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GOYT VALLEY GUIDE BOOK

1. Introduction:

The Goyt Valley, in some respects, represents the Dark Peak in microcosm. This gritstone valley on the western edge of the National Park exhibits in the four miles of its upper section many of the typical features of the area - moorland, woodland, river and valley scenery, and the more modern man-made landscape of reservoirs.

The subject of this guide book is the upper reaches of the valley, from Whaley Bridge in the north, to the Macclesfield - Buxton Road, (A537) in the south.

The valley is dominated by the Fernilee and Errwood Reservoirs, created by damming the River Goyt. The river rises on the moorland slopes between Whetstone Ridge and the Cat & Fiddle Inn, flowing through Taxal and Whaley Bridge eventually to join the Mersey on the outskirts of Stockport.

It is an area of contrasting and beautiful scenery - from green rolling hills sloping down to the reservoirs, to wooded valleys and "cloughs" and the more dramatic high moorlands which enclose the head of the valley. Its special geological and natural history features resulted in its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The character of the valley has changed considerably over the years. Before the reservoirs were built, a thriving farming community, a gunpowder factory, a paint mill, a Victorian mansion and a railway existed. Now, all forms of human habitation have disappeared, leaving a valley that is visited by thousands of people every year but which, paradoxically, remains uninhabited.

The valley became so popular and subject to such an intolerable influx of visitors and their cars that, in 1970, The Peak Park Planning Board, in conjunction with the Countryside Commission, chose it for a pioneer traffic management experiment. The road along one of the most attractive sections of the valley, from Errwood Hall to Derbyshire Bridge is now closed to traffic on Sundays and Bank Holidays from the Spring Bank Holiday to the last Sunday in September.

The scheme was the first of its kind in the country and has since

About this guide book.

This guide is intended to extend the philosophy which underlies the Coyt Valley traffic scheme, and to encourage visitors to leave their cars and venture into the countryside on foot. It is the best way to discover the natural beauty of the valley, its bird life and fauna, and its fascinating and varied history. It is hoped that the need for the special traffic scheme will then be made clear.

Unspoilt wild areas still exist, where the hand of man has not encroached, and where the only sounds are those of nature, the bleating of sheep, the song of the skylark, and territorial call of the grouse.

Discover the world of nature by taking one or more of the series of walks described in detail in this book. A 2½" to the mile Ordnance Survey map shows the routes covered.

3. How was the Goyt Valley formed ?

In geological terms, the valley is a syncline - a downward fold in the rocks. It lies between the Derbyshire Dome to the east and the Cheshire Plain to the west.

Geological Section

The lower layers of rock consist of sandstones and shaly mudstones. The middle part includes a series of thick, coarse, and often pebbly sandstones which are typical Pennine gritstone. The upper strata are characterised by coal layers and mudstones.

These rocks were formed approximately 280 million to 350 million years ago during the Carboniferous period, so the story of the Goyt Valley begins long before man came on to the scene.

The millstone grit (gritstone) and shale were laid down in layers on top of limestone. In early Carboniferous times, the Peak District area was a shallow tropical sea. For 30 million years, shell creatures and corals lived, died and accumulated and were broken down to form the massive thick-bedded compact limestone of the Derbyshire Dales.

After the limestone era, the shallow sea continued but in a changed form for a further 35 million years. A great river started to deposit mud and silt (later to become shale), and sandy grit and quartzite pebbles (later to become gritstones),, from a range of mountains to the nort The heavier pebbles and sandy grits were deposited by the river at its mouth but the mud and silt were carried to deeper waters and deposited to form sh over the limestone. Meanwhile, at the mouth of the river, the sand and pebb were building up to form a delta which continued to spread out until it cov the newly-formed layer of shale.

Photo of Coal/Shale Area. Derbyshire Bridge.

The coal found in the Goyt Valley is the remains of vegetation whic grew in the swampy delta. Over millions of years, the level of the seas ro and fell, sometimes deep enough in one area to provide conditions for the formation of shale, and sometimes filling up to form a huge delta. This gi rise to the alternate shale-gritstone layers in the Goyt Valley.

The moorland regions which enclose the valley consist of large areas of peat, and scientific examination has revealed some remarkable facts about the valley's environmental history.

Peat forms in waterlogged areas in conditions where no bacterial activity can break down dead plant remains. Thus areas which receive a high annual rainfall, such as Withinleach Moor, Goyt's Moss, Wild Moor and Hoo Moor (the moorland regions which enclose the southern end of the valley) are ideal localities for peat formation.

Under these conditions, Sphagnum Moss begins to grow in small water-holding hollows. As one plant dies, it is replaced by another growing on top of it, and so very slowly the dead Sphagnum begins to accumulate in the hollow. Gradually the growth spreads until whole areas are covered with so-called 'blanket peat'. Over thousands of years, pollen has been trapped by the peat and provides lasting evidence of the area's vegetation. Pollen grains can be easily identified under a microscope and by using radio carbon dating techniques, the time of change in vegetation (usually in response to climatic change) can be determined with considerable accuracy.

Extensive investigations have revealed that the vegetation of the Peak has changed considerably since the end of the last glaciation some 11,000 years ago. At that time, the climate was still arctic-like and the vegetation was similar to the present day Tundra of the 'Frozen North', with a few trees such as willow, juniper and rowan. Then in approximately 8200 B.C. the climate began to warm up although conditions were still sub-arctic. Pollen from peat of this age shows a marked increase in birch, juniper and pine, these trees constituting what is known as the 'Pre-Boreal Forest'.

About 7600 B.C. pollen of trees such as oak, elm and hazel are found and indicate the start of a warmer period known as the Boreal.

A sudden increase in Alder pollen at about 5500 B.C. marks the beginning of the Atlantic period. Alder trees need damp places in which to grow and we can assume that at this time rainfall was very high. Pollen from trees such as the lime that needed more warmth also began to appear. Most of the Peak at this time was covered by a mixed forest

the most interesting changes in the pollen composition occurs - namely the very rapid decline in elm pollen. At one time it was thought that this was due to a climatic change. However 3000 B.C. also marks the division between Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures, between the food gatherer/hunter and the farmer. Elm was extensively used as fodder for cattle and sheep and was probably selectively felled for this purpose.

At the same time as the elm decline there is an increase in pollen from grasses - indicating clearance of extensive areas. So here we have the first impact of man on his environment. From this time on through the Bronze Age and the Iron Age to the present day there is a gradual decline in tree pollen found in the peat.

Although the great depth of peat is composed virtually of the pure Sphagnum moss the present vegetation is composed of Cotton Grass and Bilberry. Why is this ?

It has been suggested that it is due to burning and drainage as part of moorland management. Dr. J. Tallis of Manchester University supports this by the fact that he found charcoal in the peat dated at 1300 A.D. - the beginning of permanent human settlement and land exploitation. Thus it seems that the vegetation of the present moors is entirely the result of man's influence.

At the height of its agricultural prosperity the Goyt Valley region supported 15 farms mainly concerned with sheep farming, though Mr. Joe Hibbert, a farmer in the valley before the reservoirs were built recalled that large herds of Shorthorn cattle grazed in the fields up to the turn of the century. Now only the ruins of these farms exist but sheep farming is still the most common form of agriculture. The farm buildings were knocked down at the request of the Stockport Water Board, to avoid the risk of pollution, and the valley's main use is now in water-gathering.

(photograph of Derbyshire Gritstone)

The most popular breed of sheep is the Derbyshire Gritstone, whose precise origins are difficult to establish, although it does seem probable that there is the blood of the much older breeds of Derbyshire sheep, the Whitefaced Woodland and probably the extinct Old Limestone, in make-up. The breed was formerly known as the Dale O'Goyte breed, an

indication of the fact that it originated in this part of the Peak District.

For a hill breed the Derbyshire Gritstone is a relatively large animal, both males and females being hornless and showing characteristic black and white markings on the face and legs. The fleece is of high quality and weighs about five pounds. They thrive in mountainous exposed country, feeding on heather, purple moor grass, matt grass, cotton grass and other plants low in nutritional value. They can withstand vigorous conditions and sudden climatic changes and the ewes have a strong mothering instinct, with the ability to take care of a lamb at a time of year when growth of feed on the hill is slow and when weather conditions are particularly severe.

5. The Work of the Forestry Commission.

The landscape of the Goyt Valley has changed considerably over the last 50 years and one of the most profound influences in this transformation has been started on the western side of the valley where groups of Lodgepole pines have been planted among areas of young larches. Smaller plantations, carefully landscaped to merge in with the surrounding countryside, have been made by the water authority on the East side of the Errwood Reservoir.

Above Errwood Hall on the Cats Tor side of Foxlow Clough is a good example of a plantation in its infancy. Ploughing is the first stage of preparation for a plantation as this improves drainage and reduces competition from other types of vegetation.

The young pine trees are grown from seedlings in nurseries at Delamere Forest in Cheshire, and planted when 2 - 3 years old at two metre intervals. Thinning will take place after 25 years and these trees will be ready for felling when 60 years old. The Forestry Commission is careful not to fell large areas of trees at the same time because of the adverse effects on the landscape, so the felling process is phased over a number of years.

The Commission leases a total of 2,340 acres of land in the valley from the North West Water Authority, and is currently planting 20 hectares at 2,500 trees per hectare - 50,000 trees per year.

Goytsclough Quarry - Birthplace of the Pickfords Removal Company.

This remote gritstone quarry, situated just to the west of the Goyt Valley road near the reconstructed Packhorse Bridge, was surprisingly enough, the birth-place of the Pickfords removal company.

The quarry was worked by Thomas Pickford, who was born in 1646. After his estate had been confiscated by Cromwell, for his Royalist sympathies, Thomas Pickford turned to road mending and in 1670 he first worked the Goytsclough Quarry.

Nothing remains of the water wheel that was constructed to crush the stone, which was reputed in its day to have been the world's largest. The stone was quarried for building pavements in Macclesfield, and after a few years Thomas Pickford was transporting gritstone slabs to pave the streets of London.

lustration
Pickford
ckhorses)

These flagstones were carried in panniers by packhorses that travelled in teams of forty or fifty. The lead horse would have a bridle of bells to warn the public of its approach and probably to guide the rest of the teams in the dark.

It occurred to Pickford that it was uneconomic for the panniers to return empty and he arranged to carry and distribute goods on the return journey to people in neighbouring villages. Travelling in all types of weather and staying habitually at the same inns, bringing with him the latest news as well as the mail, Pickford became a well known and respected figure over a wide area. He lived nearby at King Sterndale Hall. Gradually business diversified, dealing increasingly with goo and merchandise and less in stone.

Later the business developed into the largest removal and storage company in Britain, still using the packhorse as its emblem.

Salt Smugglers at Goyt Bridge:

Near the historic Goytsclough Quarry is the Packhorse Bridge, originally built lower down the valley in an area now lying beneath the Errwood Reservoir. The bridge was reconstructed by the Stockport Water Board. One of its earliest uses was for smuggling salt across the Derbyshire - Cheshire border at the time of the Salt Tax.

Picture
of Packhorse
bridge

The smugglers came by way of Saltersford in the Todd Brook Valley from the salt mines in Cheshire, climbing over Pym Chair and down the gully below Foxlow Edge through the woods at Errwood, where they would wait until nightfall. Under cover of darkness, they would muffle the horses feet with sacking and pad across the packhorse bridge making their escape most probably by way of Saltergate Lane - a route also used for legitimate salt transport.

A Paint Factory at Coytsclough.

The ruined remains of a number of cottages and some obviously man-made earth works around the stream that flows down from Deep Clough near Goytsclough Quarry are all that is left of the Goytsclough paint-making factory. The cottages and buildings which housed a water wheel for crushing caulk, (barytes), a waste by-product from lead mining - were knocked down when the Fernilee Reservoir was built. The caulk, which came from the Ladmanlow area, was washed and crushed at the mill and used as an important constituent in paint. The powder was bagged and taken by horse cart to Bunsal where it was loaded on to the railway. At the height of its activity in the 1890's, the mill employed 22 people.

(Photograph of workers at gunpowder factory)

Gunpowder Factory under the Reservoir

The river Goyt has been put to several uses over the last 400 years, and with the advent of the Industrial Revolution the power of the upland streams in the Goyt began to be harnessed. The Coyt Valley provided an ideal situation for a gunpowder works; it provided a fast flowing stream to drive the machinery for grinding charcoal; saltpetre and sulphur; and an isolated location suitable for an industry in which explosions were an all too-frequent danger.

According to local tradition there has been a gunpowder factory in the Goyt since 16th Century, when it is said powder was supplied for use against the Spanish Armada.

The Chilworth Gunpowder Company factory was partially demolished 1928 when preparations were being made for the Fernilee Reservoir. The factory is now under water, but when the water level of the reservoir is low it is possible to see the remains of some of the factory buildings.

parallel to the reservoir on Hoo Moor. The factory remains are situated in a line east of the wooded gully which runs down to the reservoir (from the site of the former Stubbins Farm) about 300 yards from the north end of the reservoir.

At the height of its industrial activity when the works were supplying explosives for use in the First World War,120 men were employed. The workmen were forbidden to smoke, and had to leave their tobacco tins and matches behind them in the wall that bordered the road leading down from the A5002 to the Gunpowder Works. No nails or metal hammers were used even in the construction of the wooden powder kegs - the oak barrels were held together by glued hazel wood hoops. Despite these precautions there were a number of explosions - two proving fatal.

On the 12th August 1909 an explosion occurred in the Corning House, killing Joseph Hill (aged 32) and fatally injuring George Raven (2 and Percy Southern (18).

Picture of George Raven

A report to the House of Commons by Major A. Cooper, H.M. Inspec of Explosives, describes how the explosion occurred at 2.30 p.m., the deceased being the only men in the building at the time. Mr. Raven was on the upper floor seeing to the feeding of the corning machine with pre cake (compressed cakes of gunpowder) and Mr. Hill was below in charge of the grained powder. At the time of the explosion the powder in the building consisted of one barrel of grain and eight barrels of press cak a total of less than half a ton.

Mr. Hill was killed in the Corning House,and his mutilated body foun in the river 20 yards from the building. Mr. Raven was thrown on the far bank of the river and was found standing in the water. He was badly cut and burnt, and died in Buxton Hospital three days later. In a statement after the explosion Mr. Raven said he was kneeling by a machine and hear an explosion adding, " I think something came through in the powder". The Inspector of Explosives confirmed that a foreign body - he thought it was something metallic - had caused the explosion.

Errwood Hall and the Grimshawe Family.

Picture of Errwood Hall (complete)

Today the ruins of Errwood Hall, unoccupied since the 1930's bear witness to the size and past grandeur of this solid Victorian mansion. The Hall was built in 1830, and the earliest reference to it is in Kelly's Directory of Cheshire in 1878. As you walk along the main drive up to the ruins you cannot fail to be impressed by its dramatic and isolated splendou

Forty thousand rhododendron bushes were planted in the hills around the Hall, as part of the layout for the landscaped garden, and every summer these shrubs still burst into brilliant bloom.

The family were great travellers and some of the shrubs and bushes were used originally as ballast on the return journeys of their ocean-going yacht, the 'Mariquita', which took them to all parts of the world.

The Grimshawes entertained on the grand scale, especially during the grouse shooting season, and according to an early guidebook of the area "lived in the style of foreign princes with a large household of foreign servants". The gardens, which included ornamental pools, summer houses and numerous woodland walks, were an integral part of the family's lavish entertaining.

The estate, which was built and landscaped in the 1830's had a priv school which was attended by 30 cnildren and run by Miss Dolores de Bergrin, a Spanish aristocrat, who was the personal companion of Mrs. Grimshawe towards the end of the last century.

Picture of Miss Dolores

Miss Dolores was apparently greatly loved by not only the Grimshawes but by all the members of the estate. A cultured and learned woman, she never had very good health and died in her middle forties when on a visit to Lourdes. It was in memory of her that the Grimshawes built the tiny shrine on the moorlands at the back of the Hall.

(photograph of family gravestone)

Above the Hall, on a prominent hill top near the nature trail is the family burial ground, approached through an avenue of yew trees. The gravestones provide lasting memorials to the residents of the Grimshawe Estate. An inscription on one of the headstones reads "John Butler - Captain of the Yacht 'Mariquita' for 16 years the friend and faithful servant of the late Samuel Grimshaw".

the daughter of the gamekeeper and Miss Dolores.

The shrine built as a memorial to Miss Dolores is situated by the stream which flows down the valley below Foxlow Edge, not far from the Roman road known as The Street. On the small altar one can almost always find a vase of fresh flowers. It was built in 1889 by the Grimshawes, and the resident priest of this devout Catholic family conducted services attended by servants from the hall. The Shrine was named St. Joseph's and the translation of the inscription over the alt r is "No one asks in vain of St. Joseph. A token of gratitude".

The Coal Mine at Errwood

The location of the coal mine is south-west of the Hall, on the southern bank of Shooters Clough. Of the sparse evidence that remains, the track that ran from the mine entrance to a flagged area is the most conspicuous although even this construction is covered with an abundant overgrowth of rhododendrons. The mineral rights were held by the Errwood Estate, and the mine was worked by two men at a time. Mr. J. Swindells who retired from working the mine in 1911 and a colleague; and Mr. P. Lomas and a Mr. Massey, who worked the mine until 19

photo of Mr. Swindells outside Moss House Farm, after his retirement in about 1915.

The drawing shows a cross-section of Shooters Clough showing the coal seam and tunnel entrance. The sloping entrance was to drain water from the mine.

Because of the water lying on the floor of the tunnel, coal could only be mined on the top side. Large areas of coal were left to support the roof so that the minimum of props was necessary.

The main tunnel turned at the coal seam and went along the coal face. The seam was 14" - 18" thick and of quite good quality coal. At the working face a groove was cut out under the coal seam and then thir wedges were driven in at the top, a little at a time, so that the face dropped down over a considerable length.

Map showing layout of area outside coal pit).

The coal was loaded on to shallow sledge-like trucks which were pulled down to the tunnel level and then unloaded into wagons wh ran on lines. Each wagon would carry about five hundred-weight of co

The floor of the tunnel was wet and slippery so the collier / wagoner walked on the rails pushing a truck each to help them retair

cutting any obstructing coal which lay on it. The rail track was shaped like angle-iron and sat as low as possible (the tunnel was only 3'6" - 4' 0" high) to give maximum height for the colliers.

The ruins of a small building are still visible near the track to the mine. This building was used as a smithy for sharpening pickheads and as a shelter. Wagons were pushed out of the tunnel, and the coal tipped onto a level flagged area near the entrance, so that it could be more easily loaded into horse carts. The shale heaps which can be found on the stream bank are waste from the original tunnel excavations.

(Drawing of truck used at coal pit)

In 1917 coal from the pit was still sold for 4/6d per ton, but at this time coal was fetching 7/6d. a ton in the surrounding district. Mr. Lomas asked the Errwood Estate if he could increase his charge to tenants and farmers, but still only charge the Hall 4/6d for their weekly ton. The request was refused, and so the collier stopped working the mine. However, the pit continued to be worked by other colliers until 1929.

Cromford and High Peak Railway.

Following the eastern side of Fernilee and climbing out of the valley at Bunsal Cob was one of the country's earliest railways, built by Josiah Jessop and opened in 1830 at a cost of £200,000. The railway was 32 miles long, joining the Cromford Canal (and later the Midland Railway south of Matlock) with the Peak Forest canal and LondonNorth Western Canal at Whaley Bridge.

Between inclines, the railway was single track and trucks were hauled on the level by horses. On the steep inclines such as the one at Bunsal Cob the train would be assisted by a stationary steam engine. The steam engine would be detached from the wagons and joined to the stationary steam engine by chain. On the incline at Bunsal Cob there were nine wagons. Three loaded wagons were towed down and six empty ones pulled up, the engine acting as a regulator to check the 'chain'of wagons.

(Photgraph of Allen Standard Goods Locomotive

The road from Bunsal Cob to Goyts Lane was built on the foundations of the old railway and gives a clear impression of the incline. The track continues north along the east edge of Fernilee Reservoir.

When the main line from Manchester to Buxton was being built the original plans intended that it should follow the Goyt Valley to its head and continue through a tunnel and on to Buxton. Such was the power and influence of Samuel Grimshawe, however, that he refused to allow the passage of such a "godless monster" across his land. Consequent the engineers were forced to turn at Whaley Bridge taking the track thro Chapel-en--e-Frith, Dove Holes and on to Buxton.

Goyts Moss - Derbyshire Bridge area.

The map shows the situation of the few farms that at one time existed in this area. Now all that remains are scarcely detectable ruins overgrown with grass and moss.

Perhaps the most interesting relics of this bygone age are the remains of the coal pits - an important source of energy and employment in the Goyt Valley region at the time. There had been mining nearby on a commercial scale in the 1800s by the Burbage Colliery, but the coal here, which was of poor quality and mixed with shale, was chiefly mined by farmer in the 1900s for their own use, and only surpluses were sold.

The Lomas family sunk a shaft behind Moss Farm, which was 4'6" in diameter and 65 feet deep. During the General Strike of 1926, ten miners from Yorkshire were found work in one of the small pits because the coal, although poor, was in great demand at the time.

7. The Reservoirs.

Present-day visitors to the lower part of the Goyt Valley can have little idea of the sylvan scene which once existed there, but which now lies beneath the placid waters of the twin reservoirs of Fernilee and Errwood.

Built to satisfy the ever-increasing thirst of Stockport and district, the reservoirs dammed the Goyt and drowned many acres of beautiful riverside scenery. But the dams formed lakes which have their own kind of beauty and they attract many thousands of visitors every year.

The first to be constructed was the Fernilee Reservoir at the northern (lower) end of the valley. It was built in 1937 by the Stockport Corporation Water Undertaking (later the Stockport and District Water Board and now the North West Water Authority). The Act of Parliament which authorised Fernilee, also made provision for a second reservoir, i.e. Errwood, to be built later.

Fernilee is the larger of the two, with a capacity of 1,087 million gallons. It cost £480,000 and involved the part-demolition of the neglected and abandoned Victorian mansion of Errwood Hall. It was retained as a "preserved" ruin. A number of other buildings, including the Chilworth Gunpowder Factory and the Goytsclough paint factory and cottages were also knocked down to minimise the risk of pollution to supplement Fernilee.

Early in 1964, the Water Board obtained detailed planning approval for the new reservoir, to be known as the Errwood Reservoir, just upstream from Fernilee. Work commenced in April, 1964 and was completed 3½ years later, at a total cost of £1½ million. It is interesting to note that alth the Errwood is slightly smaller than its neighbour, it cost more than thre times as much to build..... an example of building cost inflation.

Errwood covers 78 acres and has a capacity of 927 million gallons. The hamlet of Goyt's Bridge disappeared under the rising water, but the old packhorse bridge spanning Wildmoorstone Brook, once used by salt smugglers, was carefully dismantled and re-erected by the Water Board across the Goyt near Goytsclough Quarry.

The construction of the new reservoir made a number of road diversions necessary. The principal road to the valley, The Street, had to be re-directed and a bridge was constructed to carry the road over an arm of the reservoir at Shooter's Clough. Another new road was constructed on the line of the former Cromford and High Peak Railway and over the dam to link with The Street.

The reservoir was filled for the first time on December 3, 1967, and officially inaugurated by the Duchess of Kent in June, 1968.

Water for the reservoirs is collected from rainfall over the 3,806-acre catchment area. Errwood is linked to Fernilee by overflow tunnels beneath the dam. The water stored in the two reservoirs is drawn off through treatment works further down the valley before finding its way into the mains supply at an average rate of seven to eight million gallons a day.

The valley's major land use today is therefore no longer in agriculture, although sheep and grouse-rearing are still important, but in water gathering, to fill the reservoirs. But careful landscaping and tree planting has ensured that the two large lakes have blended into the valley scenery to provide important and pleasant features of interest.

Thriving sailing and fishing clubs are based at the Errwood Reservoi proving that such developments can have a dual use, providing recreation on the one hand and a water supply to thousands on the other.

Other places of interest along the valley.

Cat and Fiddle Inn:

Overlooking the head of the valley, at an altitude of 1,690 feet stands the Cat and Fiddle Inn, the second-highest public house in England.

It was built early in the 19th century by John Ryle, the Macclesfield banker who is thought to have sold the Errwood estate to Samuel Grimshawe.

Many suggestions have been made to explain the Inn's odd name. Local tradition used to state that the Sixth Duke of Devonshire liked to ride to the summit nearby and play the fiddle. It is said that the Duke had a favourite Persian cat which he had photographed with a fiddle and gave the picture to the landlord, a Mr. Cotterell, in 1807, on his last visit.

Another tale is that i was named after Catherine Le Fidele, wife of Peter the Great, Czar of Russia, but the most credible explanation is that the pub was named after the two most popular Inn entertainments of the time, a now-forgotten game called Cat (Trap Ball), and dancing to the fiddle.

The isolated position of the Inn has made it a popular venue, and once was the scene of a marathon golf trial, when two members of the Macclesfield Golf Club drove golf balls from the town to the Inn. The winner accomplished the 5½ mile course, which involved more than 1,000 feet of ascent, in 64 strokes.

Pym Chair:

Another unusal name for which there have been many explanations over the years. It refers to the point, 1350 feet high, on the ridge between Cats Tor and Kettleshulme.

Pym may have been a religious teacher and preached from this safe place, well away from the ears of the authorities. Or he may have beem the distinguished Parliamentarian, John Pym. One story says that it was he who crossed the ridge with Roundhead soldiers and rested on the stones.

A relative of the Grimshawes of Errwood Hall, Miss Gaskell, supported the idea that the stones were named after a band of highwaymen who used the high ridge as a place from which to observe passing mule trains laden with merchandise. The leader, Pym would command his henchmen to attack and plunder from his vantage point.

Taxal:

The parish of Taxal is extensive, reaching as far as the Cat and Fiddle Inn. St. James Church, with its squat clock tower, contains some interesting monuments, including a memorial to Michael Heathcote Esquire, "Gentleman of the Pantry and Yeoman of the Mouth to his late Majesty, King George the Second". Mr. Heathcote, who died in 1763, had the task of sampling all food set before the king. Also inside the church are buried Samuel Grimshawe, the builder of Errwood Hall, and his wife, Ann, an unusual example of a Catholic burial in a Protestant Church. There is a famous, very old yew tree in the churchyard.

Derbyshire Bridge:

Until the county boundary changes of 1936, the Cheshire/ Derbyshire boundary followed the line of the River Goyt. This was how Derbyshire Bridge got its name. A Ranger briefing centre, information point and car park have now been built near the narrow, gritstone bridge.

Jenkin Chapel:

Although not strictly in the Goyt Valley, St. John's Church, Saltersford, known locally as the Jenkin Chapel, is worth a visit. It was built by voluntary subscription in 1733, in the style of the small farmhouses of the area with square windows and a chimney. The "saddleback" tower was added in 1755. Inside are the original box pews, reading desk and pulpit.

9. National Park Ranger Service:

The Peak Park Planning Board established a Warden Service (now known as the Ranger Service) in 1954, on the completion of the first access agreements. These agreements now give the public the right of access to 76 square miles of land in the north of the National Park, subject to the observance of the bye-laws for behaviour on access land and the terms of the Country Code. The public's right of access, however, is withdrawn on a fe days each year between August 12 and December 10 when grouse shoots take place. At the time of writing, these "access areas" do not include the Goyt Valley.

The Ranger Service now covers the whole Park, looking after landowners' and visitors' interests. The full-time ranger for the Goyt Valley is Geoff Howe, a keen ornithologist who knows the area intimately and will answer your questions and recommend suitable walks in the valley.

To carry out his duties successfully, a ranger must have the ability to help the public to understand and respect the countryside, and to offer friendly advice where needed. He might have to assist in mountain rescue operations and various other duties such as fire-fighting, sheep rescue, erection of sign posts, and the repair of footpaths.

The variety of vegetation and terrain of the valley provides habitats for an interesting and varied selection of wild life. an examination of the flora and fauna of the area is best done by dividing the valley into three distinct regions: starting from the head of the valley with moorland, passing through woodland to the areas round the reservoirs.

Most wildlife can only be observed by using a quiet, stealthy approach; quick movement and noise frightens animals and birds.

If you find young birds (fledglings) leave them alone. The parents will return to feed them. Only move them to a safe place if they are on the road or in other danger. Enjoy watching birds without disturbing them - under the Bird Protection Act it is an offence to wilfully disturb a bird at the nest.

MOORLAND:

The three main types of vegetation are heather (ling), bilberry and grasses. Bracken encroaches on the sides of cloughs and Sphagnum moss forms saturated "sponges" on wet areas.

The moors are managed for sheep and to maintain a high population of red grouse for shooting, and the heather is burned in rotation to encourage new growth which provides food for grouse and sheep. The slopes take on a patchwork appearance due to the small areas of different shades of colour and ages of growth. In late summer, the spikes of ling flowers give the moors a purple hue.

In contrast, the deciduous bilberry bushes start the season bright green, gradually darkening through the summer, until they lose their leaves in the autumn.The single round, pink bell-like flowers turn to red, purple-black berries appear in the late summer.

Crowberry, a dark evergreen similar to ling, grows on some of the high,drier parts of the moors. Other less common plants include cranberry, which has creeping, wiry stems and tiny alternate leaves; cross leaved heath, cowberry and cloudberry.

Of the two types of cotton grass, the common cotton grass has three downy white seed heads and tends to grow in very wet places. The harestail forms tussocks and has single white fluffy heads in May and June.

From the dry brown bracken beds in the cloughs, green fronds unfurl

In spring, the small green hairstreak butterfly may be seen among bilberry, the underside of the wings showing green when the insect is at rest, but the upperside an unexpected brown. A larger insect, the fox moth, can be seen over the moors in summer where its fast erratic flight attracts attention. It has a wingspan of nearly two inches and is pale brown in colour with white wing bars.

The common lizard occurs in reasonable numbers and many of the rustles in dry bracken on hot days are likely to be caused by this small reptile. Colouring varies from brown to yellow-grey.

Other inhabitants of dry grasses are short-tailed field voles; abundant, small, pale brown rodents, measuring about 4½ inches with blunt noses, short tails and pale underparts. This tiny mammal is a source of food for other mammals and predatory birds.

Kestrel picture,

The kestrel, our most common bird of prey, is mostly noticed when hunting, hovering over grassland from where it might spy a small mammal, or even a beetle. The bird is brown in colour but the female has a brown and black barred tail and the male has a blue/grey head and tail. Both have hooked bills and yellow legs.

Other moorland birds include:-

Red Grouse: This resident species of bird is closely associated with heather moorland and is the only British game bird which can be claimed to be indigenou Although related to the european willow grouse, the red grouse is found only in the British Isles. A dark reddish-brown bird of medium size with feathered legs found mainly amongst heather, but also other 'open' vegetation. The male has slightly more colour than the female, especially in spring. Has characteristic 'go back, go back' call.

Carrion Crow: A resident, this all-black crow can often be seen hunting in pairs over the moors, although it needs trees for nesting and roosting. It feeds regularly on dead animals, but also takes many eggs and young birds. Call note is a harsh 'caarr'.

Swift: Swifts make a very brief summer visit to Britain, just to breed.

Swift picture

In spring quite large numbers travel from surrounding towns and villages to feed over the moors. At a distance the plumage appears black, and the birds seem to have unusually long wings in proportion to the length of their bodies.

Skylark: This small brown bird with streaked plumage and a crest, sings as it flies vertically to great heights, sometimes almost out of sight. The song is a loud liquid warble and usually lasts for several minutes.

Meadow Pipit: This abundant bird is of similar colour but smaller than the skylark and more slender. The meadow pipit does not fly so high on its song flight and looks like a paper dart, with wings and tail held upwards, during the descent.

Cuckoo: Everyone knows the cuckoo's call but many people have never seen the bird. The adult is a blue/grey, medium sized, with pale barred underparts, long tail and flies with rapid, shallow wing beats. The female has a different call which is a loud bubbling note. In this area cuckoos favour meadow pipit's and wagtail's nests in which to lay their eggs.

Ring Ouzel: The ring ouzel is one of the earliest migrants to arrive in the spring and stays very close to the moorland cloughs. This member of the thrush family looks like a blackbird with a white crescent on the breast, and utters its 'chach chack' alarm note with a flick of its tail.

Ring Ouzel picture

Whinchat: The whinchat is a small migrant with buffish underparts, brown back dark cheeks and pale eyestripe. Quite often in the cloughs, this species likes bracken and may be seen perched on top of the stems. The new forestry plantations also attract whinchats, the small trees and long grass providing a new habitat.

WOODLAND.

Examples of old oak and birch woodland remain together with fine specimens of Scots pine , larch and beech. This "open" type of woodland is quite rich in bird species which are attracted by a plentiful supply of seed and insect food.

Fungi are numerous among the older trees and fallen timber. The poisonous fly agaric, one of the few species with an English name, adds colour in autumn with bright red cap and white spots. Your nose rather than your eyes is more likely to find stinkhorn, with its white stripe and black, sticky cap. The name is well merited, for its offensive aroma carries quite a distance.

The newly-forested areas offer a habitat ranging from small new trees with dense ground vegetation, to fast growing impenetrable conifers shading

These include that most successful of the "opportunist" plants, rose bay willow herb, with its tall spikes of pink flowers in spring, and hundreds of downy seeds later in the season; moon daisy with flower heads two inches in diameter, yellow centres with white petals; brambles with thei thorny, spreading briars and fox gloves, another tall plant with purple bell hanging in columns on tapering flower heads, thriving where there has been ground disturbance.

Most mammals in the woods are nocturnal, and fox, badger, hedgehog and long-tailed mouse are the most active after dark. Grey squirrels are qui often seen on the ground, running up into trees when disturbed. There are no red squirrels in the valley, so do not get confused at certain times of year when the grey squirrel has a brown tinge to its fur, and at a distance may not look grey. They have discovered that litter bins provide a source of food and quite often a startled animal leaps out from a bin and makes for the nearest tree.

In early summer, an abundance of caterpillars coincides with the hatching of the hungry young of many woodland birds, and insect-eating species such as the redstart are kept busy from dawn to dusk trying to satisfy their demanding offspring.

Redstart picture

Of all the summer migrants the male redstart is the most colourful, with orange-red breast, browny-red rump and tail, black throat, white forehea and slate grey head and back. The female is much paler but also has a red tai They have a particular liking for the open deciduous areas.

Wood Pigeon: A light grey bird of medium size, the wood pigeon makes quite a flutter as it flies from trees, catching the branches with its wings. A closer look will reveal a white half collar on the neck, hence the alternativ name of ring dove, and white bars on the wings.

Jay: Another medium sized bird most likely to be seen flying away, when its white rump is very noticable. If seen closer, general colouring is a warm buff with patterns on the head, blue feathers in the wing, white rump and black tail, raucous call note.

Magpie: Local name, Pienet.

This black and white member of the crow family is more often seen in the lower part of the valley. It has a very long tail which at a distance looks

and long tail with white outer feathers, which at times gives it the appearance of a more exotic species.

The song thrush is smaller with shorter tail and a browner back, also with speckled breast. The blackbird is also a member of the thrush family. The male is black all over with an orange bill, but the female is dark brown with a dark bill. All three have loud pleasant songs, the song thrush with its repeating notes is probably the easiest to identify.

Tits: Blue tits and great tits are the most numerous. Blue tits are quite small with blue/green backs and blue crown, white cheeks, and yellow underparts Great tits are slightly larger with black heads, white cheeks, black band down yellow breasts.

Coal tits are small, pale underneath, brownish back, black round head, white cheeks and a white patch at the back of the head.

The long tailed tit is a bird of the trees and unlikely to be seen on the ground. General colouring is black and white tinged with pink. The long tail is very noticable in flight, being as long as the body of the bird.

Tree Creeper: This small resident has a brown bodly streaked back, pale underparts, curved bill and creeps up the trunks of trees. Having climbed up the trunk so far searching for insects, the bird will fly down to the base of another tree and start to climb up again.

Tree eeper cture

Coldcrest: The smallest British bird, only 3½ inches long, stays mostly around conifers during the summer. General colouring is olive-green with a crest of gold bordered with black on the head. It has a very high ptiched call note and song, and many people are unable to hear the sound..

Wren: Another tiny bird is the wren, ½"larger than the goldcrest. A perky bird with a cocked tail, the wren is one of the most lively species in the valley, darting everywhere on whirring wings and uttering an unusually loud and long song. Plumage is brown, richly barred and they can be found low in the valley and high on the moors, well away from trees.

Dunnock (or hedge sparrow) Found among bushes and low vegetation, the dunnock seldom flies high prefering to creep along the ground searching for insect food Plumage is a rather uniform browny-grey.

Robin: Britain's national bird needs no introduction, its redbreast and cheeky puffed-out appearance makes it familiar to everyone.

Willow Warbler: This small olive green summer migrant is one of the most common birds not only in the Goyt, but in most of Britain, and can be found anywhere near trees and bushes. It has a pleasant, slow 'down the scale' song.

Finches: Of the resident finches, the chaffinch is the most common, and tam birds can be seen around the car parks. The male has browny-red cheeks and underparts, grey/blue crown and neck, brown back, white shoulder patches, white wing bars and dark tail with white outer tail feathers.The female is oliver-green with similar white markings. The bullfinch is slightly larger with a stout bill and the male has bright red underparts, black on the head and tail, grey back and conspicuous white rump. The female is less bright bu with the white rump.

The chaffinch has a loud attractive song but the bullfinch only has a low call note. Other finches, redpoll, goldfinch and greenfinch may be see, but probably not at very close range.

RESERVOIRS AND LOWER REGIONS:

The main features are the waterside habitat provided by the reservoirs and streams, and grassland, with a short turf resulting from years of sheep grazing. In April, as the sheep start lambing, lesser celandine, with its yellow six to eight petalled flowers brightens the increasingly-green surroundings.

By summer, heath bedstraw, a small plant with a "foam" of tiny white flowers is common, together with the small yellow four petalled heads of Tormentil, creeping among the grasses. The purple, thistle-like hardheads, attract the small tortoiseshell and white butterflies. The small heath butterfly is quic moving, pale brown in colour with a black spot on the tip of the wings, and abundant among the summer grasses.

By the waterside, dragonflies may be seen and despite their large size (almost 3") they are quite harmless.

The fishing rights at Errwood Reservoir are let to a fly fishing club, and the reservoir is stocked with trout every spring, although some trout do breed naturally in the streams.

Many old drystone walls border the fields and provide extra cover for wildlife. Stoats and weasels make use of the walls and travel along the

white underparts, and are long and thin in shape. The stoat is the larger - about 15 ins. long with a 2 in. black tip to its tail - and the weasel is more slender, about 8 ins. long with a shorter tail.

Rabbits and hares are present, the rabbit living in burrows and the hare in the open fields. Hares are larger and more brown in colour with long hind legs and a black centre to the tail.Rabbits usually show a white "bob" tail when running.

Other small mammals are secretive, although the presence of moles is evident from their soil heaps in the fields. Occasionally, moles are seen on the surface, they are about 6 ins. long with dark velvet fur, a short tail and very large paws which are put to good use in excavating tunnels. Another small animal, often found dead, is the common shrew. This is 3" long insect-eating "mouse" with pointed nose and long whiskers. It only has a short life and although unpalatable to other mammals, it is eaten by some birds. Among the birds which can be seen in this area re:-

Lapwing: Commonly called the pewit, this likeable summer visitor can be seen displaying over fields, swooping, spiralling, calling 'pee-wit', and making a fanning noise with its rounded wings. At a distance the plumage appears black and white, but a closer look reveals a green sheen and a crest on the head.

Starling: A resident, local names, Shepster and Shepey.
The size of a small thrush, the starling is dark and has a 'sharp' look with pointed bill, wings and tail, and a fast direct flight. Although quite often a town bird, starlings spend a lot of time feeding in the fields and young birds gather in noisy flocks to feed on caterpillars and other insects.

Wheatear: A small summer migrant, the wheatear is most frequently seen along stone walls or rocky hillsides. With a flash of white rump it flies along the wall, dips and then up again, alighting on the coping. The male has a blue/grey back, dark eyestripe and wings, and pale underparts. The female is much paler with mainly buff colouring.

Yellow Wagtail: The male of the species is bright yellow and the female rather paler. It is a small slender bird with a jerking walk and a long tail. Usually found on grassland, yellow wagtails are quite often seen along the roadside by Errwood Reservoir.

Pied Wagtail: This black and white bird is more numerous than other wagtails and can be seen anywhere in the valley, near water, car parks, ruined buildings

running along the ground.

Dipper: Very much a water bird, the dipper has developed an ability to walk and swim under water so that it can feed on various larvae etc. A stocky bird with a white breast, black upperparts and short tail. When perched on stones in the river it does ' knees bends' quickly, hence its name.

Mallard: The most common duck visiting the reservoirs is the Mallard. The female is brown all over but the male is a handsome bird with dark green head, white collar, brown breast and grey back. Family parties of ducklings are usually seen from late spring onwards.

Swallows and Martins: All three species can be seen feeding over the reservoi Sand martins are light brown above with pale underparts, house martins are blu black with long tail streamers, red throat and pale underparts. Martins have a twittering call, and swallows have a musical song. In certain weather condit ons swifts also feed over the water surface.

The birds described are species which are most likely to be encountered along the various walking routes and roads in the valley.

Goyt Valley Walking Routes:

The route numbers referred to in the following description of walks around the valley are located on the 2½ in. Ordnance Survey map included in the book.

Fullest enjoyment can be gained if walkers are suitably equipped - good walking boots, warm clothing, anorak, compass and map. Binoculars, if available, would be also useful.

Route 1. (about 6 miles)

This walk, which takes about three hours, takes you from car park 1 (see Map) near the road that crosses the reservoirs along The Street, and eventually to the highest point in the valley area, Shining Tor - at 1833 ft. It is the most impressive of all the walks and involves the greatest amount of hill climbing.

As you walk up the steep incline of the The Street, an old Roman road, you pass Forestry Commission plantations of lodgepole pine trees and larches. This area is frequented by whinchat, linnet, wheatear, meadow pipit and skylark. On your left the road is bordered with windswept and rather puny beech trees - the soil here is very acidic and poor.

After a mile the road becomes less steep and in front of you is the ridge between Pym Chair and Cats Tor. The Street takes the shortest way to the top of the Ridge, and in this short distance you have climbed from 950 ft. by the reservoir to 1350 feet at Pym Chair.

A sign post points the way to Shining Tor along the ridge to your left. Follow the footpath that runs parallel to the drystone wall, making good headway on the springy turf. After half a mile you will pass the rocky gritstone outcrop of Cats Tor.

From this point there are good views in all directions - to the north east signs of habitation in the valleys. On a clear day you can see Chinley Church with Kinder plateau in the background. In the far distance you will probably be able to see the moors beyond Longdendale and Holme Moss Television Mast. Due north lies the climbing edge of Windgather Rocks, a piece of land owned by the National Park Board for the benefit of climbers. To the north west is the valley of Todd Brook and further west the Cheshire Plain and Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope. Due east is the attractive moorland

plateau of Combs Moss.

From Cats Tor the route follows the country boundary between Cheshire and Derbyshire, along the ridge to Shining Tor. Among the heather along the way you may come across red grouse, skylark, meadow pipit, twite, curlew and, if you are lucky, golden plover. The heather particularly in late summer, covers the moors in glowing purple.

From Shining Tor you should walk south east, passing across the head of Shooter's Clough. On joining the Stake Side track, turn left (north) and follow the ridge towards Errwood Hall. Soon you come to some woodland which marks the beginning of the Errwood Estate. Here there is a choice of routes, No.1 continuing straight down to Errwood car park, or turning sharp left and zig-zagging down into Shooter's Clough and out to Errwood Hall grounds. Follow the main track from the Hall ruins to Errwood car park and back alongside the reservoir to the Street.

Route 2. (2½ mile circuit)

From the car park walk half-way up the Street road turning off left at the lay by down the pleasantly wooded Foxlow Clough to Errwood Hall. About 200 yards into the Clough is the Shrine, built by the Grimshawe family. On the right are large areas of hillside that have been ploughed and prepared by the Forestry Commission for new plantations.

As you descend into the valley, you will see many square holes at the base of the stone walls. These were to allow rabbits easy passage and then an open run for the landowners' shoot.

Route 2a.

This alternative to Route 2 takes you along Foxlow Edge. It is ideal for those who want to find a good view of the valley without undergoing the more strenuous walk to Shining Tor. The pine trees on the west side of Foxlow Edge have been contorted into twisted shapes by the prevailing winds and have remained stunted because of the acidic soil.

There is a choice of paths down to Errwood Hall, or cut down to your right joining Route 2. Both routes are via Errwood Hall to Errwood car park, returning alongside the reservoir to the Street car park.

Route 4. (4½ mile circuit)

Starting from Goyts Clough Quarry, cross the river Goyt at the Packhorse Bridge, and turn left following the path that climbs up through bracken slopes on the edge of the moor, levels out and runs parallel to the valley. Here, like Route 1, the walk is through moorland terrain. Follow the way marker pegs which pinpoint the pathway. About ½ mile along this route there is a superb view from this high vantage point, straight down the length of the reservoir and the valley. Follow the edge of the enclosed fields and then descend along the track to Wildmoorstone Brook. The moor boundary wall has 'creep' holes at its base to allow sheep to get through to the fields and in places an undercoping to discourage animals from attempting to jump over.

The track then crosses the Wildmoorstone Brook by iron girders, then curves round the far side of the Clough towards Errwood Reservoir, past an old lime kiln and across the old Goyt's Lane.

Continue through the rough pasture in between new plantations to join the road behind Bunsal Cob. The overgrown pool on the opposite side of the road was the water supply to one of the stationary engines on the Bunsal incline.

Return route via Errwood Dam and along the road to Errwood car park and on to Goytsclough.

Route 5. (3½ mile circuit)

Another route starting from Goytsclough Quarry. The walk involves a fairly strenuous climb across open moorland towards Shining Tor. A short walk south from Goytsclough Quarry along the Goyt Valley road will bring you to a sign post directing you towards the Tor. Where Deep Clough flows under the road, follow the footpath sign direction on a track which curves round to the left of the old mill site. From this track as you start climbing you can see the line of the leat which used to supply water to drive the water wheel at Goytsclough Paint works. The grassy furrow is clearly seen following the curve of the hillside. At the top of the track enter the Forestry Commission's plantation by a stile on the right alongside the gate, and follow the grassy path past the ruins of a farm toward Deep Clough. The air vents visible on your right are part of disused waterworks underground storage tanks. Cross the stream. The small dam here was an intake for the storage tanks.

The path now climbs through an undulating area to a stile and continues on the outside of the boundary fence towards Stake Clough and crosses a track. This track was cut several years ago to allow the tenant of the moor better access to the shooting butts used in the grouse season to conceal members of the shooting party. The butts consist of drystone walling with a top layer of turf. Eventually you arrive at a track at Stake Side.

From this point there are fine views to the south west overlooking Macclesfield and to the south the Cat and Fiddle Inn.

Turn right along the track and follow the ridge towards Errwood Hall and eventually to Errwood car park. From here it is a mile walk south to Goytsclough Quarry.

Route 6. (3 mile circuit)

This walk takes you from Derbyshire Bridge along the old Macclesfield - Buxton road (now a stone track) to a height of 1559 ft., where there is an excellent view. The areas on both sides of the road were extensively mined for coal in the mid and late 19th century, and some of the hummocks visible are from the old coal workings. At the top of the hill turn left, walking northwards along the footpath to Berry Clough. The path then follows the course of the clough down to the River Goyt which can be crossed by the footbridge.

As an alternative, you can continue downstream crossing the Goyt by the Packhorse Bridge to Goytsclough Quarry. An alternative to walking back all the way along the road is to start off on Route 5 but do not enter the forestry plantation. Turn left along a grassy path which runs parallel with the main valley, eventually joining the road upstream of Berry Clough.

Route 3. (3 mile circuit)

Walk ½ mile along the Street from car park 1. Go through a gate on the right which leads to a recently widened track, laid out by the Forestry Commission to give better access in case of fire and for timber extraction. Walking along the track, the going is easy and between the plantations there are views of the Fernilee Reservoir and down the valley towards Whaley Bridge.

On the far side of the reservoir you can see green fields which have been ploughed and re-seeded, these are used for penning sheep in the spring at lambing time and later in the summer, cut for hay.

Continuing along the track you pass the disused Issue Tor Quarry, from which stone was taken for the construction of Fernilee Reservoir, and shortly afterwards leave the forest area. Just at the entrance to Oldfield Farm, turn sharp right down the road to Fernilee Reservoir, right again over the stile into the forest and follow the track which runs parallel with the reservoir.

This is an area rich in bird life and the following birds are frequently seen:- jays, redpoll, linnet, wagtails, finches, whinchat, as well as the more common species. Look out for the Heron on the far banks of the Reservoir.

Under the water near here are the remains of the Chilworth Gunpowder Factory, and if there is a drought it may be possible to see the powder magazi and other remains.

Continue past the ruins of Stubbins Farm, noting the yew tree, and along the footbridge over Deep Clough. Climb up past the ruins of another farm (Intake) and follow the track down an avenue of fast growing pines and larches to Jep Clough, where the track joins a section of the former coach road that led to Errwood Hall.

Continue along the track climbing up to Errwood Dam, or turn sharp right to the ruins of Errwood Farm and then to the Dam and The Street car park