

Talk on Peak District National Park

Lecture date: Friday 21/02/2020

Speaker: Tomo Thompson Chief Executive CPRE (South Yorks and Peak District)

Lecture title: What would Ethel do?

Notes taken by: Elizabeth Birks

Topic: Creation of the Peak District National Park

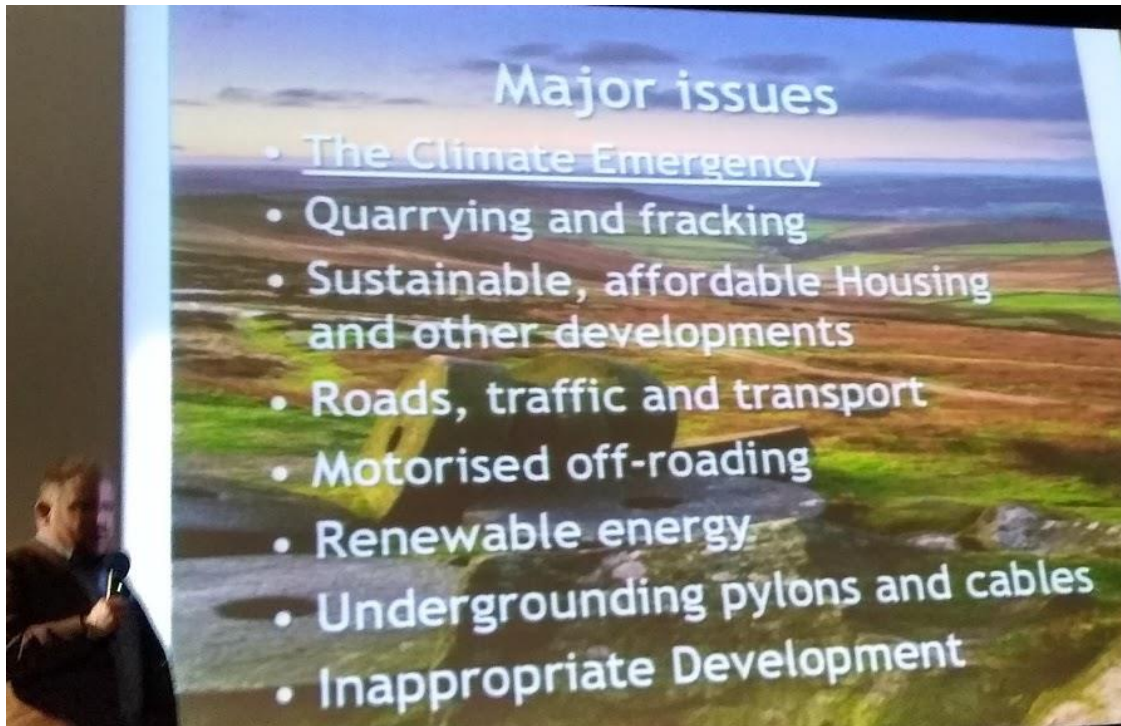
What do you know of the Peak District National Park? Do you know when and how it was formed? Whose money was largely responsible for its creation? Who is responsible for it now? Have the people of Sheffield any part to play in looking after it? In enjoying it?

Here's a story. Once upon a time there was a young woman from a wealthy family who was bereaved soon after marrying. She was distraught and suffered severe mental health problems. Her parents took her into the open countryside around Sheffield where she found solace and healing. She started to feel better and realised that the countryside might well get swallowed up by building projects and so she decided to do something to protect it. She set up a project and advertised for someone to lead it. A man applied for the job – and got it and she and he worked together and then got married and they continued to work together and they travelled all over the country. They each came from wealthy families and so had money to buy up land in danger of being sold for development and they donated the land to the project. They worked with local landowners and local bodies to remove any obstacles to their plans and with politicians to get legislation to protect the countryside. As a result, they achieved two firsts: The Peak District National Park and the Sheffield Green Belt. Among the curious things she did was to use an elephant for PR, having copied the idea from her father and she commissioned photos of local children rummaging through Sheffield's rubbish dump at Stanage Pole

Who were they? Well she was Ethel, the daughter of the Tommy Ward family that lived in Endcliffe Vale House. Her first husband, Henry Gallimore, died in World War One and she married her second husband and fellow activist, Gerald Haythornthwaite, 18 years her junior, in 1937.

The Wikipedia entry for Ethel says "*Ethel Haythornthwaite* (1894–1986) was an English environmental campaigner, and a pioneer of the countryside movement. She founded the group that would go on to become the Friends of the Peak District, aimed at protecting the countryside of the Peak District from development". I'd never heard of her before attending the lecture. So where is she celebrated by the City of Sheffield? Have you ever seen a plaque that commemorates her? Has anyone seen the plaque in the woods across the road from the Dore Garden Centre? Have you seen a picture of her riding her horse, Bracken, apparently going around the perimeter of the Peak District National Park?

The Friends of the Peak District is jointly managed with CPRE South Yorkshire (www.cpresouthyorks.org.uk). There are five full-time staff, based in Sheffield, who work with local communities to preserve the aesthetics of this vast area and to encourage visitors to use it. They are assisted by a large number of volunteers. Director Tomo Thompson says that often they see eye to eye with the policies of the Peak District Planning Authority, but occasionally they have to 'see them in court'!



And what can Sheffield U3A members do to celebrate Ethel and the Peak District? How about reading a book? I've just come across 'Protecting the beautiful frame : a history of the Sheffield, Peak District and South Yorkshire branch of the Council for the Protection of Rural England' by Melvyn Jones. I guess we can talk about her and perhaps campaign for more recognition. We could give money (before or after our death), become members of the Friends of the Peak District and do some volunteering as a trustee or join in with physical activities like litter picking. Anyone up for walking the Peak District National Park Boundary Walk (<https://www.friendsofthepeak.org.uk/boundary-walk/>)? It's only 200 miles long!!

