circles perhaps? (2)
- 4 A little exercise (2)
- 6 Threw a tantrum when posting letter? (7)
- 7 Reminder of crazy English moment (7)
- 9 Policeman seen looking into microscope (3)
- 10 Cossacks carry a small pouch (3)
- 12 The gift is here (7)
- 13 Aspiring to lose note eases headache (7)
- 14 Unpaid worker? (7)
- 15 Rank sound gives signal (3)
- 16 Cutting tool was reversed (3)
- 20 Definitely not an earthling (1,1)
- 21 Fashionable when at home (2)
- 22 About Latin (2)
- 23 Cooperate within musical drama (5)
- 24 Age is mixed support (5)
- 25 Small city? (1,1)
- 28 Hear little thanks for the black stuff (3)
- 29 Cloaked figure with a stout heart (3)
- 30 We use bags and bags of this (3)
- 31 Eccentric person from Brazil? (3)
- 34 See 15 across
- 36 Fish that easily slip through the net? (3)
- 37 Rant about the mountain lake (4)

Take the letters from the coloured squares and rearrange  
in the boxes to solve the anagram:  
Clue: We do this together at this time of year


Answers on back cover

# NYMA NEWS

**WE WERE** pleased to be able to run one organised walk for members while Covid restrictions were relaxed, and a few of us met on a chilly October day to explore the moor above Comondale with its far-reaching views and archaeological sites. It was striking how much people enjoyed being able to meet friends at last – in a socially distanced way of course, with plenty of fresh air blowing between us. Sadly, we felt that the risks were becoming too great (and the rules kept changing too quickly) for us to be able to run any more on-the-ground events for the time being.

Meanwhile, NYMA Council member Ray Clarke has taken advantage of the technology that allows us to keep in touch over the ether while we can't meet in person to give entertaining illustrated talks by Zoom. It'll be a few more months before we can behave normally, so do please get in touch if you're part of a group or society that would like Ray to enhance your meetings with a talk on the history of the Moors and on NYMA itself – you can contact us on [secretary@nyma.org.uk](mailto:secretary@nyma.org.uk).

Looking further ahead, we're pleased to announce that the National Park Societies Conference, which NYMA planned to host in October this year, has been rescheduled for 12-14 October 2021. It will be held at the Cober Hill Hotel, Cloughton (near Scarborough) and over the next few months we'll arrange (or rather, re-arrange!) a line-up of great speakers and ancillary events, with something for everyone interested in the future of the North York Moors and in our national system of 'designated landscapes'. Make a note in your calendar now!

NYMA walkers on Comondale Moor

Memorial to local men killed in WW1 on Comondale Moor



## CROSSWORD ANSWERS (see page 19)

### PULL A CHRISTMAS CRACKER

See 15 across, 36: eels, 37: tarn  
aegis, 25: LA, 28: tar, 29: oak, 30: tea, 31: nut, 34: 20: FT, 21: in, 22: ca (circa - about), 23: opera, 24: present, 13: aspirin, 14: amateur, 15: cue, 16: saw, stamped, 7: memento, 9: cop, 10: sac, 12: 1: See 2 across, 3: P, 4: PE (Physical Exercise), 6: Down  
absentee, 35: alternative, 38: algebra  
22: continual, 26: rapt, 27: ream, 32: aardvark, 33: Christmas dinner, 17: brews, 18: towel, 19: eerie, campers, 11: apprentices, 15 & 34 down:  
2, 1 down, 5: The Three Wise Men, 8: tee, 9: Across

The North Yorkshire Moors Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Registration no. 1169240

St. Hilda's, Danby



## DANBY CHURCH

I see a church, set in an old grey dale,  
A sombre building worn by wind and hail,  
A churchyard full of graves of long ago  
And round those rugged stones the snowdrops grow,  
Sheltered by wind-torn yews of years gone by  
And pines whose fluted branches reach for the sky.  
The west wind howls around that massive door  
And quivering leaves drift on the old porch floor,  
Is it but fantasy? Or does the sound  
Of weird, unearthly music linger round  
That edifice, drawn from immortal key  
By spirit in that lofty gallery?  
Or do the saints of glass step down with smiles  
To tread in slow procession down the aisles,  
Where spirits haunt the intensely quiet air,  
And sacred stillness lingers everywhere.

JOAN HARTLEY

Joan Rudsdale was born at Ainthorpe in 1919 and wrote this poem when at Whitby Grammar School in the early 1930s. Later Joan Hartley, she died in 2015 having lived all her life in or near her beloved North York Moors.

## OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

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Ian Carstairs OBE

### Chairman

Tom Chadwick

### Vice Chairman

Adrian Leaman

### Council Members

Ray Clarke, Janet Cochrane, Albert Elliot, Ann Glass, Cal Moore, Dave Moore, Colin Speakman, George Winn-Darley, Elaine Wisdom

### Treasurer

Brian Pearce – [brian.pearce11@btinternet.com](mailto:brian.pearce11@btinternet.com)

### Secretary

Janet Cochrane – [secretary@nyma.org.uk](mailto:secretary@nyma.org.uk) – 07570 112010

### Membership Secretary

Cal Moore – [membership@nyma.org.uk](mailto:membership@nyma.org.uk) – 01287 669648

### Walks Coordinator

Heather Mather – 01287 669104

### NYMA

4 Station Road, Castleton, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 2EG



NYMA - PROTECTING THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

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