

Moorland

Areas within this Zone

'Hallam and Burbage Moors', 'Sheffield High Peak'.

Summary of Dominant Character



Figure 1: Foulstone Moor in the 'Sheffield High Peak' Character Area © 2006 Barry Hurst. Licensed for reuse under a creative commons license- <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>

This zone marks the western edge of Sheffield and continues to the north into Barnsley, and to the west and south into Derbyshire. It falls entirely within the Dark Peak Joint Character Area (Swanwick and Steadman 1998 111-115) and consists of areas of “[w]ild and remote semi-natural character created by blanket bog, dwarf shrub heath and heather moorland with rough grazing and a lack of habitation” (ibid, 111). The area is linked to lower ground to the east within the ‘Piecemeal Enclosure’ and ‘Surveyed Enclosure’ character zones by areas of plantation woodland and reservoirs as well as by steeply incised cloughs cut into the gritstone geology. Outside these transitional landscapes ground cover alternates between vast areas of blanket bog, heather moorland and rough grassland grazing. Whilst classified by the HEC project as ‘Unenclosed Land’ (the majority of this area is not subdivided by internal boundary features), this area was generally subject to Parliamentary Enclosure. On the ‘open’ moorland this process generally involved,

“the removal of communal rights, controls or ownership over a piece of land and its conversion into ‘severalty’, that is a state where the owner had sole control over its use, and of access to it.” (Kain et al 2004, 1).

The physical manifestations of this enclosure of land for the management of game are the vast areas of managed heather moorland. Viewed from the air these display a complex mosaic pattern produced by the controlled burning of strips in order to encourage habitat suitable for red grouse. Without this management practice, much of the high moors could be expected to develop over time as birch scrub woodland. Grouse shooting management is also visible in the walls enclosing the edges of the moors (designed to keep people out, rather than livestock in), and in grouse butts, constructed as shooting positions (Bevan 2004, 126).

This zone has also been frequently exploited for the extraction of minerals, since at least the medieval period, leaving a number of quarry sites visible.

Inherited Character

The prehistoric landscape of the upland moors is thought to have been quite different from the heather dominated barren moors of today.

Environmental evidence, principally taken from the analysis of pollen sequences in the region, indicates that following the retreat of ice a mosaic of woodlands, scrub and grassland developed with open woodland cover extending even to the high moors (Bevan 2003, Chapter 2, p3). There would have been some naturally open areas within the denser vegetation resulting from natural processes of lightning strike fires, tree falls, gales and wild grazing. These may well have been attractive to Mesolithic hunter-gatherer populations due to their richer ground vegetation and their attraction to important game resources such as red deer (ibid, Chapter 2, p7).

Occupation of upland areas during the Mesolithic (attested to by many find-spots of Mesolithic tools recorded on the SMR) was probably part of a seasonal round with visits made to this zone at a time when it was particularly rich in resources (Barnatt and Smith 2004,12). A significant cultural and economic horizon has been detected during the Mesolithic, which in this area is represented by changes in the flint toolkits being used (ibid, 12), with an increasing specialisation and localisation of tool types interpreted as indicating more restricted seasonal patterns of movement. Associated with this material change is a horizon within regional pollen sequences indicative of increased clearance of woodland, probably by fire. This has been interpreted as connected to the formation of blanket bog; as trees were removed from the landscape there was a reduction in transpiration rates resulting in the waterlogging of the thin soils (Bevan 2004, 32). The rate at which the area of this blanket bog grew and the relative importance of human influence and climatic change in its development are somewhat controversial subjects which are difficult to give precise answers to given the current inadequacies in regional pollen sequences. It seems likely though that the earliest areas to lose their tree cover would have been the highest points of the moors.

The introduction of domesticated species into this zone in the Neolithic is unlikely to have been accompanied by dramatic cessation of either earlier hunting practices or seasonal patterns of movement (Bevan 2004, 33). New practices such as the deliberate keeping, breeding and droving of animals were probably integrated into an existing seasonal round. The 'rituals' of daily and annual practice appear to have transformed and domesticated the landscape over many generations rather than as a dramatic change where a 'Neolithic package' was adopted wholesale. Changes to the character of the landscape as a whole may well have been imperceptible to individual generations. In this zone clear archaeological indicators for more sedentary lifestyles do not generally occur until the Bronze Age - field systems which may date to this period are associated with cairns, barrows and hut circles and are recorded on the SMR in this area, although generally they are restricted to the lower altitudes. Most Bronze Age monuments in this zone occur at below 350 - 400 m AOD.

Archaeological work based on the analysis of environmental samples taken from peat deposits at Stoke Flat, just west of the South Yorkshire border, (Long *et al* 1998) allow a more detailed localised picture of the environment. The field systems and monuments of Stoke Flat are comparable to others found at similar altitudes in the East Moors (c.300m AOD) such as those in this zone to the west of the Burbage Brook. The data suggests that the Bronze Age field-systems found in the East Moors of the Peak District may have survived in use into the 1st millennium BC (Long *et al* 1998, 516) in a landscape still largely characterised at this altitude by open woodland punctuated with small scale field systems with some cultivation of cereal crops. A sharp decline in the remaining woodland cover becomes apparent in the period 373 BC - 223 BC (in the Middle Iron Age). Notably this decline in tree pollen appears to be associated with a concurrent decline in microfossils indicative of cereal cultivation - instead the sequences have been described as indicating the establishment of "*a more open environment dominated by moor and grassland types*" (ibid, 511). The work at Stoke Flat did not associate this episode of tree decline with a deliberate act of human clearance, instead suggesting that during a period of climatic change, the direct management of the fields and woodlands of the East Moors was abandoned, leading to increased uncontrolled grazing of the woodlands, which were consequently unable to regenerate in the wetter climate (ibid, 517-518).

Later Characteristics

During the medieval period the moorland landscape is likely to have been more extensive than that of today with many of the areas of 'Surveyed Enclosure' and 'Piecemeal Enclosure' countryside found to the east 'improved' by enclosing and intensively grazing areas of former rough ground. On higher land the moors continued to be an important resource for the inhabitants of the valleys below. The moors were generally seen as a resource held 'in common', meaning not that they were owned by all but

that particular groups held traditional rights to graze animals and gather resources such as bracken for thatch and bedding and heather and peat for fuel (Bevan 2004, 89). Despite these common rights the open moors remained the legal property of individuals, property claims and rights of access could be and were open to question. Bevan (114-115) highlights a legal battle beginning in 1574 over the precise line of the boundary between Hallam and Hathersage Moors and the ownership of the commons and cottages at Moscar (these areas form the western boundary of the 'Hallam and Burbage Moors' character area). The legalities of the case dragged on for over 150 years, the boundary eventually formalised and marked (boundary stones still a legible feature of much of its length) to the Hallamshire side of Moscar. Something of the practical importance of what may seem legal technicalities can be garnered from the protests made by 'men of Bradfield' in 1705 that demanded the restoration of their rights of common on Derwent Moors.

By the mid 19th century the management of the upland moors for grouse shooting was generally seen by landowners in Derbyshire as "a more important and profitable use of the moors than livestock pasturing" (Bevan 2004, 126). Physical manifestations of this change in management form the basis of the present character (see above).

Significant modern influences on the historic landscape of the modern zone strongly reflect the influence of the nearby presence of a large urban population in Sheffield. This population began to grow in size exponentially from the 17th century onwards (Pollard 1856, 172), creating an increasing demand for resources such as water, minerals and open space for recreation. In this zone these demands are most clearly manifested in the landscape, most notably in the upper Rivelin Valley, where the Rivelin Dam Reservoirs were built around 1845. Recreational influences are most apparent in the management of the moors by the Peak District National Park, set up in 1951 in order to "conserve the character of the Peak District landscapes and to enable visitors to enjoy them" (Barnatt and Smith 2004, 136). The foundation of the National Park, the first in the UK, was in part a tacit acknowledgement of growing claims of the importance of the landscape as a specifically recreational and cultural 'amenity'. These claims were brought to the fore in the Peak District by direct action and information raising campaigns by groups of ramblers such as the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers and the British Workers Sports Federation (Bevan 2004, 164-167), culminating in the mass trespass of Kinder Scout in 1932. Groups often based their claims of access to the moors on detailed study of the history and archaeology, helping to write a history of 'common' access in order to legitimate their contemporary claims (often fiercely resisted by landowners and tenants. Present day management of the moors for recreation is undertaken hand in hand with programmes of work to understand and manage the historic elements of the landscape. A legal right of access was finally established in the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act. Public access (largely operated since the establishment of the National Park by agreement rather than legal precedent until 2000) has brought its own lasting physical changes to the landscape, notably the

provision of car parking facilities, hard wearing footpaths, interpretation noticeboards and signposts - as well as more intangible and potentially temporary intrusions such as traffic, pollution, litter and vandalism.

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