Images of the Peak District, A.D. 1150—1950

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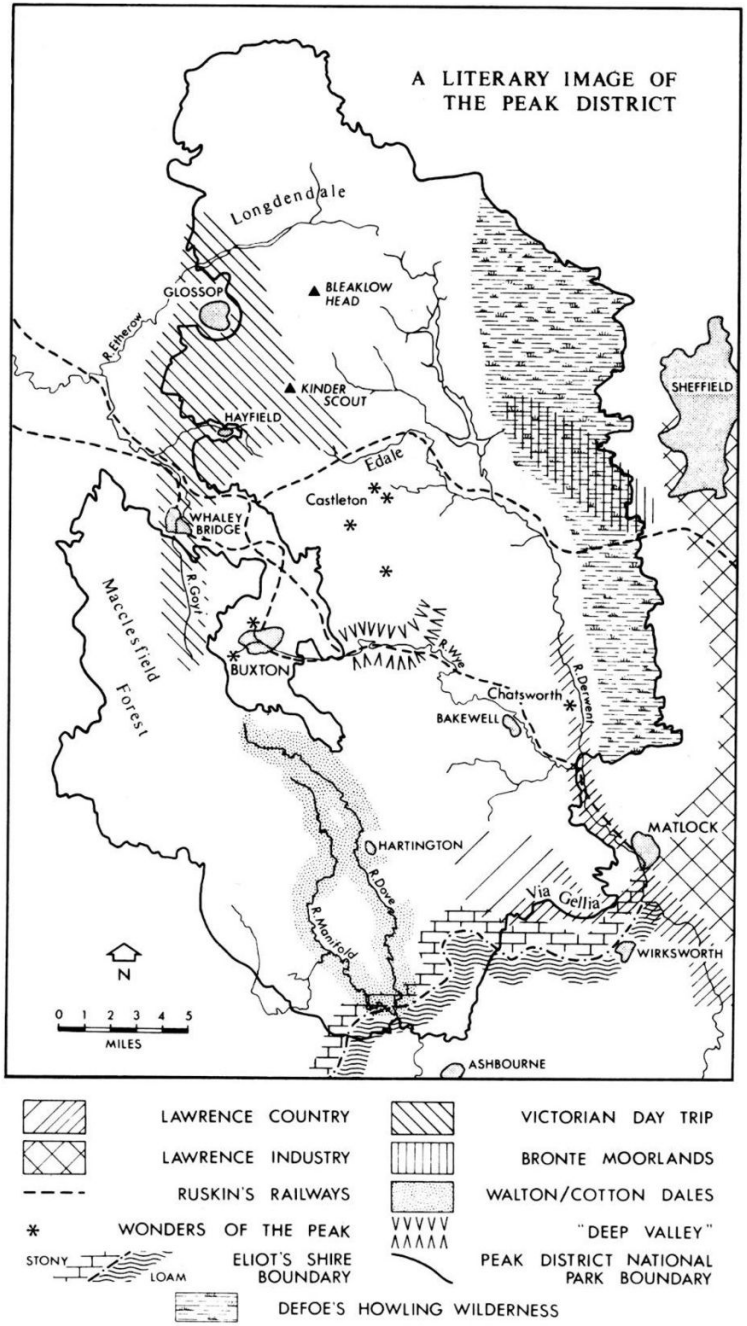
Introduction

The designation of the Peak District National Park on the 28th December 1950 culminated a decade of reports of committees, White Papers and legislation and satisfied the strong weight of public opinion in favour of the establishment of national parks. The story is comparatively well known. From the impetus provided by the Report of the Scott Committee on Land Utilization in Rural Areas (1942) and the White Paper on Control of Land Use (1944), the Dower Report (1945) and the Hobhouse Report (1947) provided the framework for the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act and for the National Parks Commission to define precisely a geographical region known as the Peak District. The region was an interesting countryside unit that largely ignored traditional and administrative boundaries, had peculiar enclaves and indentations to exclude the major industrial areas of Buxton, Glossop and Matlock and united the two distinct landscapes of the Low or White Peak of the Carboniferous limestones with the High or Dark Peak of the shale-grits and sandstones.

It was a unit defined by geographers and countryside planners who were faced with the problem of interpreting a series of ill-defined mental images in terms of a precise cartographic and administrative reality. Every member of the Hobhouse Committee, like every visitor to the Peak District, had his own personal image of what the region comprised and most would have had the rudiments of a public image that had evolved over eight centuries and been so forcefully expressed in the previous decade. It is interesting to try and trace the evolution of this image and its many facets through literature and the arts and to attempt the definition of a corporate image that was prevalent in the twenty years prior to the designation of the region as part of the heritage landscape of England.[1]

The Scenic Wonders Image

Throughout the four centuries following the Norman Conquest, a variety of gazetteers listed four wonders of the country, namely, Stonehenge, Cheddar Gorge, the Lake District and Peaktown. The earliest descriptions of these wonders are apparently to be found in the twelfth century annals of Henry of Huntingdon *(circa* 1150 A.D.). and Alfred of Beverley (*circa* 1180 A.D.). A century later, the *Polychronicon* of Ranulph Higden (d. 1364) covering the period from the Creation to



A.D. 1352, described these wonders in detail; but it was not until John of Trevisa translated Higden's work from Latin to English that the wonders became well known to the Knights and Ladies of the court. According to Chapter 42, the first greatest wonder was at Pectoun (Peaktown) —

> 'Here bloweth so strong a wind out of the fissures of the earth that it$_2$ casteth back up clothes that are casteth in .....'

The actual wonder seems to have been Peakshole Cavern surmounted by the twelfth century castle, from which a succession of Norman and Angevin Kings and nobles hunted in the Royal Forest of High Peak between 1150 and 1250 A.D.[3]

Gradually, as the region became deforested, its national renown waned. But during the final period of deforestation between 1620 and 1640 A.D., seven wonders of the Peak were being described in the Latin hexameters of *De Mirabilibus Pecci*, composed by the young tutor of William Cavendish at Chatsworth House — Thomas Hobbes. The poem was written in 1626-28, first published in 1637, reprinted twice in 1672 and translated by popular demand in 1678 after the shy tutor had come to be recognised as perhaps the most eminent philosopher of the seventeenth century. Woven into the descriptive pastoral poem that began with the suggestion that the Peak of Derbyshire was the English Alps *(alpibus angliacis)* Hobbes listed seven wonders — Chatsworth .... *praeclara domus*; *Plutonis ad anum .... loci vocat incola*, Peak's Arse — Peakshole Cavern; Mam Tor ..... *mirabile dictu*; Eldenia — Elden Hole in Peak Forest; *Fons ore perennis* — the Ebbing and Flowing Well; *Fons inclytus Annae* — St. Ann's Well, Buxton; and *spelunca Poli* — Poole's Hole Cavern.[4]

In 1681, Charles Cotton further emphasised these scenic attractions in his poem entitled *The Wonders of the Peak*, adding amongst other celebrated localities, the Valley of the River Dove. Cotton had previously extolled the virtues of this river in the second part of his joint work with Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*. Together, the Viator and Piscator travel north from Ashbourne towards Dovedale —

> '*Viator*: Bless me! What mountains are here! are we not in Wales?
> *Piscator*: No, but in almost as mountainous a country; and yet these hills, though high, bleak and craggy, breed and feed good beef and mutton above ground, and afford good store of lead within.
> *Viator*: They had need of all those commodities to make amends for the ill landscape .....'

But then, the two travellers encounter the 'delicate', 'beloved', 'fair', 'princess of rivers', the Dove, where the Piscator demonstrates how to catch the finest trout and grayling throughout the year, with a great variety of special flies; and the Viator is left to claim the stream 'to be the best Trout-river in England'. From this simple book there thus arose an image of a satisfied, comtemplative traveller, encountering the best example of a natural resource in the country and a special approach to fishing that had been evolved by a rare, local breed who were in complete harmony with their environment and all its natural splendours. The image was a powerful one;

so powerful that by 1915 it had demanded 160 editions of *The Compleat Angler*, 102 of which were published to satisfy the pastoral desires of Victorian England.[5]

The imagery did not remain with literature, for on January 8th, 1779 one of the most lavish pantomimes ever staged was presented at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane — its title, *The Wonders of Derbyshire*; or *Harlequin in the Peak*. The German artist de Loutherbourg (1740-1812) had been established as a London theatre artist and producer by David Garrick in 1772 and a visit to the beauty spots of Derbyshire in 1778 led him to recognise their potential as a colourful setting for a pantomime. The magical part of the production was based upon the tradition that the *genius loci* of the Peak was embodied in a supernatural being called Salmandore who assisted the lead miners and endowed them with special gifts of divination. The dialogue was a weird mixture of harlequinade magic and readings from Cotton's treatise on *The Wonders of the Peak*, as, in Act one, Columbine was lured away from Matlock at sunset to Dovedale, passing through a leadmine landscape and Chatsworth House en route. Act 2 comprised nine scenes set around Cotton's descriptions of the six natural wonders and ended in Poole's Cavern, where the genii and fairies appeared to laud their master. The pantomime proved to be a great success for it was performed several times between 1779 and 1791 and a book of the script was published.[6].

Thus was the climax of an image that extolled the marvellous and unique qualities of the Peak District and which had been generated by respected citizens who epitomised and inspired the contemplative, philosophical features of the character of Man. The inspiration filtered through to future generations. Perhaps the last words on the subject should be those of Lord Byron from a letter to Thomas Moore—

> 'I should like to have made a giro of the Peak with you. I know that country well, having been all over it when a boy. Was you ever in Dovedale? I can assure you there are things in Derbyshire as noble as Greece or Switzerland.'[7]

Defoe's Real Wonders and Howling Wilderness

Then there was the alternative view of the wonders of the Peak. In his *Tour through the whole island of Great Britain* in 1724, Daniel Defoe was scathing about five of the seven wonders. The Spa well at Buxton was 'nothing at all' compared to those at Bath and Aix-la-Chapelle; the Ebbing and Flowing Well was 'a poor thing indeed'; Mam Tor and Peakshole Cavern were 'wonderless and empty of everything that may be called rare or strange'; and Poole's Hole was 'another of the wonderless wonders'. His real amazement, therefore, was 'that in a nation so curious, so inquiring, and so critical as this, anything so unsatisfying, so foolish and so weak, should pass for wonders' as the aforementioned localities. He summarised his views by reducing the wonders of the Peak to a less number, and of quite a different kind. Elden Hole he acknowledged to be a wonder of nature and Chatsworth a wonder of art. With the latter edifice, his query was 'not that so noble and magnificent a palace should be built, but that it should be built in such a situation, and in such a country, so out of the way, so concealed from the world.' Finally, Defoe wondered that, in a nation full of invalids, no greater use was made of 'the fountain of medicine sent from heaven', St. Ann's Well at Buxton.

There were nine distinct editions of his work between 1724 and 1778 and the emphasis on St. Ann's Well in the latter edition seems to have had a considerable effect on the realisation of the potential of the Buxton waters. The year 1784 saw the publication of the first detailed chemical analyses of the spa waters and the following year witnessed the opening of a charitable bath-house. More analyses followed and the properties of the waters became nationally famous as the Bath Charity was reconstituted in 1854, the Devonshire Hospital opened in 1859 and the development of Buxton as a fashionable Victorian health resort was ensured.

Besides the denigration of the wonders of the Peak, Defoe also succeeded in creating an image of an adverse, inhospitable landscape, inhabited by some of the more miserable forms of humanity. His opening paragraphs on the town of Derby carry the suggestion that the reason why there were so many families of gentlemen living there was that the Peak was 'so inhospitable, so rugged and so wild a place, the gentry choose to reside at Derby, rather than upon their estates.' Travelling north and west from Wirksworth — where 'the inhabitants are a rude, boorish kind of people' — Defoe found what he considered to be one of the real wonders of the region, namely, the pitiful existence of the lead miner and his family. His graphic description portrays the image of an incomprehensible, emaciated specimen of mankind who was forced to work 150 yards below ground to provide a crude troglodyte livelihood for himself, his wife and five children. The primitive, stone age image is best described in Defoe's own words.

> 'The man was a most uncouth spectacle; he was cloathed all in leather, had a cap of the same without brims, some tools in a little basket ..... not one of the names of which we could understand but by the help of an interpreter. Nor indeed could we understand any of the man's discourse so as to make out a whole sentence ..... for his person, he was lean as a skeleton, pale as a dead corps, his hair and beard a deep black, his flesh lank, and, as we thought, something of the colour of the lead itself, ...' 'There was a large hollow cave, which the poor people by two curtains hang'd cross, had parted into three rooms. On one side was the chimney, and the man, or perhaps his father, being miners, had found means to work a shaft or funnel through the rock to carry the smoke out .....'

The contrast between this way of life and that enjoyed by the Cavendish family at Chatsworth House is most obvious in Defoe's descriptions. Yet, he seems to be more impressed by the landscape around this 'most magnificent building' that rose through beautiful plantations of trees to a mountain-top, mill-stone quarry and finally a vast expanse of moorland with a large reservoir of water to supply the cascades and fountains of the house and gardens. From his discourse on the environs of Chatsworth comes the view that the great house is a focal point in the Peak, that its imminent presence is announced to the traveller by mill-stone quarries and that the one great potential of the vast expanse of treeless moorlands is as a water-gathering ground. Chatsworth, the mill-stone markers for the boundaries of the national park and the innumerable reservoirs are, today, very strong components of an image of the region.

But a much stronger image comes from Defoe's passage on the moorlands.

> 'Upon the top of that mountain begins a vast extended moor or waste, which, for fifteen or sixteen miles together due north, presents you neither hedge, house, or tree, but a waste and houling wilderness, over which, when strangers travel, they are obliged to take guides, or it would be next to impossible not to lose their way. Nothing can be more surprising of its kind, than for a stranger coming from the north, suppose from Sheffield in Yorkshire ..... to pass this difficult desart country, and seeing no end of it ..... of a sudden the guide brings him to this precipice, where he looks down from a frightful heighth, and a comfortless, barren and, as he thought, endless moor, into the most delightful valley, with the most pleasant garden, and most beautiful palace in the world.'

Thus arises the image of the impenetrable eastern moorlands of the Peak District, acting as a daunting boundary to would-be travellers from the north, but finally yielding at the gritstone edges to reveal the green and gentle landscape of the Derwent Valley. This description and the portrayal of the lead mine landscape are perhaps two of the most powerful legacies of Defoe's topographical tour of the country. The edition of 1778 was the ninth and so complete and so accurate was the work that the tenth did not appear until 1927. It was a *vade mecum* for Victorian travellers and many novelists used its descriptions as background inspiration for their writing. Charles Dickens and George Elliot both extended the lead mining image, Charlotte Brontë condemnned her heroine Jane Eyre to wander through the same 'houling wilderness' and the young Ruskin formed his own opinion of the scenic wonders with a copy of the book in his hand.[8]

Contrasting images from mid-Victorian literary visitors.

> 'There is no really beautiful part of this kingdom so little known as the Peak of Derbyshire. Matlock, with its tea-garden trumpery and mock-heroic wonders; Buxton, with its bleak hills and fashionable bathers; the truly noble Chatsworth and the venerable Haddon, engross almost all that the public generally have seen of the Peak.'

This pen-picture succinctly describes the mid-Victorian, middle-class image of the Peak District that had evolved from seventeenth and eighteenth century literature and drama. The quotation forms the opening to *The Miner's Daughters — A Tale of the Peak* written and published by no less an author than Charles Dickens, in the first volume of his weekly journal, *Household Words*. The journal was very popular with the Buxton bathers; extracts were printed in the local newspaper and in the advertisements for localities worth visiting, along with the association of Castleton with Sir Walter Scott's *Peveril of the Peak* and Dovedale with Cotton and Walton,

Cressbrookdale was cited as the scene of 'Mr. Dickens very interesting story.' The remainder of the opening paragraph is a eulogy from which the reader derives a feeling of natural, primeval quality of the dales and hills and a primitive, empirical character for the local population.

> 'It is talked of as a land of mountains, which in reality are only hills; but its true beauty lies in valleys that have been created by the rending of the earth in some primeval convulsion, and which present a thousand charms to the eyes of the lover of nature. How deliciously do the crystal waters of the Wye and the Dove rush along such valleys, or dales, as they are called. With what a wild variety do the grey rocks soar up amid their woods and copses. How airily stand in the clear heavens the lofty limestone precipices, and the grey edges of rock gleam out from bare green downs — there *never* called downs. What a genuine Saxon air is there cast over the population, what Saxon bluntness salutes you in their speech?'

Dickens actually sets his tale in a tributary arm of Cressbrookdale and proceeds to create a primitive image with further use of 'Saxon', descriptions of hard-drinking lead miners and pinched framework-knitters, and children who ramble through the dales on bright autumn afternoons, picking flowers and the fruit of the mountain bramble, 'known only to the inhabitants of the hills.' But after dark, the craggy paths become unfamiliar and forboding and, as distraught parents search the woods, the miner's son falls over a precipice, leaving the younger daughter in a state of adolescent lunacy. Dickens further stresses the adversity of the environment to human life when, in rapid succession, he condemns both parents to an early grave as the father is killed in his mine and mother is seized by rheumatic fever. The daughters are thus left 'to rise in the dark, and traverse those wild and bleak hills' for work in the cotton factories.[9]

It is mainly the benevolence of the factory owner that aids the rehabilitation of the younger daughter, a characteristic which had been notably absent in the mill-owners in the novels of Mrs. Trollope and Mrs. Banks — *Michael Armstrong* and *Bond Slaves*. The latter lady actually tells the reader about a factory in Cressbrookdale but Mrs. Trollope is more wary of libellous consequences in describing Deep Valley Mills in a dale that is readily identifiable with the valley of the River Wye near Cressbrook. The heroine, in search of Michael, crosses 'barren' and 'wild heath' covered 'with a crowded layer of large and shapeless gray stones' that create an 'arid', 'rugged desert', into a secluded Deep Valley where 'all the acts that might be committed ..... were hid from the eye of every human being but those engaged in them.' Here, in the factories, she finds atrocious conditions for the bare existence of misplaced parish orphan apprentices, sent into bondage and obscurity until death; children dying by the wayside from over-work and malnutrition; and wild, crazy women who have escaped from the factories.[10].

The Miner's Daughters and *Michael Armstrong* were both set in the austere limestone dale and hill scenery of the White Peak, the landscape most frequently

observed by the visitors as a diversion from their bathing and tea-garden trumpery. But what of the less angular gritstone hills and moors; was there a literary image for this landscape? There was, and it came from the pen of another casual visitor to the Peak District.

The biographers of the Brontë family record that Charlotte spent two or three weeks at Hathersage vicarage with her friend Ellen Nussey and that the brief sojourn had two interesting results. She renamed the village Morton and used its surrounding landscape for the setting of the Rivers' cottage in *Jane Eyre*; and from a comemorative tablet in the church, celebrating the Eyre family, it seems highly probable that she took Jane's surname. Fleeing from Mr Rochester and the terrors of Thornfield Hall, the coachman set her down at Whitcross, a way-marker in the dusk of a north-midland shire.

> 'There are great moors behind and on each hand of me; there are waves of mountains far beyond that deep valley at my feet ..... High banks of moor were about me; the crag protected my head; the sky was over that.'

Whitcross is usually identified with the crossroads on the Sheffield to Chapel-en-le-Frith turnpike on Stony Ridge Moor, part of the inhospitable eastern Peak District moorlands that form a daunting barrier between Sheffield and the Hope Valley. After spending a night on the moors, Jane walked 'amongst the romantic hills' towards Morton which soon came to be regarded as a 'sordid little village', before finding succour at the Rivers' home of Marsh End, popularly associated with North Lees Hall. Like the moors and the village it first appeared to be remote, cold and hostile.

> 'My eye still roved over the sullen swell, and along the moor-edge, vanishing amidst the wildest scenery; when at one point, far in among the marshes and the ridges, a light sprung up ..... It led me aslant over the hill, through a wide bog; which would have been impassable in winter and was splashy and shaking even now, in the height of summer.'

Eventually she gained her object, the friendship of the family and the regard of the working people of Morton in her new found role of village schoolmistress; and the local environment became secure, warm and friendly. Such an image of a safe, anonymous refuge contrasts sharply with the precarious or sinister and malevolent picture painted by Dickens and Mrs. Banks, as the harsh limestones of the Wye Valley contrast with the softer gritstones of the Hope Valley.[11]

One further contrast remains to be examined, namely the Loamshire/Stonyshire contrast in the novel *Adam Bede*. Within months of the publication of George Eliot's most popular work, her mid-Victorian readers had identified the key villages of Hayslope and Snowfield with Ellastone in Staffordshire and Wirksworth in Derbyshire. To these were added, by quaint contrivance, Ashbourne (Oakbourne) and Dovedale (Eagledale), Norbury as Norbourne, Derby as Stoniton and hence, Stonyshire came to be identified as the county of Derbyshire while Loamshire fitted

neatly with Staffordshire. The authoress was not, however, intimately connected with the locale and she readily admitted that the landscapes and countryside were intimately imagined from stories she had heard from her father, reinforced by topographical details gleaned from the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In her letters she remarks of the counties of Derbyshire and Staffordshire that 'I never remained in either of those counties more than a few days together, and of only two such visits have I more than a shadowy, interrupted recollection.'[12] Yet by her description of the locale, she provided a rich and credible setting for the story, a strong feeling of authenticity, but, above all, a sharp contrast between Loamshire, the county of Adam Bede and Stonyshire, the home of the Methodist heroine, Dinah Morris.

> 'That rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged, lies close to a grim outskirt of Stonyshire, overlooked by its barren hills as a pretty blooming sister may sometimes be seen linked in the arm of a rugged, tall, swarthy brother; and in two or three hours' ride the traveller might exchange a bleak treeless region, intersected by lines of cold grey stone, for one where his road wound under the shelter of woods, or up swelling hills, muffled with hedgerows and long meadow-grass and thick corn .....'[13]

This description is more than simply a Derbyshire/Staffordshire contrast for the landscapes of hedgerows, long meadow-grass and thick corn lie directly east of Ellastone on the undulating lowlands of south Derbyshire. More specifically, low-land Stonyshire and Loamshire contrast with upland Stonyshire along the Carboniferous Limestone scarp boundary running to the north of the Wirksworth to Ashbourne road. Northward lies the grey, rugged barrenness and austerity of the limestone plateau with its lead mines and grey hamlets, while to the south lie the gentle undulations of the Yoredale shales and sandstones and the rich arable and pasture lands overlying the drift covered lowlands of Keuper marl.

Dinah herself describes the contrast.

> 'Oh, I love the Stonyshire side, ... 'I shouldn't like to set my face towards the countries where they're rich in corn and cattle, and the ground so level and so easy to tread; and to turn my back on the hills where the poor people have to live such a hard life, and the men spend their days in the mines away from the sunlight. It's very blessed on a bleak, cold day, when the sky is hanging dark over the hill, to feel the love of God in one's soul, and carry it to the lonely, bare, stone houses, where there's nothing else to give comfort.'[14]

Through the character of Dinah and her active involvement in a non-conformist faith and the trail of Hetty Sorrel the stark and cold country of Stonyshire comes to be associated with the austerity of truth. Add to this such descriptive phrases as 'the keen and hungry winds of the north' and the 'grim, stony and unsheltered' nature of Snowfield on the edge of Stonyshire with, twelve miles to the north, the village of

Hetton-Deeps (Over Haddon), 'where people get their living by working in lead-mines, and where there's no church nor preacher,' and the image of a bleak, barren, impoverished and pagan wilderness is created to contrast with the self-sufficient, idyllic paradise of Hayslope and the lowland counties of the Midlands in general.[15]

The Manchester Mistresses and a day trip from Darkshire

The decades between 1840 and 1880 saw the publication of a spate of novels that exposed the sorry plight of the industrial working classes in England. Several novels had strong regional associations, but none more so than those of the two eminent mistresses from Manchester and district — Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell and Mrs. G. Linnaeus Banks, who published a host of writings that placed the actual observations of Engels into a precise romantic and ruthless north country environment. The local campaign was actually begun by a native of the south of England, Mrs. Frances Trollope, whose novel *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong,* had the sole intention of revealing 'the hideous mass of injustice and suffering to which thousands of infant labourers have subjected who toil in our monster spinning mills' and 'the fearful evils inherent in the factory system.'[16] Mrs. Gaskell joined the fray with *Mary Barton* and *North and South* and Mrs. Banks followed up with *Bond Slaves* and *The Manchester Man.* From these works came the dismal image of a smoky manufacturing town like Milton-Northern in Darkshire where, if the many-windowed factories did not choke the populace with black 'unparliamentary' smoke, then the operatives would suffer a premature demise through the inhalation of cotton dust and the disease of byssinosis.[17] Beyond the smoke there were the more fashionable, less-polluted suburbs like Crampton and further east, the secluded river valleys of the Pennine foothills, in one such 'Mr Ashton possessed a water-mill on the picturesque banks of the river Goyt, which divided the counties of Cheshire and Derbyshire'. Here, at Whaley Bridge, the patriarchal factory owner had his country retreat —

> 'as delightful ..... as any wearied denizen of the town could desire,' that 'overlooked a charming landscape; descending, at first suddenly, from the wide-spread flower-garden (with its one great sycamore to the right of the cottage for shade), then with a gradual slope to a bean-field below, to a meadow crossed by a narrow rill, then, after a wider stretch of grass the alder and hazel fringe of a trout stream, skirting the high road, on the far side of which tall poplars waved, and in Autumn shed their leaves in the wider waters of the Goyt .....'[18]

The villages of Whaley Bridge and neighbouring Taxal had, according to Mrs. Banks been chiefly colonised by Mr. Ashton's workpeople, many of whom were displaced pauper apprentices from Manchester and Warrington. Displacement had its compensations, for it was easy to walk out of the factory and into the countryside to meditate alone with nature or to find remance.

> 'Factory hours were long, but the summer days were longer, and he was glad after work was over to ramble away through the valley of the Goyt, following the winding of the stream, or over the larch-clad hills above Taxal, whence he would return with the rising moon, bringing pockets full of the crips-brown fir-cones for Sim to play with. In the pine-woods along with nature, he could give vent to his emotions, or indulge in meditation at his will .....' '... Ellen Chadwick and Jabez went rambling with the winding waters of the translucent Goyt, under umbrageous trees on pleasant mountain slopes, where foxgloves nodded and horse-tail grasses bent before them, and only an occasional reaper or gleaner crossed their path.'[19]

These were privileges reserved for those cotton operations who happened to live and work in the mills to the east of Manchester in towns like Glossop, Hyde and New Mills and while they were able to take full advantage of the beauties of the Peak District hills and valleys, their counterparts in the city were denied the experience of the solitude and romance of such country. Mrs. Gaskell stresses the inaccessibility of the countryside in *Mary Barton* and also describes another surprising characteristic of the working man in Manchester and district —

> 'There are botanists among them equally familiar with either the Linnaean or the Natural system who know the name and habitat of every plant within a day's walk from their dwellings ..... there are entomologists who may be seen with a rude-looking net ready to catch any winged insect ..... practical, shrewd, hardworking men who pore over new speci mens with real scientific delight ..... Perhaps it may be owing to the great annual town holiday of Whitsuntide so often falling in May or June that the two great beautiful families of Ephemeridae and Phryganidae have been so much and so closely studied by Manchester workmen while they have in a great measure escaped general observation.[20]

Mention of the annual Whitsuntide holidays is to be found in many of the novels written about nineteenth century Manchester. According to Mrs. Banks —

> 'Whitsuntide is the great annual festival of Manchester. It is the race week, the time when Sunday-school children dress in their best to walk in procession and have excursional treats into the country.[21]

The Whit walks remained part of the heritage of the whole Manchester district until well into the twentieth century and the excursion treat for the schoolchildren still continues in many towns. In the early nineteenth century, the country day out was to the immediate peripheral countryside with picnics and sports in such inviting localities as Ardwick Green. But, with the advent of railways, the entire juvenile

population of parts of Manchester came to be transported to the fringes of the Peak District. On Whit Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 1876, the year of publication of *The Manchester Man*, the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Companies transported no less than 10,850 Sunday-school children and parents from Manchester to a variety of rural stations on the fringes of the Pennines. From the stations at Hadfield, Glossop, Broadbottom and Hayfield, the excursionists could climb on to the heather-clad hills of Peaknaze Moors, the Snake Moors, Charlesworth Coombs and Kinder Scout to look back towards the frowning clouds hanging over Cottonopolis; and from Strines and New Mills they could explore the same fir woods of the Goyt valley as Jabez Clegg and Ellen Chadwick.

Predictably, the local land-owning gentry reacted and there were frequent verbal and physical skirmishes between the visitors and gamekeepers leading, inevitably, to the establishment in September 1876 of the Hayfield, Kinder Scout and District branch of the Ancient Footpaths and Bridlepaths Association. It was not long before most of the rights of way in the Hayfield district were established, but in their descriptive booklet, the Association was careful to state that 'if the pedestrian wishes actually to ramble over the Scout ..... he must provide himself with an order.'[22] Thus commenced the battle for recreational access to the Peak District moorlands in an attempt to secure a vital part of the heritage of the Manchester working man. To this was added the heritage of the Sheffield working man when the Midland's Dore and Chinley railway forged its way through the secluded vale of Edale and beneath the forboding eastern moorlands in 1894 to open the whole of the Dark Peak as a potential recreation ground. Then, on Good Friday and several subsequent occasions in 1898, the Kinder moors were fired maliciously and the conflict for access rights had begun in earnest.[12]

Ruskiniana and the railways

The railways which brought the recreating masses were not without their critics. Perhaps their best known opponent was the eminent nineteenth century literary and social critic John Ruskin, whose dour commentaries and letters on a variety of subjects dominated public criticism in the latter half of the century and filled no less than thirty-five volumes when published in 1903. Ruskin knew Derbyshire well. His parents introduced him to the region in 1829 when, as a boy of eleven, they took him on excursions from Matlock to explore the local caverns in search of mineral specimens. He was to return to the area many times and even contemplated the purchase of a 'rose-covered cottage in the dells of Matlock'. But an 1871 illness in this town left unfortunate memories and he chose the Lake District in preference. In a series of open letters published at various times between 1840 and 1890, he recommended the region to countless visitors with profuse superlatives and comparisons of the limestone dale scenery with that of classical Arcadia and the Vale of Tempe. The Peak District was portrayed as being both unique and diverse and of great educational potential to students of a wide range of arts and sciences.

> 'I can't find anything like Derbyshire anywhere else.. That little heap of crystalline hills, white over with sheep, white under with dog-tooth spar is a treasure alike to them all..... In its very minuteness it is the most educational of all the districts of beautiful landscape known to me. The vast masses, the luxurious colouring, the mingled associations of great mountain scenery, amaze, excite, overwhelm or exhaust — but too seldom teach; The mind cannot choose where to begin. But Derbyshire is a lovely child's alphabet; an alluring lesson in all that's admirable .....'[24]

To Ruskin the dales of Derbyshire were as inviolable as the vales of Arcadia and when the Midland Railway projected a Matlock to Buxton and Manchester line through the heart of the Wye Valley his opposition was both vociferous and vituperative. Unfortunately, the opposition failed and he was left to mourn the blight of industrialism creeping into the English countryside in the wake of the railway. The industry was, of course, limestone quarrying and, in the twenty years after the opening of the Buxton branch-line in 1865, five lime and stone companies had aligned their workings with the railway. But it was probably partly his acidic criticism (and stubborn land-owners) that led to the alteration of the route of the proposed Dore and Chinley railway from its original line through Castleton and Dove Holes to a northerly route along the vale of Edale. Castleton was much-revered by Ruskin and its caves had been a constant source of inspiration to him since his first visit in 1829, when he admits to have frightened both his parents and himself in Speedwell Cavern. He opposed the original Buxton, Chapel-en-le-Frith & Sheffield Railway Bill in 1867 and again in 1884, when it was revived as the Dore & Chinley scheme, defending his beloved limestone caves and dales from devastation. There are many pieces of railway Ruskiniana, but the following extracts best illustrate his views on the Peak District railways and their violation of the landscape.

> 'There was a rocky valley between Buxton and Bakewell, once upon a time, divine as the Vale of Tempe; you might have seen the Gods there morning and evening — Apollo and all the sweet muses of the light — walking in fair procession on the lawns of it, and to and fro among the pinnacles of its crags. You cared neither for Gods nor grass, but for cash (which you did not know the way to get); you thought you could get it by what the *Times* calls "Railroad Enterprise". You Enterprised a Railroad through the valley — you blasted its rocks away, heaped thousands of tons of shale into its lovely stream. The valley is gone, and the Gods with it .....'[25]

> 'And there is yet this to be noted of the ghastly *precision* of the destroying force, in Derbyshire country ..... In most every other lovely hill district, and in all rich Lowland, the railway kills little more than its own breadth ..... But in Derbyshire the whole gift of the country is in its glens. The wide acreage of field and moor above is wholly without interest. Into the very heart and depth of this, and mercilessly bending with the bends of it, your railway drags its close clinging damnation'.[26]

Ruskin's private and public image of the Peak District was thus a contrast between a beautiful, Arcadian dale scenery, dominated by white limestone crags that hid enchanting caves, and landscapes transformed by the polluting, mercenery menace of the railways. He painted a similar picture in the Lake District and it seems that it was mainly his fanning of a late-Victorian flame of an environmental conscience that led to the formation, in 1894, of the National Trust. His words certainly inspired later generations to recognise the national importance of the dale scenery for, when, in the 1930's, a greater part of Dovedale and also Taddington Wood (in Ruskin's 'Vale of Tempe') were donated to the Trust, the local and national newspapers described the areas with reference to the image he had popularised half a century earlier.[27]

Lawrence and the attractive, arid wilderness

The writings of D.H. Lawrence are predominantly associated with the industrial belt of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfield stretching along the eastern flanks of the Peak District, from Sheffield to Nottingham. Through the eyes and thoughts of his characters, Lawrence projects the image of a new race of mechanical, half-corpsed mankind being produced by the blight of industrialism that had replaced the old, agricultural way of life. 'Perhaps they were only weird fauna of the coal seams,' thought Lady Constance Chatterley. Yet, to this new race, there was a place to the west where even Lawrence felt that they might regain something of their rural soul for a day, namely, in the town of Matlock and the surrounding countryside.

> ..... Connie saw the great lorries full of steel-workers from Sheffield, weird, distorted smallish beings like men, off on an excursion to Matlock .....'[28]

To Lawrence, such excursions were special boyhood treats and their importance to him and his characters is emphasised by his projection of the concept of the Peak District as a somewhat mysterious and attractive wilderness. From fleeting references in a variety of novels comes an adjectival list that suggests such a countryside, either by direct descriptive phrases and adjectives like 'roof of England', 'top of the world', 'foreign', 'bare', 'naked', 'arid', 'distant' and 'mysterious' or by contrasting phrases for 'the monotony of the Midlands' with its 'coloured counties', implying a pallid diversity for the Derbyshire Hills. This impression is given in his first novel, *The White Peacock* —

> 'We climbed the hill behind Highclose, and walked on along the upland, looking across the towards the hills of Derbyshire, and seeing them not, because it was Autumn.'

and is repeated in *Sons and Lovers* as Paul Morel and Miriam Leivers see 'the hills of Derbyshire fall into the monotony of the Midlands' —

> 'They were now in the bare country of stone walls, which he loved, and which though only ten miles from home seemed so foreign to Miriam'.

In a similar vein, the meeting of the principal characters of his novelette, *The Virgin and the Gipsy* actually takes place in his inhospitable landscape of grey limestone walls —

> 'They were on the top of the world, now, on the back of the fist. It was naked, too, as the back of your fist, high under heaven, and dull, heavy green. Only it was veined with a network of old stone walls, dividing the fields, and broken here and there with ruins of old lead mines and works. A sparse stone farm bristled with six naked sharp trees. In the distance was a patch of smoky grey stone, a hamlet. In some fields grey, dark sheep fed silently, sombrely. But there was not a sound nor a movement. It was the roof of England, stony and arid as any roof. Beyond, below, were the shires.'[29]

Perhaps this work, more than any other, serves to symbolise the fresh virginity with which many visitors from the industrial conurbations come to experience the rustic secrets of the Peak District countryside! Fleeting trips by Lawrence as a university student in Edwardian times and later in the 1920's provided the image for his stories. He first visited the Derwent valley with his sister and friends at Easter 1905 and the countryside around Cromford became familiar to him during his stay at Mountain Cottage, Middleton-by-Wirksworth in 1918/19. This picturesque bungalow is situated 'in the darkish Midlands, on the rim of a steep deep valley looking over darkish, folded hills — exactly the navel of England, and feels exactly that.' Here, 'feeling very lost and queer and exiled' yet attached to his native heath by a primordial umbilicus, Lawrence observed nature, wrote and nursed his tuberculosis on gentle winter walks over the limestone plateau to villages such as Bonsall and Bolehill and spring rambles through the 'steep deep valley' of Via Gellia, now part of the southern boundary of the National Park. Thus it was that his images of distant, folded hills, naked against the elements, beckoning inquisitive day-trippers and unsettling invalids living in temporary exile reinforced Eliot's Stonyshire image and influenced successive generations of visitors to the nationally famous hydropathic establishments of nearby Matlock.[30]

A cumulative literary image and its projection

The cumulative literary image may be translated in cartographic terms (Map 1) to define some of the boundaries of the Peak District *sensu lato*. There are three strong boundaries, namely, Eliot's Stonyshire/Loamshire contrast to the south; Defoe's 'houling wilderness', supported by Lawrence's industrial country in the east; and the Cottonopolis/Pennine moorland contrast in the north-west. The limits to the north and west are weakly defined in the literature and the case for their inclusion in the Peak District depends largely upon their historical images as Longdendale, part of the Royal Forest of High Peak and the Macclesfield Forest respectively. Similarly, the south-western boundary derives some strength from the Stonyshire/Loamshire contrast and a lesser weight from Arnold Bennett's portrayal of a 'panorama of the immense valley of industries' of the Potteries.[31]

Dovedale and five of the wonders of the Peak are well within the National Park boundary but the town of Buxton and its two wonders plus Matlock and its 'tea-garden trumpery' find themselves outside an administrative boundary drawn deliberately for their exclusion. Although the images of these two towns as important national health resorts became an integral part of the concept of the Peak District, another more powerful scenic image presented itself to the visitor to either spa — the spectre of limestone quarrying and lime-burning. Late-eighteenth century visitors to Poole's Hole often continued past the cavern to climb the slopes of Grin Low to observe the wonder of poor lime-burners living in dwellings hollowed out of the mounds of lime waste in a desolate landscape for which reclamation was being proposed as early as 1808'

> '..... the disgusting desolation of Grin Hill as viewed from Buxton might perhaps be removed by planting it with Ash, etc.....[32]

A plantation did screen part of the hill, but by the turn of the nineteenth century, it would have taken well over a thousand acres of trees to screen the operation of the thirteen firms that amalgamated to form the powerful limited company known as the Buxton Lime Firms Company in 1891 and the new lime-producing firms on the plateau to the south of the town.[33] Successive generations of visitors and bathers thus came to witness an increasing contrast between the tranquility of the fashionable spa town and the desolation of the quarries and waste heaps. Hence, the immediate unaesthetic image of the industry prevailed over the cumulative historical and cultural image and, with one or two unfortunate oversights, the boundaries of the National Park were drawn along the limits of the mineral rights of the industries. The same premises were applied around Matlock and Wirksworth and the 'navel' of Lawrence's England found itself virtually detached from the Peak District body.

The literary image changed drastically in the 1930's as a variety of organisations echoed and extended Ruskin's sentiments in a plethora of strongly-worded propaganda. Examples of the movement towards the designation of the first national park are legion, but four events best illustrate the intrinsic influence of the literary image. In 1932, the Council for the Protection of Rural England published a booklet entitled *The Threat to the Peak*. The foreword to this work comprised the words of G.M. Trevelyan, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, on the occasion of the presentation of the Longshaw Estate (where the coachman set Jane Eyre down in her flight from Rochester) to the National Trust.

> 'But I felt also very sorrowful, raising my eyes across the distant landscape as far as the ridge of Kinder-scout, in the contemplation of so much of the strength and beauty of nature left exposed to the desecrating hand of modern man.'[34]

Thus was engendered a powerful feeling of threat and imminent desecration.

Yet, along the ridge of Kinder Scout, a certain section of the public was more concerned with the desecrating foot of modern man as gamekeepers and landowners battled against the twentieth-century demands of the day-trippers from Darkshire.

The mass trespasses of 1932 on Kinder and at Abbey Brook in the Derwent Valley firmly established the needs for open access to the moorlands of the Dark Peak and undoubtedly played an important part in the success of the 1939 Access to the Mountains Bill. However, the timing of the legislation was such that the provisions for access were never enacted and Kinder Scout was still regarded as 'holy ground' in the late 1940's.[35]

Thirdly, through the legacy of Walton, Cotton, Byron and Ruskin *inter alia*, the piecemeal donation of Dovedale, parts of the Manifold Valley and Taddington Wood in the Wye Valley to the National Trust in the period 1933 - 35 demanded the unison of these 'jewels of Arcadia' into an organised, national scenic resource. The donations had come in the wake of the propaganda surrounding the sixth annual conference of the CPRE at Buxton in 1933 that demanded, amongst other things, 'joint planning for beautiful regions such as the Peak District'[36]

Finally, the 1930's produced an unfortunate statement concerning the native population of part of the Peak District that interpreted Defoe's 'incomprehensible' and Dickens' 'Saxon' image in a different light. With war imminent, a Sheffield steel firm planned the erection of a major steel producing plant in the rural vale of Edale, away from the Sheffield conurbation and the threat of enemy air attack. The controversial affair began as a matter of local concern until the committees of the rural district council recommended no objection to the proposal. Similarly, Edale Parish council was in favour of development and a referendum of parishioners showed that 177 out of 244 welcomed the idea. But it seemed that the greater part of the outside world was against the proposal when the Ramblers' Association sent a 50,000-signature petition to the House of Commons and over 200 members of Parliament tabled their opposition. Inevitably, the scheme was rejected but one comment remained for many years as a symbol of the attitude of local government to the views of the public

> '..... as if the divine architect, when he fashioned this lovely valley of His, consulted Edale Parish Council.'[37]

The desecrating hands of modern man have been shackled; the feet have been given ample room to roam; the stimulation of the senses by scenic delights has been assured; but the native, feudal Saxon image still prevailes in a region planned by Norman invaders!

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