

## **Reflection 5**

### **The Forward March . . .**

### **The Trespass and the 1980s**

There is a touch of memoir in Reflection 5. I shall do my best not to regale you with too many 'baby boomer' tales from the late-1940s to the late-1980s. As with previous reflections, I offer a collage of events, ideas, trends, people, comments and so forth. The focus here is on the political resonance and reverberations of the Mass Trespass in the 1980s.

A bit of scene-setting is necessary and I start with a few developments between the end of WW2 and the late-1960s. The decades of post-war reconstruction were a time of political and ideological consensus. The National Parks were established and the growth of mass leisure-time and mass consumption began to re-shape the agenda of the outdoor movement.

I will then consider the political tensions of the 1970s – cracks in the consensus which had echoes of the 1930s and presaged the political turmoil of the 1980s. Towards the end of the 1970s, arguments about the Mass Trespass were revisited and rehearsed as part of wider debates about the future roles, identities and next steps for the outdoor movement.

In 1982 the Mass Trespassers of 1932 were publicly celebrated. The Mass Trespass was afforded a measure of wider recognition by organisations which had spoken against it so vehemently over the previous fifty years. Hopes were growing that a mixture of 'unfinished business' and 'new and emerging problems' would set a radical agenda for campaigning on recreational access and other countryside-related issues. There was a sense that The Forward March of the access movement was under way . . .

. . . By the end of the 1980s, the historic landmarks of the political terrain on which the outdoor movement had flourished since the late-19th century were being assailed by far-reaching social, political and cultural upheavals. The contestation of the 1930s had resumed with a vengeance, though not, for the most part, in ways which had been anticipated. Moving into the 1990s, it was becoming clear that, in a much changed political landscape, the cause of recreational access would need to discover a new sense of focus and direction.

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### **5.1 In the wake of the 1945 – 51 Labour governments<sup>1</sup>**

#### **a) A mixed economy and a political consensus**

The Labour Party caught the popular mood at the end of WW2 with its offer to break from the social order of the inter-war years. Following its landslide victory in the 1945 general election and drawing on its involvement in managing the wartime economy, the Labour government led by Clem Attlee embarked on a transformative programme of reconstruction. Key infrastructural industries and services were taken into public / common ownership – coal mining, iron and steel, railways, electricity, gas. The framework for a 'cradle to grave' Welfare State (as distinct from a Warfare State) set out in the 1942 Beveridge Report resulted in a wide array of measures in relation to national insurance, pensions, unemployment benefits, workers' rights and, of course, the much loved and celebrated 'free at the point of use' National Health Service. It retained and embedded the national educational system set up by the 1944 Butler Education Act. It set in train frameworks

for economic and town and country planning and public housing (building on the experience of the Labour-controlled London County Council in the 1930s).

The post-war settlement was not built on the basis of abstract socialist theory, or even the tenets of classic European social democracy. It grew pragmatically out of what had worked effectively during the command economy of the war years; it had cross-party inputs – Beveridge was a Liberal and Butler a Tory; it was a leftish Keynesianism which came to be known as a 'mixed economy'. Within the Labour Party there was an undertow of those seeking more radical measures; just as there was a grouping who persistently sought to move away from any hint of more widespread forms of common ownership. For the most part, the broad structure of the 1945–51 settlement was accepted across the political spectrum, ushering in two decades of mainstream political and ideological consensus. Not surprisingly the Mass Trespass was largely lost from public view, even in the Dark Peak.

### ***b) Land and Countryside***

The section of the 1945 Labour Party manifesto which was disregarded was the option of land nationalisation, beyond what was necessary in terms of compulsory purchase to enable the local and central states to undertake their respective obligations. This did not entail a post-war reversion to unbridled Lockeanism. Planning and other regulatory mechanisms addressed some of the recognised problems of private ownership in relation to the operation of the market in land and the recurring inequities of rentier landownership. In essence, the 1945 government adopted a version of Georgeism in their approach to land matters, both rural and urban.<sup>2</sup>

The Attlee government avoided the blunder of Lloyd George's coalition in the aftermath of WW1. Agriculture had been a heroic WW2 success story on the home front. The Women's Land Army was unceremoniously discharged back into family life; no demob arrangements, no resettlement payments, no offers of retraining or relocation. But the farm owners and male rural landworkers enjoyed the benefits of the 1947 Agriculture Act which perpetuated the system of subsidies and price guarantees for farming. That system endured through the entry into the EEC and on to the end of the twentieth century, when Margaret Thatcher was the first post-WW2 Prime Minister to echo Bonar Law's 1922 opposition to subsidies for agriculture.

The period 1945–1970 was sometimes dubbed The Second Agricultural Revolution.<sup>3</sup> It was the period of tractors and chemicals, of uprooting hedges and creating larger fields for monocultural agriculture, of commercialisation and indoor farming – all of which stored up problems for the end of the century.<sup>4</sup> But a sense of farming success was pervasive, even though it took place within the context of a rapidly changing countryside / rural environment.

The second half of the century saw a further continuation of the absolute decline in the numbers involved in agricultural work. The sorts of changes in the rural social economy which had exercised A G Street in 1937 continued with a vengeance after WW2. Increasingly, those from towns and cities saw rural communities as desirable places to live, either full-time – rapid expansion of commuters, those setting up businesses in pleasant rural towns and villages, retirees – or part-time – second-home owners, holiday cottagers, weekenders. To those permanent or semi-permanent incomers have to be added the growing crowds of urban dwellers who owned cars and simply went for days out (often *en famille*) to tour around the countryside, and admire the scenery and find a place to eat, and fill up with petrol, and urge local authorities to straighten out and widen some of those old-fashioned bendy A-roads. These trends caused huge dislocation to the lives and identities of rural communities – property prices, new class struggles between the poorer remaining land workers on small council estates and the middle class incomers. The latter began to take over the parish councils and, paradoxically, sought to preserve the beauty of their rural landscapes whilst disrupting the social dynamics of rural life and relationships within such landscapes.<sup>5</sup>

What was occurring on the ground in the post-war years was a further realignment of urban – rural identities altogether. In many respects, growing numbers of people no longer inhabited two distinct and contrasting environments / landscapes; they embraced both as parts of a lived continuum, in which they created their own balancing of those identities in the light of their own circumstances, means and aspirations. Urban and rural ghettos of poverty and deprivation were being created; not entirely new in either context, but a significant fracturing of the historic ideological cross-class shared identities, values and meanings of the communities of rural England.

### **c. National Parks and the dynamics of families, leisure-time, consumerism**

I looked at the emergence of the idea of National Parks in the previous reflection. In 1938, John Dower, the author of *The Case for National Parks* defined a National Park as:

*An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action, (i) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, (ii) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment, including particularly cross-country and footpath walking, are amply provided, and (iii) wild life and places and buildings of historic, architectural or scientific interest are suitably protected.*

Dower deftly wove together the hopes of the ramblers and the preservationists. After further deliberations, in 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was finally passed as part of the Labour government's overall post-war settlement. The minister responsible, Lewis Silkin, presented it as follows:

*This Bill is a people's charter – a people's charter for the open air, for the hikers and the ramblers, for everyone who loves to get out into the open air and enjoy the countryside. Without it they are fettered, deprived of their powers of access and facilities needed to make holidays enjoyable. With it the countryside is theirs to preserve, to cherish, to enjoy and to make their own.<sup>6</sup>*

On the face of it, the Act looked like the long-awaited fulfilment of Bryce's, the RA's and the CPRE's aspirations. The framework for establishing National Parks had the appearance of a rural, recreational and preservationist version of the NHS service – beautiful open countryside free and accessible to all at the point of use. It took some time for it to become apparent to the people, that *their* National Parks charter did not quite make the countryside within those Parks *theirs* to own or control. It made no substantial changes or regulations in relation to land ownership and use within the area of the proposed National Parks. It did not provide for mandatory free recreational access or a right to roam – only a somewhat cumbersome mechanism by which access was to be negotiated. It set up special planning boards for the future parks which, in principle, had the capacity to become a sophisticated mechanism for handling the competing interests both of those who owned, worked and lived within the park together with interests and expectations of those who would visit. But it was 'light touch'; it did not circumscribe the activities of the farming community or even the industrial operations within the Park area. It did not resolve the classic tensions between recreational access and preservation. Unlike 'National Parks' in other countries, the English and Welsh national parks were not protected wildernesses or reserves for the preservation of natural landscapes and/or the pursuit of countryside adventure.

I will look later at Marion Shoard's analysis of the shortcomings of the National Park system when she came to publish her defining 1980 text: *The Theft of the Countryside*. I note here, however, the later reflections of Barbara Castle, one of the group of rambling, pro-national parks Labour MPs brought together in the pre-WW2 years by Tom Stephenson who, by 1949, had become the first General Secretary of the Ramblers' Association:

*This unsatisfactory arrangement has had its inevitable result. The development of National Parks has been uneven, according to the strength of local interests. In some of them rights of access are still being resisted by local landowners. In others tourism is being promoted by local revenue-hungry councillors at the expense of John Dower's vision. . . . The Minister's reserve powers atrophied in the Thatcher decade, when the rights of wealth, private property and profit making were enthroned again.<sup>7</sup>*

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Notwithstanding the in-built shortcomings of the National Parks settlement, their arrival was taken as a great leap forward in the immediate post-war worlds of rambling and climbing. They symbolised a commitment to moving the rambling and climbing agenda into the post-war era. Insofar as the National Parks – with the Peak District taking pride of place as the first to be established in 1951 – were presented and perceived as 'the People's Parks' they reflected the gradual fading away of the *de haut en bas* rhetoric of outdoor activities as an exercise in moral and cultural self-improvement. Forms of popular romanticism persisted, but the former preachiness of the leaders of the outdoor organisations had to be tempered to the ostensibly more democratic aura of choice and personal freedom taking sway in the 1950s and 60s.

Indeed, irrespective of the visions of John Dower, Barbara Castle, Tom Stephenson or Lewis Silkin, what shaped the effective character of the National Parks, along with the rambling and climbing movements as a whole, were the stirrings of the linked growths of mass leisure-time, mass consumption and, particularly in the 1950s and early 1960s, the pervasive ideology of the nuclear family as the main site where leisure and consumption took place.

The consumerism of the 1950s saw the widespread purchase of such domestic items as fridges, radios, TVs (on which to watch the coronation, Bill and Ben, and see pictures of Hillary and Tenzing returning from their first ascent of Everest) and washing machines, together with all sorts of things to enhance home, garden and family life. By the end of the 1950s, families headed for the countryside in their new cars. In the Dark Peak, for instance, considerably more people drove to the upper Derwent Valley simply to look at, have a picnic and a short stroll by the newly built (1948) Ladybower Reservoir and the older "Dam Buster" dams than to begin a hike up from the valley to the plateaux of Kinder Scout or Bleaklow. Indeed, until 1955, when the first access agreement was negotiated for parts of Kinder Scout, Kinder and Bleaklow were still out of bounds and notionally on the 'Private: Keep Out' list. And, as consumers, the growing ranks of leisure-time hikers and climbers who did head for moors, mountains and crags were no longer satisfied with kit from the Army and Navy Stores. They became a market for specially produced boots, new-fangled anoraks and fancy waterproofs, frame-rucksacks, walking socks, gaiters and so forth, along with all the ropes and gear climbers use.

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These fragmentary observations on leisure-time and consumerism in the 1950s and early-1960s point to a subtle reconfiguration over those years of the cultural relationships I explored in earlier reflections as the motifs of walking and nature, leisure and freedom. Once the activities of walking and climbing are informed by a pervasive consumption- and leisure-driven economy, one's engagement with the countryside takes on new meanings and significance, personally and socially. In one form or another, those involved in managing and developing the new National Parks – along with those responsible for the oversight of related spaces / landscapes such as those designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Country Parks or Sites of Special Scientific Interest – were obliged to come to terms with the dynamics of 'crowd control' and all the knock-on facilities / arrangements associated with travel by cars.

For individuals, the freedoms and pleasures associated with walking and climbing were notionally enhanced by such 'freedoms' and pleasures as car-ownership was deemed to engender in relation to one's autonomy and self-determination. The experience of access to the countryside

was enhanced (?) by the experience of roads and cars. Once I could drive before breakfast from Manchester to Wasdale, do a couple of routes on The Napes on Great Gable, have a pint in the Wasdale Head Inn and be back in Manchester for a late evening meal, then the ideological tenets of the upper-class Alpinists who once lodged at the Inn and put up the early routes on The Napes were no longer a key determinant of my experience, enjoyment or aspirations as a northern rock-climber. I was a modernist climber, whose experiences and passions were shaped by a democratic, post-colonial, post-WW2 social order, not the echoes of a minimally democratic, imperial pre-WW1 social order.

#### ***d. Adapting roles and identities: the outdoor organisations***

Inevitably the core network of outdoor organisations had to make adaptations to the changing patterns of leisure-time and individual and familial consumerism in people's lives over the post-WW2 decades. The YHA had to adjust its core principles to take account of the use of cars to access hostels and extend the reach of people's walking opportunities during their stay. The CHA and the HF both adjusted the tenor of their founding values to fit in with changing expectations and, like many of the groups from that earlier era, eventually entered the 21st century on the basis of some sort of rebranding, often taking references to forms of collective endeavour out of their organisational descriptors. So the Co-operative HA, became the Countrywide HA; the Holiday Fellowship became HF Holidays; the Ramblers Association eventually began trading as The Ramblers; the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society morphed into the Open Spaces Society; the CPRE moved from being a Council for PRE, to a Campaign for PRE, from Preservation to Protection and, currently, to CPRE The Countryside Charity.

The newcomer amongst this long-standing network of umbrella bodies was the British Mountaineering Council, set up in 1944 by that doyen of the Alpine Club, Geoffrey Winthrop Young, some of the other classic climbing clubs and, be it noted, the Camping and Caravanning Club! Rock climbing and mountaineering saw several major transformations in the post-WW2 years. The capacity of the BMC to adjust to those changes is a case-study of the challenges that faced all the umbrella outdoor organisations which sought to represent the changing interests of their respective memberships and constituencies.

No sooner had the BMC celebrated the first ascent of Everest in 1953 as a triumph of the old empire / new commonwealth side of mountaineering, than the entire 'sport' of rock-climbing and mountaineering was transformed by a handful of working class young men from Manchester. Bypassing established clubs, climbers such as Jo Brown and Don Whillans made their own way to the climbing grounds of the Dark Peak, the Lake District and North Wales and picked up where Menlove Edwards had left off. On the basis of climbing techniques they developed for themselves on Dark Peak gritstone edges, along with forms of protection they made for themselves from nuts and bolts, they climbed where no-one had previously thought it was even conceivable to climb.<sup>8 9</sup> They also found their way to the Alps and expeditions to the higher global ranges where they pushed the boundaries of what such forms of mountaineering should aspire to. Gradually, the Everest-style industrial sieges were replaced by much smaller teams of self-supporting climbers, such that eventually climbers like Reinhold Messner and Alison Hargreaves opened up the era of solo climbing Himalayan and similar mountain peaks.

Meanwhile, back at the boulders of the Dark Peak and the slate quarries of North Wales, climbing became an increasingly anarchic, self-managed activity on the part of young men and women, who approached climbing as a dimension of gymnastics and spent ages in putting together a few moves on boulders rather than climbing up full crags or cliff faces.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, they often preferred to climb indoors, leading in the 21st century to the emergence of climbing as an Olympic sport undertaken competitively on articially constructed walls of holds – at the same time as climbing Everest in huge parties on pre-fixed ropes and ladders has become a global tourist attraction for those with the money to buy their way into it.<sup>11</sup>

What is noteworthy is that the BMC was capable of retaining an umbrella, representational and, where necessary, campaigning role over a remarkable diversity of climbing cultures, experiences and practices. It was, in effect, an adaptive network providing a range of services and opportunities for climbers, enabling the sharing of facilities between member clubs, insurance services, mountain walking, climbing and leadership training, regional access committees, oversight of guidebook publishing, and reciprocal rights schemes with Alpine climbing clubs. . . . And its attempt at rebranding as *Climb Britain* was rejected by a mixture of its old guard mountaineers / climbers and its anarchic young tearaways who continue to push the grades upwards competitively on indoor climbing walls.

Similar shifts of emphasis and practice were taking place in other organisations. The RA began to find a new voice and register. Having seen the establishment of National Parks and the Pennine Way as a legacy, Tom Stephenson – whose roots were in the WW1 and inter-war years – stepped down from the General Secretaryship of the RA in 1969, handing over to Chris Hall. In his turn Chris handed over to Alan Mattingly in 1974 when he moved on to the editorship of that classic countryside publication *The Countryman*, which was a lovely platform for his particularly wide-ranging brand of rural radicalism. Both the activities of rambling and walking and the rationales and campaigning strategies for extending access had to be grounded in the changed discourses and cultures of politics and nature by the 1980s. A new generation of leaders was emerging, amongst whom were Kate Ashbrook (RA and OSS) and Fiona Reynolds (Campaign for National Parks and NT). And, as I will explore more fully later, the researchers Doreen Massey and Marion Shoard contributed to the process of re-framing the terrain on which countryside and access issues were articulated and fought for by the relevant organisations.

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## **5.2 Cracks in the consensus: the politics of the 1960s and 1970s**

I now need to return to, and root around in, the politics of liberalism and democratic collectivity which emerged in the course of my previous reflection on the Trespass and the 1930s.

Arising from the experience of the shared, collective endeavour of the war years, the 1945 – 51 settlement effectively extended the sense of democratic collectivity more widely across the polity. A set of ideas which had been forged and elaborated within the broadly-defined labour and progressive movements of the late-19th and early-20th century were now embedded more pervasively in the structures and institutions which shaped the social order as a whole. What was continued by the Tory governments of 1951–1964, under the leadership of one-nation Tories (Churchill, Eden, MacMillan) was a mixture of public and private ownership, state intervention / supervision in infrastructure and services alongside laissez-faire markets. It provided a potentially shared and democratic stake for the people as whole in ownership and control of key aspects of social, economic and political life. But that sphere of collective ownership continued to be shaped by a classically liberal capitalist, individualist consumer-oriented free enterprise market sector. This balance worked pragmatically for a majority of people during the 1950s and early-1960s, as the UK moved beyond the austerity of the immediate post-war years and people found their (and their families') identities and social positioning within the new order. But, as they moved into and through the 1970s, the post-war political consensus was beset by all sorts of tensions and critiques.

One set of tensions arose from an awareness of some of the unspoken assumptions of that political consensus. An example of this was the fact that both the Labour and Tory Parties actively pursued policies aligned with the production and potential deployment of nuclear weapons within

the framework of the post-war NATO alliance. This prompted the resurgence of the peace movement in the shape of CND (1957), the Aldermaston Marches and the Committee of 100 (1960). The latter revived the tactic of non-violent direct action in its demonstrations, leading to the arrest of such long-time pacifists as the philosopher Bertrand Russell. The peace movement fed into the Anti-Vietnam war protests later in the 1960s.

Another set of problems arose from the fact that a political consensus forged in the late-1940s was exclusionary as well as inclusionary; it masked the extent to which the lived experience of many social groups diverged from the dominant norms and social dispositions. An example here is the growing numbers of women who became conscious of the systemic inequalities and limitations in opportunities and choices they faced by virtue of the dominant assumptions of the consensus's familial ideologies of gender roles and identities. The various strands of the Women's Liberation Movement took shape in the public domain by the late-1960s and grew throughout the '70s. Similar exclusions and oppressions led to the movement for equality and recognition on the part of the Gay and Lesbian communities. And, no less pervasive, were the exclusions from, and active opposition to the consensus arising from the growth of post-colonial racism in the UK. The interventions of the Tory politician Enoch Powell gave an aura of legitimacy to the discrimination and hostility which had been inherent and manifest in the consensus since the arrival in the UK of British Citizens of diverse ethnicities from former colonised states. By the time of the trial of the Mangrove Nine in 1970, racialised tensions and conflicts were a prominent and enduring feature of the political environment.

Insofar as the post-WW2 consensus was underpinned by a Keynesian fusion of the economics of laissez-faire liberal capitalism and an interventionary collectivism, it was inevitable that the political right and the political left would have their respective critiques of the settlement. As early as 1944, the economist Friedrich Hayek – a British citizen since 1938 with an academic career which included a long stint at the LSE – wrote *The Road to Serfdom*, a critique of all forms of economic collectivism and a re-assertion of classical liberal economics. He subsequently worked in Chicago and built a network of similarly-minded economists who came to be known as 'The Chicago School'. The most prominent member of that School was Milton Friedman, who wielded a huge influence over both the academic discipline of economics – for which he won a Nobel Prize in 1976 – and the practical and political worlds of corporate strategy and economic policy. For Friedman, the state should not perform the sort of macro-economic adjustments advocated by Keynes; it should continually endeavour to minimise any direct role in the routine management of economic affairs, beyond performing its classic Lockean tasks of upholding the laws and rights of property owners and managing the currency. It was becoming clear by the time of the Heath (Tory) government of 1970 – 1974, that the Chicago School's critique of the post-WW2 consensus was being reflected in the approach to economic policy of a growing number of its prominent members.

During the Wilson (Labour) governments of 1964 – 1970, it was equally clear that a socialist-oriented critique of the Keynesian consensus was emerging – or, more accurately, a rich assortment of socialist critiques; socialists, alas, tended not to have the tight-knit intellectual unity of the Chicago School. In 1967, the Roundhouse in Camden hosted a galaxy of radical thinkers and activists (*inter alia*, Herbert Marcuse, R D Laing, Stokely Carmichael) at the Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation.<sup>12</sup> It explored the linkages between political and personal liberation and new ways of theorising and enacting transformational politics, building not just on left theory, but insights from liberation struggles and psychology. In 1968, the student uprisings in France and across Europe and USA, began to give concrete expression to options and ideas for what became known as a *New Left*. In the UK, for instance, the 1968 *May Day Manifesto*<sup>13</sup> offered ways of moving beyond the obdurate limits of Labourism.<sup>14</sup> The New Left moved away from both the jaded 'scientific socialism' still notionally espoused by the CPGB, and the arid doctrinal tenets of the various parties claiming the mantle of the Fourth International. It opened up a vision – though not an immediate routine reality – of a movement for socialism which was more emotionally sensitive, imaginative, agile and – again in principle if not immediate practice – capable of adapting to the

sorts of issues of race, gender and identity being surfaced outwith the established party and political structures of 'the left'.

The 1970s were marked by an upsurge in trade union self-activity and direct action of various forms. There was extensive support for the 1971–72 'work-in' organised primarily by a group of shop stewards in the face of the threat of closure of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders consortium. There were two successful strikes by the Mineworkers in 1972 and 1974, the second of which led, indirectly, to the downfall of the Heath government and its replacement with the Wilson & Callaghan (Labour) governments of 1974–79. 1976–78 also saw the high drama of the Grunwick strike. It was probably one of the last occasions in which a campaign by a small group of low-paid Asian women workers for union recognition, initially supported only by Brent Trades Council and dramatised by NUM flying pickets, eventually received public endorsement in a march led by members of the TUC's General Council and several Labour Party cabinet ministers (Shirley Williams, Dennis Howell and Fred Mulley).

It was also an era of union-based creativity and optimism. The Institute for Workers Control was set up Nottingham, overseeing a move at government level to explore, in the 1977 Bullock Report, options for introducing forms of industrial democracy along the lines of those in Germany at that time. Workers Co-operatives were supported as options for avoiding the closure of commercial companies and loss of jobs. In 1976 the Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards produced an alternative plan for the company to move away from the production of military hardware and towards the production of more socially useful and environmentally friendly products – an early Green initiative.

Though the actions of trade unions in industrial disputes rarely received a 'good press', it is important to bear in mind that trade union membership grew throughout the 1960s and 1970s, such that by 1979, over half the entire UK workforce were members of a trade union and, even more significantly, 73% of all employees' incomes were negotiated by the process of collective bargaining between unions and companies / industries.

On the general political terrain, it should also be noted that some of the smaller and more radical socialist parties were capable of taking forward initiatives of significance and imagination. For example, the Socialist Workers Party (formerly the International Socialists) took the lead in galvanising action against the growth in the late-1970s of such outwardly fascist and racist groups as the National Front and the British Movement and in support of the communities they threatened. The national and local marches and concerts of the Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism were imaginative acts of solidarity which were beyond the capacity of the mainstream left parties and groups to conceive and organise.

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The previous few paragraphs have strayed on to the memoir territory! I was an ardent post-1968 'New Left' activist during the 1970s and 1980s, and I need to be careful, therefore, not to overstate the reach of everything which marched under a 'New Left' – or, for that matter, an 'Old Left' – banner. The LP and CPGB were both riven and constrained by deep internal fissures. The conflicts within the Labour Party had a long history and they were duly replayed during the 1970s and into the 1980s. The CPGB had seen an exodus of members in 1956 following the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary. A further deep division emerged following the Soviet Union's military ending of the Prague Spring of 1966–68. The USSR-oriented 'Tankies' within the CPGB faced opposition from the more modernist 'Eurocommunists' who identified with the west European mass-membership and culturally rich CPs of Italy, France and Spain.

Similarly, most of the organisations of the broadly-defined left remained white and male-dominated. None of them did a good job of listening to, let alone accommodating, the demands for greater autonomy and engagement of women and BAME communities within their memberships. The insistent reduction of politics to economic and class conflicts was a persistent barrier and hurdle. One of the most trenchant critiques of the left of the 1970s was the 1981 book by Sheila

Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright: *Beyond the Fragments – Feminism and the Making of Socialism*. There was still a long way to go before the promise of the 1960s Dialectics of Liberation were to shape the dominant politics and ideology.

The political endpoint of the 1970s occurred when the Labour government finally ran out of steam and lost the 1979 general election, ushering in a decade of Thatcher governments. Things were in flux and the post-war consensus was clearly on the wane. There was nevertheless sufficient radical momentum and passion – if not too much joined-up 'common cause' – to offer hope and a not wholly unrealistic expectation that newer and richer forms of democratic collectivity could be within reach in the 1980s. There were a few warnings that things may not turn out as hoped, but they were somewhat lone voices and not heard as clearly or as widely as they warranted.<sup>15</sup>

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### **5.3 The Mass Trespass and the 1970s: Revisiting the Arguments**

Meanwhile, in the Dark Peak and its urban environs, the PNFS had celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 1969. To mark the occasion, Frank Head wrote a brief history of its work over that time.<sup>16</sup> In the section on Access to Kinder Scout, he observed:

*Another important consequence of the 1949 Act was the gradual freeing of Kinder Scout, Bleaklow and other moorland areas devoted to grouse shooting or water gathering, the whole Access Area now amounting to some 60,000 acres out of a total of some 70,000 in England and Wales. The ancient discontents out of which our Society was born have thus been remedied and we are grateful to all concerned, especially the pre-1949 fighters and propagandists, G. H. B. Ward, Edwin Royce, P. A. Barnes and Tom Stephenson, and to the Access Committee of the Peak Park Planning Board under the chairmanship of our former Secretary, Philip Daley, for the subsequent laborious task of implementation.*

Not only was the Mass Trespass not mentioned; Royce, Barnes, Stephenson and Daley were amongst those who were on record as opponents of the BWSF's 1932 day of direct action. Phil Daley did indeed play a key post-WW2 role in negotiating access in the Peak District; he was also a major figure in the RA during that time. He subsequently maintained that, in negotiations with landowners, the Mass Trespass was always used as an argument against public access:

*Such action as we have gained, owes nothing whatever to the mass trespass . . . and I can say quite categorically and without fear of contradiction, that the "mass trespass" was a positive hindrance and deterrent to the discussion and negotiations to secure the freedom of the hills.<sup>17</sup>*

For some, the Mass Trespass had not just faded from memory over time; it continued to be deliberately airbrushed out of the narratives and histories of the access movement.

Nevertheless, as the politics of the 1970s grew more fractious, there was a gradual recovery and wider dissemination of the lost / folk memory of the Trespass and its continuing significance and resonance beyond the lives of a network of friends and comrades around Benny Rothman. In 1970, the BBC broadcast a documentary reconstruction / reminiscence of the Trespass. It featured Benny Rothman, Tona Gillett, Dave Nesbitt and Ewan MacColl, together with a discussion between Rothman and one of the Kinder Reservoir's Stockport Water Board officials at the time. In 1974, Dave Cook, publicly prominent as both a leading member of the Climbing Club and a central figure in the CPGB, first published the article I quoted at the head of section 4.5 of Reflection 4 in a climbing journal. Dave Cook was involved in the politics of the climbing world; he campaigned successfully for the admission of women as members of the Climbing Club and organised his own

direct action trespasses for climbing access to prohibited and forbidden crags and cliffs, the most prominent of which was a long-standing campaign for access to the Range West cliffs on the Pembroke Coast, which were owned by the military and from which climbers were excluded.<sup>18</sup> Cook re-published his article in 1977 to a wider political readership in the journal, *Marxism Today*.<sup>19</sup> In 1980, Howard Hill gave considerable prominence to the 1932 Kinder Scout and Abbey Brook trespasses in his book *Freedom to Roam* which he published shortly before his death. He was also a sometime member of the CPGB.

What took these 1970s accounts into a more extended debate about the Trespass was the decision of Tom Stephenson to write an article about it for the Autumn 1979 edition of the RA's journal *Rucksack*.<sup>20</sup> An expanded version of this article was published posthumously in his 1989 book *Forbidden Land*.<sup>21</sup> This took account of the 1982 50th Anniversary celebration and some of the accounts of the trespass generated at that time, including Rothman's own 1982 memoir.<sup>22</sup> I will use this version as the basis for the following comments on Stephenson's long-held critique of the Mass Trespass.<sup>23</sup>

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The gist of Stephenson's position was summed up in the following paragraph:

*The truth is that there never was a mass trespass. No-one reached the summit of Kinder Scout and the so-called victory meeting was held on a public path at Ashop Head. In saying this I do not wish to belittle the intentions or the enthusiasm of the demonstrators, but only to keep the record straight and, if possible, prevent the canonisation of myth as history.*<sup>24</sup>

This was a direct challenge to Benny Rothman's (1982) account of the events in Hayfield on 24 April 1932. I referred to this ambiguity in my earlier account of the Trespass in Reflection 1, section 3. The issue raised by Stephenson hinged on how one read the map of the terrain of Kinder Scout and determined what constituted 'a trespass on Kinder Scout'. If moving off the right of way path up William Clough and walking up and / or contouring across open countryside in the direction of the plateau of Kinder Scout constituted trespassing, then a mass trespass certainly took place. If setting foot on the edge of the summit plateau was a necessary condition for a trespass to have occurred, then the issue was less clear-cut. What adds further complication is that Ashop Head – the agreed location of the trespassers' victory meeting – is not actually on the summit plateau, but some 60 metres below at the broad col where the right-of-way William Clough path becomes the right-of-way Ashop Clough Path and crosses the modern Pennine way path which descends from the plateau and ascends towards Mill Hill.

In his 1982 account, which included a sketch map, Rothman indicated that the trespassers climbed out of William Clough and headed towards the Sandy Heys area of the plateau. After a bit of pushing and shoving, they passed a line of gamekeepers who had descended towards them. Having reached the plateau they then turned towards Ashop Head where they met with a group from Sheffield who had come up from Edale and trespassed on Kinder Scout without any hindrance along the western edge of the plateau. There is, one has to admit, a certain implausibility about this. Given the extent of the trespass undertaken by such a group from Edale, one would have expected a fuller account of their exploits to be included in the narratives by both Howard Hill and Benny Rothman. The supporting Sheffield trespassers have always been a somewhat spectral presence in the Kinder Mass Trespass narrative. Indeed, if they did achieve what is claimed, then they would arguably have the bragging rights over the Manchester based BWSF 400+ as the group that mass trespassed for a couple of miles along the plateau of Kinder Scout in April 1932!

When Keith Warrender 2012 published his updated and much expanded 80th anniversary posthumous edition of Rothman's 1982 book, he retained Rothman's account verbatim but amended the map to indicate that, after leaving William Clough, the trespassers were effectively corralled by the gamekeepers away from the plateau on a rising contour across open, steep

moorside towards Ashop Head.<sup>25</sup> Insofar as the trespassers left the right of way path and tramped across the flanks of Kinder Scout, a trespass occurred, though not, perhaps, the sort of headline-catching 'victory' which actually getting behind the keepers and walking on or across the plateau would have been. In support of this account of the actual area of Kinder which was trespassed and by whom, it is worth noting the observations of Kate Ashbrook on the matter in 2019:

*There are varied reports of what actually happened on the day, but it is doubtful that the Manchester contingent, led by Benny, got on to the Kinder plateau, although they certainly trespassed up Sandy Heys and scuffled with the keepers.*<sup>26</sup>

The second main feature of Tom Stephenson's critique addressed the more general issue of the significance of the Mass Trespass and its place within the history of the wider access movement. I will explore the issue of 'myths and histories' later when I reflect later on the wide range of political meanings which were present in the 1982 Celebrations.

What Stephenson's critique highlighted was the continuing divergence between Stephenson's staunchly LP-oriented politics and Rothman's no less staunchly CPGB-oriented politics, both during the 1930s and subsequently. Stephenson was a Labour Party legislative reformist through and through; the sort of direct action, movement / class building socialist politics was not his bag at all.<sup>27</sup> Stephenson's work throughout the 1930s was driven by his nurturing of a group of Labour MPs in support of access in preparation for an eventual Labour Government. Not unreasonably, Stephenson was aware that a majority Labour government was the only sort of government which would be politically disposed to deliver the sort of unamended Bryce Access Bill long sought by the RA. Anything else was a non-starter or a diversion – hence the scorn Stephenson poured in his article on the assessment of the political damage of the Mass Trespass put forward by his long-time fellow-RA leader and companion, Stephen Morton. (Morton was a key RA figure in the Sheffield Federation and nationally in the late-30s and post-WW2.) In the Winter 1979 edition of *Rucksack*, Morton wrote a letter justifying and slightly amending his 1932 views on the Mass Trespass's significance.

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In the Summer 1980 edition of *Rucksack* three more letters on the Mass Trespass appeared. In the first Stephenson gave further justification for his political analysis; in the second, Benny Rothman gave a long reply; in the third, Bernard Levine – who was 12 years old in 1932 – gave his own thoughts and reminiscences prompted by Stephenson's article.

Rothman gave considerable emphasis to the unity and solidarity of the Trespassers, explaining how key decisions were taken during the day, in particular the decision to re-group at Ashop Head and walk collectively back to Hayfield rather than dispersing individually. In his final paragraphs he made the following barbed comment on the creative potential of direct action – in both the 1930s and the 1980s – and the weakness of endless negotiation:

*What is regrettably true is that, after the Mass Trespasses, the BWSF did not continue the campaign as vigorously as it should – doing what it had condemned, leaving it to the 'official' ramblers bodies. If the militant struggle had continued, with the support it had aroused, who knows, we might have had **real** access today.*<sup>28</sup>

This re-assertion of the values of mass, collective action was further emphasised in Levine's letter. Stephenson had drawn a clear line between 'political' trespassers of the BWSF and ramblers who genuinely loved the countryside. Levine reminds Stephenson of the radicalism of the Access Rallies and re-connects the political and the love of the countryside as linked aspirations for many ramblers:

*Whilst only a few members of the group belonged to the BWSF, all were motivated by a desire to be allowed to walk on the hills without harrassment. . . . From my memories of*

*these people . . . all had a tremendous love of the countryside and their knowledge of the Kinder area was unsurpassed. . . They actively encouraged myself and friends, who were the younger generation of the time, to appreciate the beauty and glories of the Derbyshire moors. . . I hope this will enable your readers to understand the motivations behind the actions of many of these people which were not only political.*<sup>29</sup>

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Clearly articles and correspondence in *The Rucksack* were not a headline, public media spat. Nor, however, were they an arcane and insignificant dispute between a handful of old retired access campaigners of the 1930s. By the late-1970s, the RA had assumed the status of the lead, co-ordinating body in relation to access in particular and the outdoor rambling and climbing movement generally.<sup>30</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the election of the first Thatcher government and within the ambit of the RA, rehearsing the original arguments had a wider and contemporaneous purchase and significance. It was not just a technical matter of historical accuracy; it was an articulation of political and campaigning issues and choices which were presenting themselves quite starkly to the RA in the early 1980s. What, for instance, was going to be the most effective way, after years of fruitless negotiation, of achieving real and enduring access in such long-standing problem areas as the Forest of Bowland, or, more pressing at that time, in relation to the exclusion of ramblers and climbers from the Arans above Bala in the Snowdonia National Park? Achieving access since 1949 had proven much harder than expected. The underlying politics of land ownership and access, highlighted by the Mass Trespass, were re-emerging on to the 1980s agenda. The growing millions of landless ramblers and climbers needed, and increasingly asserted a democratic, collective entitlement to unfettered access to open countryside which they did not own. By 1980, all outdoor organisations had to take account of the ramifications of the growing cracks in the political consensus in relation to land use and the countryside.

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By way of an addendum, I note two further publications which further contributed to the scene-setting for a re-emergence of a contested politics of land and countryside in the 1980s.

In 1978, the geographer Doreen Massey (together with Alejandrina Catalano) published *Capital and Land: Landownership by Capital in Great Britain*.<sup>31</sup> It was a different sort of enterprise from the *Who Owns Britain?* books by Bateman (1883) 95 years earlier or Shrubsole (2018) forty years later. Massey and Catalano's researches were concerned with the changing role of capital in the structure of landownership – in particular the re-configuration of the rentier role of traditional aristocratic landowners and the growing significance of the increased land holdings of the financial sector – property companies, insurance companies, pension funds. It was, presciently, an exploration of the early years of contemporary rentier capitalism which has subsequently been a dominant factor in shaping issues of land ownership (urban as well as rural) and management. Their researches were continued for the period from the 1980s onwards by Brett Christophers (2018). The detail of Massey's book<sup>32</sup> is, for my purposes here, less important than the broad area of research into land from which it emerged. Her project had been funded by the Centre for Environmental Studies [CES]. The CES had been established by the Wilson government in 1967 to promote understanding and good practice in the area of planning the environment for enhanced human living.

In 1980, a more widely read (and more excitingly titled) book along similar lines was Marion Shoard's *Theft of the Countryside*.<sup>33</sup> Marion Shoard's researches were undertaken when she was also a research fellow at CES. Prior to that she had spent several years as the Assistant Secretary responsible for planning and conservation at the CPRE. By the 1970s, the CPRE had become the Council for the *Protection* of Rural England and was one of the first of the outdoor

organisations to locate its work explicitly within a conservationist framework. Although the title of her book echoed the 19th-century anarchist Proudhon's famous phrase: *Property is Theft*, Shoard was not primarily writing about capitalism and land ownership. Her focus was the degradation of the countryside arising from agricultural and other uses, along with the persistent failure of Town and Country Planning and other regulatory bodies / frameworks to exercise effective, democratic control over land usage for agricultural, recreational and landscape conservationist purposes. She was particularly scathing in her criticisms of the governance of National Parks and the inability to establish effective management and control of the competing interests within their boundaries, resulting in systemic failures to prevent the misuse of the countryside they were originally set up to protect.

Between them, Massey's and Shoard's CES books paved the way for new perspectives on land and countryside into which the political arguments about access would have to be located. . . . It is not wholly surprising that the CES – a body which was supporting research into the operation of rentier capitalism, planning for the lived environment, the destruction of biodiversity in the countryside and the need for a more effective and equitable use of the planning system – had its public funding withdrawn within the first few months of the first Thatcher government!

#### 5.4 1982: Trespassers Will Be Celebrated

**TRESPASSERS WILL BE CELEBRATED**

Access to some of the wildest and most beautiful places in Britain is denied to ordinary people. In the past landowners took open country for grouse moors and deer shooting.

On April 24th 1932 a milestone was passed in the struggle to regain the land for the people.

Bernard Rothman

and other working class ramblers organised a mass trespass by 800 people across Kinder Scout in Derbyshire. The moor was—and is—privately owned. For a few days of the year it was used for shooting grouse. The rest of the time it was empty.

Despite opposition from police and gamekeepers the objective was achieved. The trespass was a major step forward in the campaign for access rights to open land.

Yet we still have no

general right to go where we wish in open country.

To commemorate the mass trespass a celebration weekend is planned in the nearby village of Hayfield on April 24th/25th.

**CELEBRATE THE KINDER SCOUT MASS TRESPASS**

**Saturday April 24th**  
 12.00 Welcome by New Mills Brass Band  
 1.00 Anniversary meeting and singing of national anthem  
 1.00 Reception at OSU Booths, led by original trespassers  
 2.00 Bulk Concert at New Mills town hall. Various songs, sketches, etc. and an antic-race show.

**Sunday April 25th**  
 11.00 Kinder Scout 50th Anniversary Fall race  
 11.30 Access Rally  
 1.00 Access question time. Open meeting

Organised by Chris Brasher

**FURTHER INFORMATION**  
 For further information, speakers etc. contact either:  
 Kinder Scouters, 22 Dovedale Road, Park, Mansfield, Notts. (053524000) 41700  
 Bernard Rothman, 46 Clifton Avenue, Tuggerah, Cheshire (081 872 2302)  
 For details of arrangements, book and other goods, 2 Woodlark Road, Hayfield, or Stockport Press (0622) 5424.

**KINDER TRESPASS** 50th Anniversary

I have written at length elsewhere about the 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Mass Trespass in Hayfield, which was promoted under the banner: *Trespassers will be Celebrated*.<sup>34</sup> I offer here a few vignettes and reflections which hopefully capture some of the diversity and political cross-currents present in that event shortly before the 1983 general election.

**a. 1982: The immediate political context of the anniversary celebrations**

There were strong echoes of the early-1930s in the political turmoil of the early-1980s.

- The election of the first Thatcher government in 1979 did not lead to a more settled social and political atmosphere. Unemployment rose sharply by virtue of the 'monetarist' economic strategy pursued from the outset. The government remained widely unpopular for its first two years and in 1981, the TUC, reprising the Hunger Marches of the 1930s, organised the People's March for Jobs from Liverpool to London, with supporting rallies and meetings along the way and a large march in London at the end.
- With the left-wing Tribune MP Michael Foot as the Labour Party leader, the early-1980s saw several major city authorities, by way of opposition to the Tory government, engaging in new forms of 'municipal socialism': the Greater London Council, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool and Lambeth Councils all came to be dubbed 'loony left councils' by their critics. They refused to make cuts in the extensive range of public services for which they had direct responsibility – housing, education, social services, development planning. In varying ways they sought to enhance the diversity of the nature and scope of the services they provided and, in some instances, built creative partnerships with service-providing and campaigning agencies which we would nowadays deem to be the voluntary sector / social economy / civil society.
- As a result of this perceived leftward shift across the LP, in 1981 Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, David Owen and Bill Rogers, leading ministerial stalwarts of the Wilson-Callaghan years, quit the Labour Party and set up a new party, the Social Democratic Party. Other MPs and some members followed them.
- Following the New Cross Fire, major urban unrest (riots) took place in Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side, Handsworth, Chapeltown during the summer of 1981.
- The peace movement was re-energised with a revival of CND at a time of renewed Cold War tensions. And in 1981, Women for Life on Earth walked from South Wales to Greenham Common where they trespassed on the Common and set up the Greenham Women's Peace Camp and began an occupation and a series of blockades and trespasses which lasted for several years, leading to similar camps and protests at other military bases around the UK..
- As suggested earlier, smaller left parties were in flux over issues of strategy. The SWP retreated from its popular cultural radicalism (Anti-Nazi League, Rock Against Racism) to the sort of workerist, class-on-class, positions of the CPGB in the early 1930s. Conversely, the 'class struggle' base of the CPGB felt alienated from the leadership's approach to a strategy of 'broad democratic alliance' not just with other socialist parties but with a wider array of autonomous campaigns and progressive civil society groups.
- In that context, Red Rope, the Socialist Walking and Climbing Club was set up in 1980, explicitly locating itself within the traditions of Clarion's leisure-time outdoor socialism and, in theory, BWSF style direct action.<sup>35</sup> At the same time the Gay Outdoors Club also

emerged, along with a resurgence of women-only climbing groups.

- And, perhaps most noticeably, the 50th Anniversary celebration weekend took place in the middle of the defining event of the first Thatcher government, namely the 1982 Falklands War. The celebration weekend in Hayfield was sandwiched between the Task Force leaving Portsmouth on 5 April and the recapture of South Georgia on 26 April, and the declaration of the Exclusion Zone on 28 April as the prelude to the sinking of the Belgrano on 2 May and the start of major military hostilities. . . . It was not, perhaps, the most propitious of times for securing positive media coverage for celebrating the actions of a group of communist-led trespassers in the 1930s!

#### ***b. 1982: A broad democratic alliance in action?***

In the politically charged early-1980s, an energetic, recently retired Benny Rothman set about organising a weekend 50th anniversary celebration of the 1932 Mass Trespass.<sup>36</sup> Deploying all his political nous and experience from over 40 years as a trade union and political organiser in Greater Manchester, he deftly wove together a wide range of individuals and groups to do the work that was necessary to make such an event happen. He managed to involve prominent and established figures in the outdoor movement, nationally and around the Dark Peak, along with an enthusiastic group of younger activist climbers and walkers drawn mainly from an array of left political parties.

All good political organisers progress their agenda through some sort of committee. Benny excelled himself by eventually having **four** Kinder 50th Anniversary committees!

- A formal, figurehead Manchester Committee.
- A London Committee, made up of four London-based members of Red Rope,<sup>37</sup> joined by an elderly Tona Gillett.
- A Sheffield Committee, whose key members were a couple of climbers, who set up the Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland [SCAM] following an early-1982 meeting in Sheffield addressed by Dave Cook and an elderly Stephen Morton.
- A Hayfield Committee. This was, in effect, a co-ordinating group which met monthly at The George Hotel in Hayfield. It was where things got done, publicity and promotional tasks were sorted, and practical arrangements were made.<sup>38</sup>

This was a canny move – the classic political organiser's trick – enabling diverse agendas, commitments and energies to be engaged, whilst minimising potential risks of arguments becoming too heated and blocking off some options. Indeed, it was the sort of 'broad democratic alliance' which was the organising line / strategy of the CPGB in the 1980s! As an old labour movement trooper, Benny was never phased when the young Trots of the SWP occasionally forgot their manners and accused him of being a Stalinist and failed to recognise his life-long commitment to the class struggle.

What transpired was a weekend which duly celebrated what the trespassers did in 1932 and what had been achieved subsequently by the RA, the PNFS and the Peak Park Planning Board, whilst having a clear agenda of 'unfinished business' and contributing – practically and in debate – to the shaping of the next stages of the access battles facing the outdoor movement generally. It was an event with a strong left political ambience alongside a strong rambling and climbing ambience – very much along the lines of Bernard Levine's contribution to the Rucksack exchanges about the 1930s.

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It should be noted that there was opposition to the Anniversary Celebrations.<sup>39</sup> The Manchester Ramblers Federation was less than fulsome in its support. In Hayfield, those whose families could remember the 1932 Trespass or whose forebears were gamekeepers and/or worked the land and/or sought to hang on to the village's waning character as a small rural mill town were far from supportive; the chair of the parish council was reported as saying. "Why anyone would wish to remember such a misconceived and violent occasion is beyond my comprehension."

In the same vein, the commemorative plaque – which had been put in place some days before the event and whose unveiling was the focus of the first main event at the Bowden Bridge Quarry – was in fact defaced during the night. Fortunately, it was mainly daubed with paint and it was possible to clean it up in time for the 24th April rally, with the aid of a group of squatters from East London who had come for the celebration and were camped nearby.<sup>40</sup>

### ***c. 1982: Myths, histories, politics***

At the 1981 AGM of Red Rope, I had proposed the motion that the club should mark the 50th Anniversary of the Mass Trespass. Some of the left activists there – keen walkers and climbers all who had just returned from the club's annual mass walk / scramble round the Snowden Horseshoe – had not even heard of it; some SWP members had reservations about celebrating an event in the 1930s organised by the CPGB! . . . By 1991, it would have been hard for anyone on the left and/or closely involved in rambling, climbing and countryside access *not* to have heard of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass.

Tom Stephenson had little success in preventing the growth – canonisation even – of the Myth of the Mass Trespass which arose from the 1982 Anniversary celebration. This was not Myth as untruth, 'fake news' or deliberately invented fantasy. I have already explored the inherent political drama and narrative arc of the Mass Trespass.<sup>41</sup> This was Myth as heroic narrative, a widely-resonant tale of high hopes and moral conflicts, good guys and villains, victories and defeats. Such myths have the capacity to accrete and reflect a wide range of meanings, they combine echoes from the past with resonances for the future. They act as symbolic reference points, speaking in varied ways across the generations about fundamental, shared aspects of the natural and social order we inhabit. For me, such mythic dimensions of the Mass Trespass are no less significant than 'the facts' in shaping its political meanings and significance.

1982 lit a beacon of Mass Trespass memorials and celebrations which, in one form or another has been re-kindled more or less annually ever since. A cursory look at the Hayfield Kinder Trespass Group's website gives an indication of the scope, reach and diversity of the myth.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, there is a real sense that the overarching narrative Myth of the Mass Trespass encompasses all sorts of subsidiary and internally contradictory myths. The dynamic of contestation is an inherent feature of the Myth of the Mass Trespass.

The Mass Trespass has now become one of the best known and most often re-told stories in the history of the outdoor movement to which people return and by / through which they locate their own outdoor aspirations and concerns.<sup>43</sup> The Myth of the Mass Trespass is made up of several strands braided together. What one takes to be the dominant and the subsidiary strands in that braid at any given time will depend, of course, on who is telling the tale and what the listeners wish to hear. The following are some of the best-known mythic strands that have been woven into the over-arching narrative. All were present, in one form or another, in the 50th Anniversary Celebrations.

- The "*Socialist Pantheon of Heroic Struggles*" Myth. Tony Benn was fond of recounting a history of the left / progressive movement built around such events / people as The Peasants Revolt, Diggers and Levellers, Tolpuddle Martyrs, Chartists, Matchgirls and Dockers; Red Clydesiders . . . 1982 marked the ritual entry of The Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout into that Pantheon. This is the Mass Trespass pointing us along the way to the Common Treasury, a socialist future and the strategic demands of what was referred to in 1982 as 'mass action'. It is Benny Rothman being cloaked in the mantle of the leaders of historic land-based revolts and rebellions: Wat Tyler (1381), Jack Cade (1450), Robert Kett (1549)

There was a marked CPGB-specific aspect to this at the 1982 rally at Bowden Bridge Quarry. Several stalls and campaigns added to the sense of occasion, the most prominent being a largeish marquee in which Ruth and Eddy Frow displayed some of their huge collection of left memorabilia from the 1930s. The Frows were long-standing friends and CPGB comrades of Benny Rothman and their lifetime's collection of left history archives and artefacts became the basis for the Working Class Movement Library in Salford. Their marquee gave an aura of historic authority to the occasion, amongst the usual crowd of left paper sellers plying their trade at Bowden Bridge Quarry.

- The "*Urban Ramblers' Hands Across the Dark Peak*" Myth. It was too big an ask for Benny Rothman and Tom Stephenson to be publicly reconciled. But there was clearly a rapprochement between Benny Rothman (from Manchester on the west of the Dark Peak) and Stephen Morton (from Sheffield on the east of the Dark Peak).<sup>44</sup> So much so, indeed, that an elderly Stephen Morton joined the ubiquitous Dave Cook for a meeting in Sheffield in March 1982 about access problems still facing those wanting to walk and climb on the moors and crags around Sheffield. That meeting agreed to hold its own, hastily organised Mass Trespass as a curtain-raiser for the Kinder celebrations – which duly occurred on 28 March 1982. It took place, without the owner's permission, over Bamford Moor; the trespassers included several rock-climbers who trespassed a few routes on Bamford Edge. Morton and Cook were both to play roles on various platforms and debates in Hayfield a month later.
- The "*Great BWSF–RA–Peak Park–PNFS Reconciliation*" Myth. Alongside Benny Rothman, the other speakers at the rally and unveiling of the commemorative plaque at Bowden Bridge Quarry were Alan Mattingly, General Secretary of the RA, and John Beadle, Chair of the Peak Park Board. A member of the Manchester and Hayfield Committees and a key contributor later in the weekend was Don Lee, the indefatigable and militant access officer of the PNFS.<sup>45</sup> Members of the outdoors organisations teamed together in a set-piece debate during the anniversary weekend in which they challenged representatives from the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers' Union on future access issues.
- The "*Lotta Continua*" Myth. For the radicals of Red Rope and their counterparts in the Sheffield Campaign for Access to Moorland [SCAM] campaign, 1982 signalled an 'upturn' in the direct action and politically driven access campaigning agenda. After its curtain-raising Trespass on Bamford Moor, SCAM did indeed continue to trespass regularly on the eastern moorlands of the Dark Peak for a further twenty years until the 2000 CR0W Act took effect.<sup>46</sup> Red Rope spent a few years actively seeking to influence the policy-making of the RA and BMC at a national level in the direction of mass trespassing and other radical steps in their respective access and wider countryside politics. These efforts culminated in a substantial conference in the Hope Valley in 1985 on *Strategy on Access, Conservation and Planning for the Countryside*, which brought

together a mixture of earlier generations of radical outdoor activists, alongside many younger activists who were to exercise key roles over the following 30 years.<sup>47</sup>

- The "*Maverick Young Extremist to Grand Old Man of Access*" Myth. In 1982, a large part of the Kinder Estate was transferred to the National Trust. As part of its new role in relation to Kinder, the NT set up an Advisory Committee on Access Issues, and, in a move which was controversial, surprising, and rooted in some complex 'behind-the-scenes' negotiations, Benny Rothman was appointed Chair of that Advisory Committee – and took with him several of those who had been on his Manchester Anniversary Committee. Benny also became involved in some of the RA's other campaigns, such as the 1989 Rivington Pledge and was, in due course, awarded Honorary Life Membership of the RA. As a sign of posthumous mythic status, in 2007 a Northern Line train was named *Benny Rothman Tha Manchester Rambler* by the Rt Hon David Miliband MP; and in 2012, the conservative-controlled Trafford Council in Greater Manchester put a blue plaque on the house where Benny and Lily lived for most of their lives to mark: *Kinder 80, Trespass to Treasure, 2012*.<sup>48</sup>
- The "*Man and the Mountain*" Myth. There is a touch of the 'pathetic fallacy' about another mythic dimension which emerged from 1982. The values and politics of the communist Benny Rothman – freedom, 'the commons', open access – came to define the character of the landscape of Kinder Scout. So, in 2013, one of the continuation initiatives emerging from SCAM, primarily on the Sheffield side of the Peak District, was the annual series of 'Spirit of Kinder' events. These take place in different venues and have different themes, all of which, in one form or another have an educative-cum-campaigning aspect in relation to enabling people to access and enjoy the Peak District. They have, *inter alia*, taken up the diversity agenda which has arisen in recent years,<sup>49</sup> though it appears that mountain bikers are still not welcomed on the hallowed ground.<sup>50</sup> Echoes of this mythic element are also found in the title of Douglas's book – *The People's Mountain*.
- The "*Passing the Baton to the Next Generation*" Myth. Of the various ways in which this particular sub-myth manifested itself, perhaps the most noticeable was the fact that *The Manchester Rambler* was not sung by Ewan MacColl at the 1982 anniversary's folk evening in New Mills Town Hall. MacColl was not there and that special Mass Trespass honour was bestowed on Mike Harding – who has subsequently made an appearance in many ways across the access movement. He has sung *The MR* at many of the follow-on Mass Trespass anniversaries; he has written the forewords to the posthumous books by both Tom Stephenson and Benny Rothman; he has served as a sometime President of The Ramblers and has been a generally well-known public face of the access movement.

All these mythic elements and political cross-currents were echoed and/or prefigured during the rally at Bowden Bridge in Hayfield on April 24 1982 and other events over the weekend. Reflecting the momentum and aspirations of socialists and allied radicals, it was a moment of great hope for the co-creation, in the not too distant future, of a glorious age of full and democratic recreational access to the countryside.

It was all given a poignant endorsement by the message relayed from the mountaineers Chris Bonnington, Pete Boardman and Jo Tasker which was read out at the rally in Bowden Bridge Quarry.<sup>51</sup> They were, in late-April 1982, at Everest Base Camp before making an attempt on the then pinnacle of outdoor challenges, an ascent of the Everest North East Ridge Route. Pete

Boardman grew up in Stockport, so Kinder was a local haunt of his as a youngster. Sadly the news came through a month later that Pete and Jo had died during their attempt to carry the Spirit of the Mass Trespass to the top of the world.

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### **5.5 The Forward March Halted?**

My guess is that very few of us at Hayfield in April 1982 were aware of the following exchange in the House of Commons in 1979:

Just forty days after Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Heseltine, was asked . . . about 'the policy of the Government with regard to the disposal of public sector land which is surplus to requirements'. He replied:

*The Government believe that all land which is currently held by public authorities surplus to requirements should be offered for sale as soon as is practicable. The Government is asking for public authorities to act on this premise.*<sup>52</sup>

The ascendancy of the Neoliberal agenda of the Chicago School was set in train in the UK, albeit surreptitiously, with the privatisation of commonly / publicly owned land as one of its foundational tenets. The aggressive commodification and marketisation of the Common Treasury is, of course, exactly what had confronted the Diggers, 330 years earlier.

What none of us could fail to be aware of was the removal of the Argentinian military from the Falkland Islands shortly after the 50th Anniversary celebrations. The Task Force returned to great national rejoicing, and Margaret Thatcher and a re-invigorated Tory Party won a resounding victory in the 1983 General Election. What had been quietly presaged by Michael Heseltine in 1979 became a multi-faceted Neoliberal onslaught on the democratically collective dimensions of the post-war political consensus. From 1983 onwards, the left had an object lesson in what class struggle looks like when the ruling class seizes the initiative and drives the agenda. The Empire struck back across the political, economic and ideological terrain in clear and deliberate terms.

I am not going to give a blow-by-blow account of the actions of the Tory governments of the 1980s. It took twenty years for the nature and reach of the Neoliberalism which was being unleashed to be fully appreciated. It wasn't even named as Neoliberalism until much later. What was taking place was not an aberrant Tory government trimming away a few features of the post-WW2 consensus which would, in due course, be reversed and the consensus nudged back into shape by a government of a different political stripe. It was the start of an inexorable, long-term, root and branch destruction of the old consensus and the construction and elaboration of a new one. When asked, in 2002, what she considered to be her greatest achievement, Margaret Thatcher replied: *Tony Blair and New Labour. We forced our opponents to change their minds.* When he came, in 2013, to his own reflections on his time as prime minister, Tony Blair concurred: *I always thought my job was to build on some of the things [Margaret Thatcher] had done rather than reverse them.*<sup>53</sup>

In broad terms, the transformations which began in the UK in the mid-1980s, were a 'local' expression of a re-energised, aggressive, increasingly financialised and globally operating capitalism. The Industrial Revolution has been described as Prometheus Unbound. The age of Neoliberalism felt like Prometheus shaking himself free all over again; this time from what he took to be the shackles of all forms of non-marketised relationships. A general analysis and discussion of that process is beyond the scope of my essays about the Mass Trespass. I do, however, note a

few features of what was under way during the 1980s; they were pivotal in shaping the wider contexts for a subsequent politics of land, countryside, landscape and recreational access.

***The transformation of publicly owned services into privately-owned and competing commercial enterprises.*** The sale and privatisation of gas, electricity, water, railways led, by the 1990s, to the increasing commercialisation, marketisation and commodification of more general social services, either by way of sub-contracting or direct sale. Such essentially public and collective / common arenas of social life as education, welfare services were increasingly transformed into market enterprises for which 'customers' (students, old and poor people . . . ) were required to pay.

***Boosting possessive individualism and consumerism: downplaying mutuality and sharing.*** Giving the tenants of council and other socially owned housing a 'right to buy' their homes and then sell them on the open market was another major initiative. It undermined the erstwhile powerful networks (and physical embodiments) of sharing and common space; the individualistic ideology of the 'property-owning democracy' distorted the more inclusive notions of the universality of democracy. Coupled with the expansion of consumer credit, it led to a growing orientation towards competitive individualism as a dominant norm; by the 2000s, shopping was the pre-eminent leisure-time activity.

***Closing down the space and opportunities for collective endeavour.*** The brutal defeat of the 1984–85 Miners' Strike and the subsequent legislation restricting the opportunities for trade unions to operate effectively not only sowed dissent across the Labour Movement, it also began the process of cutting back the space for the exercise of collective and democratic decision-making and self-activity. The GLC and Metropolitan County Councils were abolished and all forms of local government were increasingly constrained by requirements to outsource services and insistent reductions and caps on their incomes and capacity for spending their common resources. Local authorities eventually lost their role in the direct provision of education as the provision of education was increasingly determined by a mixture of central government fiat or by the operation an assortment of other self-managing (both for-profit and not-for-profit) providing bodies.

***Globalisation and the 'crises' of socialism and social democracy.*** The ascendancy of Neoliberalism was a global phenomenon. The collapse of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 were a key moment in that transformation. Indeed, in the UK, one of the consequences of 1989 was the 1990 decision by the CPGB – the Party of the Mass Trespass – to dissolve itself.<sup>54</sup> I have already noted the fact that New Labour largely took over and carried forward the Neoliberal agenda. Elsewhere across the world, parties which located themselves within the traditions of socialism and social democracy found it difficult to define their role and political focus within the dominance of Neoliberalism economically, politically and ideologically.

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There were some attempts at opposition. In 1990 Margaret Thatcher over-reached herself in pressing for a replacement of the rates (taxes based on property values) by a 'poll tax' (a tax raised directly from the income of individuals) as the basis for funding local authorities. The opposition was fierce, not least in Scotland where a 'trial run' of the poll tax was attempted. Riots erupted in London and elsewhere and in the chaos Margaret Thatcher was deposed by the Tory Party and replaced by John Major. But for the most part, the fragmentation and downgrading of the social space for collective, mutual and shared endeavour facilitated the ability of the central state to pursue its agenda with minimal co-ordinated opposition. As an era of mass, atomised individualism took hold it became difficult to envisage – let alone to organise – substantial forms of democratic collectivity and mutuality capable of generating a sustainable political alternative to Neoliberalism and a momentum to carry it forward.

The title I have given to this section – *The Forward March Halted?* – is a homage / reference to the title of one of the warnings made in 1978 of the weaknesses in the broadly defined Labour

Movement which would, in all probability, prevent it from taking further forward its historic mission and purpose: Eric Hobsbawm's (1978) *The Forward March of Labour Halted?* After the defeat of the Miners' Strike, this came to be seen as highly prescient, not just for the Labour Movement but more generally for all other movements which had seen themselves as hitherto making progressive common cause. . . . The confident sense of political celebration and revival which accompanied the Mass Trespass at the beginning of the 1980s had become much more subdued and unsure of itself as the 1990s began.

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## **5.6. Into the 1990s: Whither the path to the Common Treasury?**

What could walkers and climbers now draw on if they still aspired to own 'in the common treasury' the land and the crags on which they walked and climbed? A particularly dominant strand of twentieth-century communism may have departed the scene, but were there other ways of carrying forward the BWSF's aspiration to introduce "a socialistic content into sport and physical recreation" on moors, mountains, fells, fens, riverbanks, woodlands and, indeed, urban pathways? What resonance would the various Trespass Myths of 1982 have when it came to mapping a route across a changing political landscape without the political bearings from previously enduring and familiar landmarks?

To explore these questions, I will once again call in aid my trusty seven Mass Trespass motifs.

- **Urban & rural identities**

The '80s and '90s were not the happiest of times for rural England. For Howkins (2003), they were the crisis years before the traditional English countryside finally passed away. For Woods (2016), they were the decades of complex political battles over the identity of rural England – what he called 'Contesting Ruralities'.<sup>55</sup> For Shoard (1980), the *Theft of the Countryside* was not primarily a complaint about landowners denying ramblers and climbers recreational access to their land. Her central concern was the loss of biodiversity occasioned by large-scale, mechanised and artificially fertilised modes of farming, and the lack of effective democratic control over land use as a result of the defects in the town and country planning systems. With her CPRE background, Shoard reflects the shift from countryside *preservation* as a matter of culture to countryside *conservation* as a matter of ecology and nature. Shoard brings the ecological concerns of Rachel Carson<sup>56</sup> into UK debates about countryside politics.

The 1990s were a time of considerable flux in rural identities. Unexpected political coalitions emerged; new age, animal rights activists found common cause with middle-aged and middle class members of the RSPCA in their opposition to factory farming. They shared a growing preference for organic farming; after fifty years, the Soil Association had growing support. Later in the decade, they extended their joint opposition to blockading ports together to prevent the export of live animals.

1990 saw the crisis over BSE – commonly known as 'mad cow disease'. Whether rightly or wrongly, the farming community were blamed for its emergence. Notwithstanding the Agriculture Minister's publicly feeding a beef burger to his daughter to demonstrate the safety of 'British beef', consumers were not impressed. Nor was the rest of the EU, which proceeded to ban the sale of all beef exported from the UK. At the end of the 1990s, a similar farming crisis erupted over the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease.

The 1990s saw the NT being more pro-active in the acquisition of land, rather than houses. Which led to it becoming embroiled in the activities of the animal rights movement and the hunt saboteurs. These sorts of rural protests became frequent and prominent sites of rural activism.

They were considerably more headline-catching than the concerns of the RA, OSS and the footpath preservationists with their on-going rounds of negotiations over access to specific bits of the countryside.

These various 'crises' were, for rural communities, compounded by the actions of a Tory party in government whose traditional links with the countryside were declining, which fundamentally opposed the principle of subsidies on which agriculture depended for its economic survival, whose neoliberal programme tended to support metropolitan or global financial elites rather than those who lived in rural areas. A sense of generalised rural grievance coalesced in the mid-1990s in the establishment of the Countryside Movement, which became more widely known as the Countryside Alliance. Having lost what they saw as the historic support and endorsement of the Tory Party, the CA took to the streets of London and fostered a range of actions and campaigns, all aiming to give voice to what they saw as a neglect of rural lives. As an article in *Farmers' Weekly* put it:

*The . . . country people need a Countryside Movement because their way of life is now under siege. Opponents of country ways and values take issue with all aspects of the countryside's management of animals including live animal transport, hunting, livestock husbandry, shooting, fishing and national hunt racing.<sup>57</sup>*

Woods (2016) has mapped the political cross-currents within the Countryside Alliance, a broad-based rural coalition which defiantly lobbied for the preservation of the interests of the hunting, shooting and fishing communities, whilst also taking forward campaigns for rural services – the retention of rural post offices, better broadband access, keeping crime down, supporting small rural businesses. For the most part, it eschewed direct engagement with the crunch political issues of land ownership, use and access; it didn't encroach on the roles of the still dominant NFU and CLA. Nor did it maintain a formal, public stance in relation to the dominant role of tourism in the economy of rural England. It nevertheless did serve to keep alive an otherwise flickering flame of a distinct rural identity, ostensibly free from the taint of urbanism. What could not be disguised, however, was the inherently contradictory rural interests and tendencies which marched under the CA's banner, which in turn reflected the pervasive flux in the arena of rural identity.

- ***Leisure and Freedom***

That sense of flux in rural identities was reinforced by the extent to which, in an era of mass leisure and mass consumption, the countryside and rural landscapes were increasingly perceived primarily by town and city dwellers as either a leisure-time adjunct / locale for an overwhelmingly urban population or undifferentiated open space through which one drove on one's journeys from town / city to town / city.

'Going into the countryside' was a major leisure-time / tourist activity; more person-days were spent annually in rural landscapes than were spent at seaside resorts. But within those numbers, the proportion of those going to spend several hours walking, rambling, tramping or climbing diminished. Most visitors to the countryside never went more than a mile or so from where they had parked the car. One did in the countryside largely what one did elsewhere in one's leisure-time; shopping, eating meals, looking at specially designated 'tourist attractions', 'enjoying the fresh air' and 'getting away from it all for bit' – and then driving on to the next place where one could do the same things all over again against a slightly different landscape backdrop.

The history and reach of landscape romanticism and its shaping of the classic cultures and values of walking and climbing did not carry forward – other than in very attenuated ways – into the routine habits of visiting the countryside as a leisure-time consumer. By the end of the 1990s, the demands and aspirations of the outdoor movement no longer automatically represented a leading strand in debates about the recreational use of the countryside. They were merely one set of concerns amongst many others. Nor were the activities of the ramblers bodies, footpath

preservationists and so forth necessarily a reasonable reflection of the concerns of the urban landless classes.

I must also note that, a century on from the first publication in 1899 of his 'Theory of the Leisure Class', Veblen's<sup>58</sup> analysis of the behaviours and economics of *conspicuous consumption* as a characteristic of a very small elite had been generalised as a defining characteristic and aspiration across all classes. Set alongside the now prevailing culture of possessive individualism, consumption in leisure-time became, into the 2000s, a major determinant of personal identities and aspirations across all classes. It gave rise to that great contemporary paradox of 'mass individualism' which was perceived and represented as 'Capitalist Realism'.<sup>59</sup>

- **Land & property**

It is worth asking the question, some 300 years after Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*: in what sense was Neoliberalism yet another version of what I have often referred to in these Reflections as 'the Lockean settlement'? Similarly, some 200 years after Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, in what ways was Neoliberalism an extension of laissez-faire markets and free trade? In what ways, if at all, were there any echoes of such political economists of the 19th-century as Mill or Marshall in the Neoliberal agenda?<sup>60</sup> What were the continuities, and what were the discontinuities and new departures?

For me, Neoliberalism is the moment when the value of land to the landowner is no longer primarily rooted in its physicality or its productive potential as a result of the labour which is mixed with it – be it rural or urban land. Locke's and Smith's related labour theories of property and value are little more than tangential relics by the 1990s; they pale into insignificance alongside the capacity of land, just like many other commodities, physical and intellectual, to generate income through processes of rent. It is land as a symbol of rentier capitalism which is important by the 1990s.<sup>61</sup> What was also jettisoned by the Neoliberals are any of the constraints or limitations placed by Locke, Smith or Mill on the freedom of the owners of land / property to do whatever they wished with their land within the framework of a wholly open, free market system of ownership, exchange and capital accumulation. Hence the bonfires of regulations that have marked much economic activity of states in the Neoliberal era. Similarly, as noted earlier, the rejection of any form of Keynesian economic management. Free Trade is writ large – again, disregarding the warnings of Adam Smith that such unbridled freedom will lead to unacceptable levels of inequality and social dislocation.

What is taken from Locke and placed centre stage more prominently than ever before is the underlying notion of possessive and competitive individualism. Through such measures as extending home ownership – more correctly, home indebtedness through the processes of credit – possessive individualism and the aspiration to own property were normalised and universalised. We are all possessive individualists nowadays. There is a sense in which Neoliberalism, for all the mathematical complexities of its financial algorithms and operations, is arguably the simplest – purest, even – form of 'just let it rip' capitalism on a worldwide scale.

- **Accessing land**

In 1983, SCAM and Red Rope organised a one-day conference in Sheffield on *Strategy for Free Access*. It took place at the Bow community centre in Sheffield and was followed by a mass trespass on Midhope Moor the following day. It was attended by around 60 people, including such outdoor politics luminaries as Peter Melchett and Chris Hall for RA; Don Lee; Benny Rothman and Tona Gillett; Kate Ashbrook (OSS); Jim Perrin (climber and writer); Mark Hutchinson (BMC national officer) and about 50 members / associates of RR, SCAM and other local groups. It was a lively event and, in its choice of workshops, made a serious attempt to identify complex strategic and tactical issues involved in creating a direct action access campaign in the mid-1980s. Indeed, given Benny and Tona were both there, there was a feeling that the mantle of the BWSF was being

handed on to a new generation. As one of the speakers observed, if a radical, direct action, access campaign were to emerge in the UK in the 1980s, then those at the conference were probably the only people who could make it happen.

It was Chris Hall who drew attention to the brutal reality that we were meeting just one month after the 1983 General Election; there was no real evidence of a groundswell of popular demand for access to open countryside, let alone support for direct action. The only feasible way forward would be through political education and propaganda. A sense of the possible scale of impending problems, not just for the left, but for progressive forces / movements generally from the mid-1980s onwards, was beginning to be articulated.

By the 1990s, the prescience of Chris Hall's comments were becoming all too apparent; there was no upsurge in radical political activism in the recreational access arena. As an instance of the political education called for by Chris Hall, in 1987 Marion Shoard first published her magisterial book: *This Land is Our Land: The Struggle for Britain's Countryside* – with a Foreword by George Monbiot.<sup>62</sup> As with her earlier book in 1980, (see above) her basic framework was provided by placing campaigning against the ecological degradation of the countryside alongside campaigning for greater and more coherent approaches to recreational access.

Re-reading it recently, I was struck by the extent to which the book was primarily driven by issues of safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity. For Shoard, that was the priority issue, to be tackled in such a way that it also became feasible, as part of that process, for a greater measure of public access to be organised. She elaborates the critiques of farming and land management which I explored earlier in relation to rural identity.

When it comes to the actions she sees as necessary to ensure that Our Land remains Ours, she is very clear that *Our* does not entail common ownership or nationalisation of either land or agriculture, wholly or partially. As she acknowledges,<sup>63</sup> her approach to disparities and inequities of ownership are to be addressed by a radical version of Georgeist land taxation,<sup>64</sup> coupled with much stronger and more democratic planning controls on land use and development generally. Her approach to such matters tends to be located in the reforming / legislative camp rather than direct action protesting and campaigning camp – Stephenson's rather than Rothman's heritage.

More specifically, she also makes a case for a Right to Roam.<sup>65</sup> Her rationale is, indeed, radical. She avoids the ambiguities of both the notional Scottish traditions of open access and of the traditions rooted in assumptions of some sort of ancestral 'common rights', be they pre-Norman Conquest Anglo-Saxon communities or "universal rights" granted by such ancient bits of legislation as Magna Carta or The Charter of the Forest:<sup>66</sup>

*What is really needed is an attack on the blanket presumption against access afforded by the law in Britain. . . The character of land ownership needs to be redefined to exclude the landowner's right to bar his fellow-citizens from the face of the earth. We need a change from a system that treats presence on rural land as trespass except in special circumstances, to one that presumes a public right to walk on the land except in circumstances where there are good reasons why it should be withheld.<sup>67</sup>*

She builds on this in her subsequent book, which I will consider in Reflection 6.

- **Common ownership**

By the 1990s, there was a real sense that the thin red line of *common ownership* may have been washed away by the floods of privatisation and marketisation and the surge in private home-ownership. The aspirations of The Diggers, Thomas Spence, Wallace, Marx and Engels, Sidney Webb were not the flavour of the decade as the second millenium CE drew to a close. It was not at all clear that the Common Treasury was anything other than a quaint metaphor from a

past which was deemed of little relevance in an age of rampant individualism.

- ***Nature, Direct Action & Walking***

I have decided to merge the last two Mass Trespass motifs – *Direct Action, Nature & Walking*. The elision casts light on some significant, albeit sporadic and initially marginal, shifts across the political terrain of the 1980s and 1990s.

In previous reflections, I explored the Direct Action dimension of the Mass Trespass primarily from the perspective of Direct Action rooted in the labour and trade union movement. Given its CPGB underpinning, the Mass Trespass in 1932 was explicitly located within the syndicalist traditions of Direct Action and Workers' Control. That 'labour movement' Direct Action was reflected in the broadly defined left political framing of the 1982 celebrations of the Mass Trespass. The defeat of the 1984–85 Miners' Strike – a form of industrial direct action on a large and sustained scale – sent shockwaves throughout the labour and trade union movement. Such forms of militant direct action subsided quite dramatically.

What nevertheless did emerge during the 1980s and 1990s were forms of direct action which were rooted, in one way or another, in commitments to protecting nature, wildlife and rare / endangered flora, fauna and funga. I noted earlier the emergence of protest actions associated with issues of animal rights and opposition to forms of factory farming and the destruction of biodiversity by the farming business. More dramatic and publicly prominent were the succession of protests and actions arising from growing opposition to the destruction of natural environments by the building of new roads and expanding airport runways.

In the early-1980s, the A30 Bypass of Okehampton proved highly contentious – especially after the Minister responsible for deciding on the route, Nicholas Ridley, disregarded the recommendations of local, statutory committee of enquiry and in 1985 ordered the 'southern route' which ran almost entirely through the northern edge of the Dartmoor National Park.

In the 1990s, more substantial forms of protest / direct action took place with the aim of preventing road and other developments. There had long been opposition to extensions to the M3 at Twyford Down and in 1993 – 94, a range of groups and individuals became involved in on-going protests and blockades to prevent work taking place. A mixture of local activists, ramblers groups, travelling groups / tribes of activists who had pitched tents and occupied the site, all became embroiled in a series of bitter confrontations. It resulted in enquiries into the use of unacceptable force against the protesters. It is also worth noting the observation of the local MP at the time, John Denham, that many involved in the Twyford commented to him along the lines of "I never thought that I would find myself doing something like this."

In 1995, the folk-hero and environmental campaigner known as Swampy, put in his first appearance as a protestor against developments that threatened the destruction of naturally important environments. His trademark mode of activism was tunnelling under proposed developments – in 1996 at Fairmile (A30) in Devon; in 1997 (A34) Newbury Bypass; in 1997 (second runway) at Manchester Airport. At other sites, some environmental direct activists adopted the practice of attaching themselves to the upper branches of trees to prevent them from being felled – which was always a tricky one for the rock climbers. There is a strong streak of anarchism running through rock-climbing and many used their abilities with ropes and heights to support such climbing tactics in support of environmental causes. Unfortunately, professional rock climbers (whose life-styles also veered more towards anarchism than routine 9 to 5ism) needed to earn freelance income wherever they could and were often employed to find ways of bringing the activists safely down from their trees. . . Such are the contradictions of the politics of environmental direct action for those also active in the world of climbing.

These ventures into environmental direct action politics in the 1990s were accompanied by the growing presence on the broadly-defined political / campaigning arena of such organisations as Friends of the Earth and The Green Party. The former had been around since 1971. By the 1990s it had become a more routine and prominent fixture on the campaigning scene. It eschewed all forms of political affiliation and, to this day, proudly asserts its identity as a politically impartial, civil society organisation. In 1985, an explicitly political arm of the environmental movement – The Green Party – emerged, after various procedural wrangles, from the Ecology Party, which had been around since 1975. On the international scene, the actions of Greenpeace were becoming more routinely prominent by the 1990s.

Insofar as drama / imagination and risk are key dimensions of the politics of direct action,<sup>68</sup> then the environmental activists of the 1980s and 1990s are the main bearers of the mantle of direct action from the 1990s into the 21st century. They also take with them a focus on the politics of nature in ways which differ in several key respects from the politics of land, landscape and countryside which had been hitherto been at the heart of the politics of the Mass Trespass, and the outdoor / access movement generally. What was taking place around roads and airports was a very different sort of politics of countryside from that of, say, the CPRE and Marion Shoard. Both of those based their politics around strengthening of planning procedures. What drove the tribes, the Swampies and the outraged yet upright citizens of Newbury to protest and barricades were what they perceived to be the failures of planning procedures to provide real protection, not just for countryside / landscape in the abstract, but the living and breathing substance of Nature.

Also worth noting is the ambiguity / hesitancy of the mainstream recreational access organisations when it came to engaging with or even acknowledging this nature-based direct action. As it happens, shortly before his mobility was severely restricted by a stroke in 1994, Benny Rothman recognised that one direction for continuing his socialist political activism after the collapse of the CPGB and Soviet Union lay in a 'greenwards' direction. He went down to Twyford Down and addressed an Earth First Rally.<sup>69</sup> But, worrying about the risks to their charitable registrations if their actions were deemed 'political', many of the rebranded outdoor organisations kept a safe distance from these activist campaigns. The activist Peter (Lord) Melchett, did not trespass against genetically modified crops as a past-President of the RA, but as a member of Greenepeace.

. . . I will consider, in the final Reflection, the ramifications of these green shoots of Nature-oriented direct actions for the resonance and political significance of the Mass Trespass in the present day.

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Before that, I offer a few final observations on the dramatic political journey taken by the Mass Trespass across the 1980s.

From relative obscurity in the first few decades after WW2, the Mass Trespass put in a political re-appearance towards the end of the 1970s. It was proudly and publicly celebrated in 1982 and afforded a certain standing within the outdoor movement's articulation of its own histories and politics of land, landscapes and countryside. By the end of the 1980s, many of the Mass Trespass's key political dimensions had been thrown into disarray as a result of the political onslaught of the first decade of an aggressive Neoliberal ascendancy. There is a startling disjunction between the political resonance of the Mass Trespass in the early 1980s, when the post-war consensus was still informed by a strong element of democratic collectivity, and its resonance a decade later. Such key political motifs as common ownership, progressive direct action, rights and freedoms for the landless to access land for recreational purposes, banding together to advance shared agenda and so forth were all being written out of the social contract by a set of rampant property rights and assertions of possessive individualism.<sup>70</sup>

The political underpinnings of the Mass Trespass were drawn to a large extent from the histories, cultures and traditions of radical socialism and the labour movement. The political defeat / erasure of those histories, cultures and traditions could not but have a major impact on the subsequent political meanings and significance of the Mass Trespass. The early 1980s saw the creative and imaginative construction of a range of "Myths of the Mass Trespass"; the rest of the decade saw the growing domination of a set of contrary ideologies, cultural practices and popular myths which, explicitly and implicitly, tended to the relegation of the Mass Trespass either to a quaint bit of folk history or to a cautionary tale about the limits and risks of direct collective action in the cause of the common good. In 1982, we glimpsed a clear view of a path leading to the Common Treasury; by the 1990s, thick mists had obscured the view. Doubts were cast on whether it was a path at all, let alone whether it was a right of way or led to an acceptable destination. Had The Forward March of access to a Common Treasury been finally halted?

Those of us who love tramping on the Kinder and Bleaklow plateaux know just how scarily and quickly things can change. On a clear day, you can more or less see where you are heading across those plateaux. But if the mist descends, managing featureless moorland and peat grouches is not only tiring but hugely disorienting. Even with maps, compass and a life-time of experience of the Dark Peak, it is always tough going and one sometimes simply retreats as best one can. And if you've forgotten to put your map and compass in your rucksack – or, even worse, you discover that someone has deliberately nicked your compass and shredded your map – it can become worryingly dangerous.

By the start of the 1990s, mists were descending on the politics of the Mass Trespass. Even those of us who were most ardent in our support for the radical politics of the Mass Trespass and the legacy of the BWSF, found ourselves in the position of not entirely trusting our map and compass work. We had to accept we may not find the path we saw earlier in the day and would end up somewhere we didn't want to be – maybe even all the way back where we started. . . .

The issues of the relationship between collectivity and individualism we noted in the 1930s, were becoming even more insistent by the 1990s. In terms used by Jeremy Gilbert, the question we faced by the mid-1990s was: Where could we find Common Ground and a sense of Democracy and Collectivity in Age of Individualism? <sup>71</sup> What could we draw from the myths, politics and histories of the Mass Trespass to help us navigate our way through the Red – Green politics which emerged during the first decades of the 21st century?

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## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Edgerton (2019) is an insightful account of GB's twentieth-century history. Part 2 deals with the period 1950 – 2000

<sup>2</sup> See Tichelar (2003) and (2019) caps 6 and 7 pp. 109 – 154

<sup>3</sup> Or Third, if one considers the neolithic discovery of crop rotation as the first c. 3800 BCE.

<sup>4</sup> Howkins (2003) chapter 8

<sup>5</sup> Howkins (2003) chapter 9; Woods (2016) chapters 2 – 4 is good on the political cross-currents in these aspects of changing rural communities.

<sup>6</sup> Howkins (2003) pp 188 – 189

<sup>7</sup> Howkins (2003) p 189.

<sup>8</sup> Cook (1974)

<sup>9</sup> Opposition to a new era of access for climbers in the post-war Peak District was sometimes very dramatic. Take, for instance, the problems at Yellowslacks crag on the edge of Bleaklow above the start of the Doctor's

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Gate path. In an attempt to prevent rock climbers crossing his land to get to the then popular Yellowlacks outcrop, David Shepherd dynamited much of the crag. An extreme way of trying to get round the newly negotiated Peak Park access agreements! The climbers simply put up new routes on the 'new' crag. Milburn (1980) pp.178-9.

<sup>10</sup> See M J Harrison's (2013) wonderful novel *Climbers* for an insight into that end of the climbing world.

<sup>11</sup> See Peedom's 2017 film *Mountain* – with a script written by Robert Macfarlane.

<sup>12</sup> Cooper, David (ed) (1968) *The Dialectics of Liberation*. Republished by Verso in 2015. [NB All contributors were men.]

<sup>13</sup> Williams, Raymond (ed) (1968) *The May Day Manifesto*

<sup>14</sup> Miliband, Ralph (1961) *Parliamentary Socialism: The Politics of Labour*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 1972.

<sup>15</sup> Hobsbawm (1978) *The Forward March of Labour Halted*; an appraisal of the weaknesses of the traditional labour and trade union movement. Hall (1979) *The Great Moving Right Show*; one of first analyses of 'Thatcherism' as a very different political project from that of traditional Toryism. Appearing in the CP's theoretical journal, *Marxism Today*, they were both set aside too readily as either old-style communism or new-fangled Gramscianism.

<sup>16</sup> Head (1968)

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Stephenson (1989) p. 163

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, OSS (2021) *Whose Landscapes? The Range West trespasses* have a section on them in that online symposium.

<sup>19</sup> Cook (1977)

<sup>20</sup> Rucksack (1979) Autumn pp. 8–9

<sup>21</sup> Stephenson (1989) pp.153–164

<sup>22</sup> Disclaimer. I was closely involved with Benny Rothman in organising the 50th Anniversary celebration. One of my roles was the production of much of the national publicity for the event. This included the writing of countless press releases and a number of articles in such journals as Labour Weekly, AUEW Journal, WEA News. These may be amongst those which Stephenson dismissed as "misinformed and contrary to authentic available records." p.157 Copies of some of my writing at the time can be found in the Red Rope archive, housed with the Working Class Movement Library, Salford.

<sup>23</sup> These are an elaboration of some of the observations I made in my account of the 50th Anniversary Celebration, Batsleer (2021)

<sup>24</sup> Stephenson (1989) p.153

<sup>25</sup> Rothman (2012). NB Keith Warrender is due to publish a further updating in 2022, on the basis of further researches he has made. This may cast further light on what happened and where.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/news/blogs/2019/april/kate-ashbrook-kinder-blog.aspx> Devotees of this somewhat arcane debate, may care to note that Warrender's 2012 map suggests that they trespassers did not make it, as Ashbrook suggests, to the Sandy Heys area.

<sup>27</sup> Worth noting that the Pennine Way was created, not by the act of walking along the watershed of the Pennines, but by painstakingly following existing rights of way and/or negotiating new rights of way. It was not an 'open access' route.

<sup>28</sup> Rucksack Summer 1980. p. 26

<sup>29</sup> Rucksack Summer 1980 p.26

<sup>30</sup> The RA at that time organised what was called the Joint Committee of Rambling and Mountaineering Associations. (JOCORAMA) Its members were those organisations affiliated nationally to the RA. I was briefly a member of the JOCORAMA myself in the mid 1980s, when Red Rope was a national affiliate of the RA. RR's presence was not without critics when we sat down with the Scouts Association, the BMA, the YHA . . . See Batsleer (2020)

<sup>31</sup> Massey (1978)

<sup>32</sup> It is a somewhat technical exploration of the Marxist analysis of the role played by rental income in the operation of capitalism in the late-20th century.

<sup>33</sup> Shoard (1980)

<sup>34</sup> Batsleer (2021) <https://kindertrespass.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Mass-Trespass-50th-Anniversary-JB-20210316-final.pdf> Extensive archive material relating to the 1982 anniversary can be found in the Rothman and Red Rope Archives housed at the Working Class Movement Library

<sup>35</sup> See Batsleer (2020)

<sup>36</sup> In 2011, the historian David Hey wrote an article entitled *Kinder Scout and the Legend of the Mass Trespass*. It largely concurred with Tom Stephenson's position, and concluded (p.216) that after 1932 ". . . little more was heard of Benny Rothman in the campaign for access before 1982, when he was invited to join the 50th anniversary commemorations organized by the Ramblers' Association, whose new generation of members seemed to be unaware that their organization had once bitterly opposed Rothman." This simply was not the case; major RA figures played a part in the 1982 celebration – but as invitees, not as organisers.

<sup>37</sup> In autumn 1981, I took a group of London-based Red Rope members across the Kinder Scout plateau from Edale to Bowden Bridge via the original Pennine Way. Most had never been on Kinder before and as

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we laboured our way across the peat groughs heading for Kinder Gates, a slightly exasperated comrade wondered aloud: "Why on earth were the working class so obsessed with coming up here?"

<sup>38</sup> Main members - [with political affiliations] were known: Benny Rothman [CPGB], Don Lee (Access Officer of PNFS - a militant footpath campaigner), Martin Doughty (New Mills resident and newly elected member of Derbyshire County Council [mainstream Labour]), Julian Batsleer, Kieran Loftus, (both of Red Rope, [left-LP]) Dick Williams, Jon Cowley, (SCAM [SWP]) Neil and Gerry Goldsmith (Hayfield and Kinder Mountain Rescue Team).

Martin Doughty would, of course, go on to play major roles as sometime leader of Derbyshire County Council, chair of the Peak Park Planning Board and chair of English Nature, before sadly dying of cancer in 2009. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/mar/09/sir-martin-doughty-obituary> The Guardian also published my letter in response to Martin's obituary.

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, The Guardian 10 April 1982

<sup>40</sup> Personal reminiscence of Karen McCarthy

<sup>41</sup> See sections on Direct Action in Reflections 2 and 3

<sup>42</sup> <https://kindertrespas.org.uk/>

<sup>43</sup> This dimension of the trespass was discussed at length in Thompson (2018) *Privileging the Exceptional: The Historiography of the Kinder Trespass* pp 187 – 200. I differ from Thompson in relation to the issues of ideology and myth.

<sup>44</sup> See Correspondence between them in 1981 and 1982 in the Rothman archive

<sup>45</sup> Don Lee observed that: "You need three things when you go for a wlak in the countryside; your map, your boots and ytour wirecutters." I have been on 'access rambles' with Don when we walked across people's lawns because that was where the right of way was. He also did a huge amount on developing urban walks in the Manchester area – many of which have been under threat over the last 15 – 20 years from the blight of urban development.

<sup>46</sup> See Sissons (2005) for a lovely set of memoirs of the SCAM years and its complicated relationship with both the RA and the Peak Park Authorities.

<sup>47</sup> See Batsleer (2020) The following were all at the HVC conference: Peter Melchett (Greenpeace, Soil Association); Kate Ashbrook ('CampaignerKate in RA and OSS); Chris Smith MP (sometime Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and head of the Environment Agency); Fiona Reynolds (sometime Director of the National Trust) and Red Rope's Colin Knowles (sometime BMC Board member and recently elected Secretary General of the International Federation of Sport Climbing's European Council Board)

<sup>48</sup> Metcalf, 2016 p.51

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, Shibli (2020); Testament (2018); Friend (2020)

<sup>50</sup> Maloney (2020)

<sup>51</sup> No video, Zooms or other interent links in those days!

<sup>52</sup> Christophers (2018) p. 118

<sup>53</sup> <https://economicsociology.org/2018/03/19/thatcherisms-greatest-achievement/>

<sup>54</sup> Worth noting, perhaps, that Benny Rothman remained true to his life-long political commitments and remained active in helping to create the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) which oversaw a measure of continuation of some of the aspects of the CPGB. The Morning Star, for instance, is still published and continues to provide the same sort of daily critiques of economic, political and cultural life as before.

<sup>55</sup> Howkins (2003) later chapters; Wood (2016) – Contesting Rurality

<sup>56</sup> Carsons (1962) *Silent Spring* – a pivotal scientific critique of the use of chemicals in agriculture.

<sup>57</sup> from Farmers' Weekly, November 1995. Quoted in Howkins (2003) p.225

<sup>58</sup> Veblen (1994)

<sup>59</sup> See Fisher (2009) and Gilbert (2014) *passim*.

<sup>60</sup> You may remember that these were all touched on and discussed briefly in Reflection 2.

<sup>61</sup> Christophers (2018 & 2020)

<sup>62</sup> Shoard (1997)

<sup>63</sup> Shoard (1997) p.447

<sup>64</sup> See Reflection 2

<sup>65</sup> Shoard (1997) pp. 449 – 456

<sup>66</sup> I will discuss this further in Reflection 6

<sup>67</sup> Shoard (1997) pp 450 – 451

<sup>68</sup> Reflection 2, section on Direct Action

<sup>69</sup> Metcalfe (2018) p. 48

<sup>70</sup> Indeed, in 1987, Margaret Thatcher famously denied there was any sort of social contract at all in her famous remarks ". . . there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours." <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes>

<sup>71</sup> Gilbert (2014)