

509 Arts

Hardcastle Ways

**The Twentieth Century Story
of Hardcastle Crag
and Gibson Mill**

**Learning Pack
Section One
Before your visit to Hardcastle Crag**

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With thanks to



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**ARTS COUNCIL
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**HEBDEN BRIDGE
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

Hardcastle Craggs and Gibson Mill: the 20th Century Timeline



HARDCASTLE CRAGGS - THE TWENTIETH CENTURY STORY

From industry to recreation, entertainment and people power

Textile production at Gibson Mill ends. **1897-1901**

Hardcastle Craggs becomes a regular venue for Clarion Choirs, picnics and outdoor concerts. Mass gatherings are addressed by Keir Hardie and Christian Socialist Caroline Martyn.

Over a three-day Whitsun holiday weekend in 1897 twenty thousand people enjoyed a day out in the Craggs.

1900 Welshow Dean reservoirs are built for Halifax Corporation. Construction workers and their families live at "Dawson City", a temporary hut village.

A railway is built along the valley to transport workers to the reservoirs, crossing Blake Dean on a wooden trestle bridge.

1902 Gibson Mill and the adjoining cottages undergo transformation into an Entertainment Emporium, with a wooden roller-skating rink, tea rooms, dance hall and restaurants.

1920 The upper and lower millponds are used for boating.

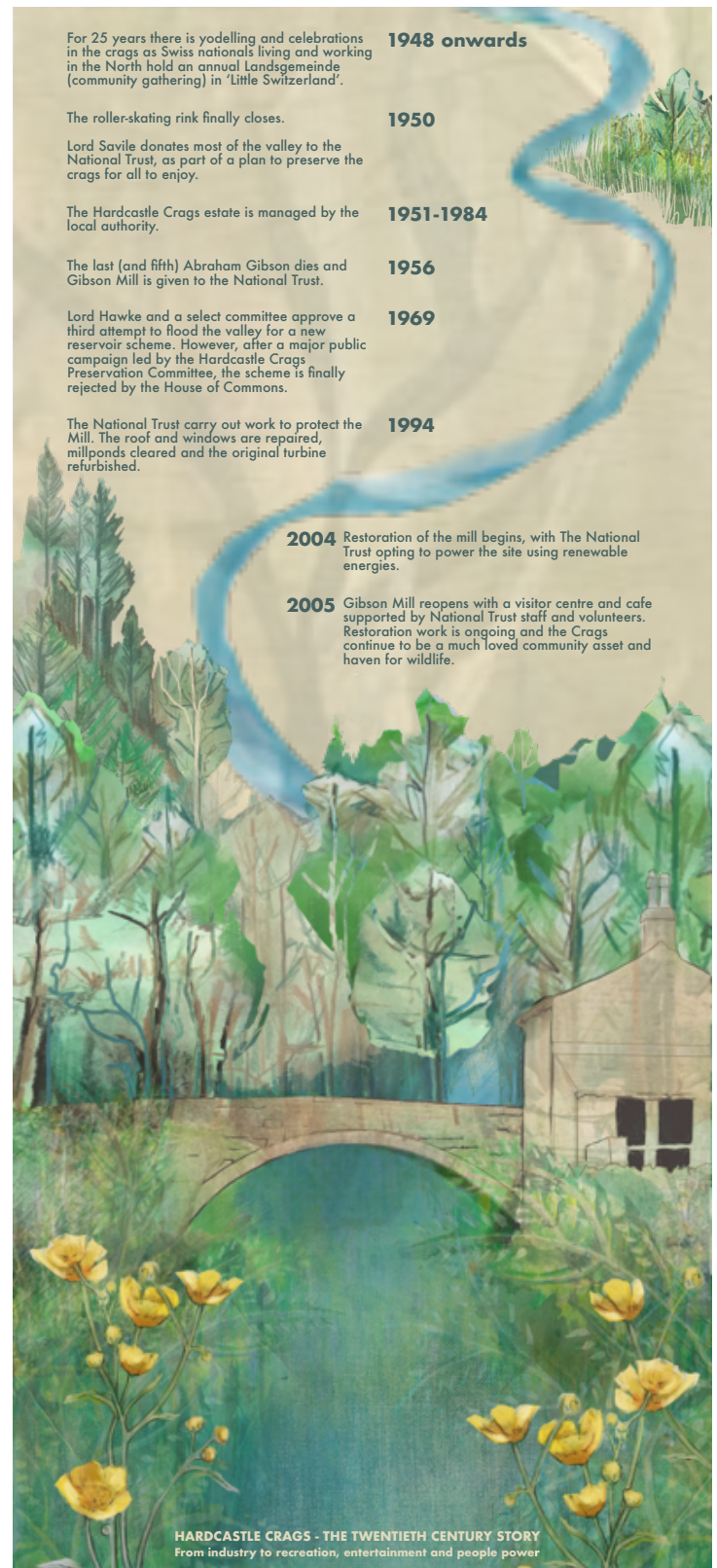
Gibson Mill reaches the height of its popularity as an Entertainment Emporium. People camp and stay at hostels in the valley and every summer weekend thousands of people flock to Hardcastle Craggs.

1930 Arnold Binns achieves a new world record by roller-skating for 40 hours non-stop at the Gibson Mill rink.

1934 The Halifax Water Corporation propose flooding the valley for a new reservoir. Local people object and begin to protest. The Hardcastle Craggs Preservation Committee is formed.

1946 The Mill restaurant closes but the roller-skating rink and cottage cafe remain open.

1948-1949 A second attempt is made to flood the valley and create a reservoir. Following an extensive letter-writing campaign led by The Hardcastle Craggs Preservation Committee, Halifax Corporation's proposal is turned down by a Lords Select Committee.



For 25 years there is yodelling and celebrations in the crags as Swiss nationals living and working in the North hold an annual Landsgemeinde (community gathering) in 'Little Switzerland'. **1948 onwards**

The roller-skating rink finally closes. **1950**

Lord Savile donates most of the valley to the National Trust, as part of a plan to preserve the crags for all to enjoy.

The Hardcastle Craggs estate is managed by the local authority. **1951-1984**

The last (and fifth) Abraham Gibson dies and Gibson Mill is given to the National Trust. **1956**

Lord Hawke and a select committee approve a third attempt to flood the valley for a new reservoir scheme. However, after a major public campaign led by the Hardcastle Craggs Preservation Committee, the scheme is finally rejected by the House of Commons. **1969**

The National Trust carry out work to protect the Mill. The roof and windows are repaired, millponds cleared and the original turbine refurbished. **1994**

2004 Restoration of the mill begins, with The National Trust opting to power the site using renewable energies.

2005 Gibson Mill reopens with a visitor centre and cafe supported by National Trust staff and volunteers. Restoration work is ongoing and the Craggs continue to be a much loved community asset and haven for wildlife.

HARDCASTLE CRAGGS - THE TWENTIETH CENTURY STORY

From industry to recreation, entertainment and people power

Introduction

509 Arts is based in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Our creative work is inspired by people and place. We thrive on open conversations. We talk, we listen, we share. And then we make things happen.

509 Arts has an ongoing relationship with the National Trust at Gibson Mill and Hardcastle Crag. During Victorian times Gibson Mill was a thriving cotton mill weaving business. In the early 20th Century, the mill closed and was reborn as an “Emporium” of Edwardian entertainment, attracting thousands to its roller-skating rink, dance hall, restaurant, boating lake and swing boats – all set in the beautiful environment of Hardcastle Crag. These days it is enjoyed by 200,000 visitors annually and is an important place for recreation, exercise and reflection.

The location of Hardcastle Crag and its steep sided valley was seen by some as a potential site for a reservoir and throughout the 20th Century local people successfully resisted three attempts to construct a reservoir that would submerge much of the valley and destroy a valuable civic amenity.

In Autumn 2019, 509 Arts worked with the National Trust to stage Footfall, a processional dusk walk and woodland ceremony (with yodelling!) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of a successful campaign to resist plans to build a reservoir in the valley.

Whilst the site’s history as part of the industrial revolution is well documented, the stories of Edwardian entertainment, environmental preservation and public protest remain largely hidden. This education pack is a way of revealing these untold stories.

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HARDCASTLE WAYS

SECTION ONE

**Before your visit to Hardcastle Craggs
And Gibson Mill**

1. Notes for Teachers and Group Leaders:

The aim of this Learning Pack is to enhance understanding of the natural environment, the unique stories of Hardcastle Crag, together with the wider historical context of the site. It is designed for use by:

- Teachers and students working in primary and lower-secondary school
- Community organisations, project workers and their users.

It should be seen as providing a series of starting points that can be followed in parts or as a whole. Each activity is a beginning and can be taken in a number of different directions depending on the time and resources available to the school or group. You are welcome to make use of these resources and use them in ways that are appropriate to the communities or students you work with.

Gibson Mill is located in Hebden Dale. To get there you have to walk from the car park – about a mile. If you are very keen you can walk up from Hebden Bridge – about 2.5 miles. There are special parking places for people with mobility problems next to Gibson Mill. Please phone and book if you need them: 01422 841023

Feel free to adapt and develop the ideas in this pack. Feedback and suggestions for other activities should be sent to alan.dix@509arts.co.uk.

Please note: there is no wi-fi and very little mobile coverage at Hardcastle Crag

2. Background Information

This information is designed to be used by teachers, group leaders and more advanced learners. It describes the historical background to the 20th Century story of Hardcastle Crag and can be used as a launchpad for more detailed research.

The Site

Owned and Managed by the National Trust, Hardcastle Crag is a beautiful steeply wooded valley near Hebden Bridge in Calderdale. It gets its name from a rocky outcrop that rises up from the valley floor.

People have lived, worked, and played in Hardcastle Crag for thousands of years. Its trees have been felled for firewood and to make building timber and charcoal. Its rock has been quarried for buildings and walls and its water has been used for cooking, cleaning and to make steam for engines.



Gibson Mill

Gibson Mill is nestled in the valley bottom next to the river. It was built around 1800 And was used to spin cotton for nearly 100 years. People who worked in Gibson Mill walked up from Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd or down from Pecket Well and Heptonstall. The work was hard, and the hours were long, and

people didn't get paid a great deal in Victorian times. They earned just enough to pay for food and clothes and to keep themselves warm in winter. There wasn't much left over, and they had to save up for luxuries.

Both children and adults worked in Gibson Mill. In 1833 the mill employed 21 workers and most were younger than 21 years old. A 10 to 12-year-old child would have earned 2 shillings & 6d (12.5p) for working a 72-hour week.

Gibson Mill closed down in 1900 and the buildings were gradually converted into an "entertainment emporium" with a wooden roller-skating rink, tea rooms, dance hall and restaurant. People could camp and stay at hostels in the valley, and every weekend in the summer thousands of people would flock to Hardcastle Crag to enjoy the beautiful scenery and walk the hills above Hebden Bridge.

It has been suggested that Hebden Bridge station has such long platforms in order to accommodate the vast numbers of visitors arriving there with the Crag as their destination.

In 1934, 1948 and 1969 the water board tried to build a dam at Hardcastle Crag. Each time they wanted to build a huge wall across the valley to hold the water back and create a reservoir 30 metres deep. The trees and plants, footpaths and animal habitats would be flooded, and the valley would disappear.

Each time local people organised protests and campaigns to stop the water board from building the dam.

When The National Trust began to restore the mill in 2005, they took the decision to make the site as sustainable as possible by exploring 'green' technologies that allow the site to function completely off grid. It is fascinating that the power of the river that brought the Mill here over 200 years ago (indeed the 1926 turbine is still functioning) is now feeding more modern technologies to allow visitors to enjoy the site.

The Reservoirs

From 1900 onwards the people, mills and factories of the Calder valley began to need more and more fresh clean water. To meet this demand, three reservoirs were built at Walshaw Dean above Hardcastle Crag.

There were so many people working on the building of these reservoirs that a temporary town had to be built for them to live in whilst they were working. The temporary town was named Dawson City; you can find out more about it here:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardcastle-crags/features/dawson-city>

In order that people and materials could more easily be transported through the valley to the site of the reservoirs a small railway was built. The engines were pulled to the top of the valley by 15 horses and were then put on the newly built tracks that led to the reservoir.

A wooden railway bridge was built to span the valley. It was 105 feet high and 700 feet across. The bridge was demolished in 1912 as it had become too dangerous but the stone base and foundations are still visible today.

But demand for water continued to grow and in 1934 the Halifax Water Corporation Water Works Committee proposed the building of another reservoir in the valley above Gibson Mill. This would involve the construction of a 200 foot high dam and the flooding of a major part of the valley. Local people opposed the plan and it was eventually rejected.

In 1948 the water corporation tried again to get permission to build the reservoir and the job of investigating the idea was given to a man called Lord Hawke. He discussed the plan with a group of other Lords and members of Parliament.

The Hebden Bridge Preservation Society was formed to oppose the construction of the reservoirs and thousands of people signed petitions that were sent to Parliament. The petition of protest at the plans to flood the valley reached almost 84000 signatures at its height.

After visits to the valley Lord Hawke was convinced that flooding the valley was the right thing to do and the decision was approved by him and a group of other politicians in 1969. However, when the dam was discussed in the House of Commons in 1970 it was rejected.

Today the whole site is owned by the National Trust, to be preserved and enjoyed by the visitors from all over the world.

Leisure in the Landscape

When the Mill fell into disuse in 1890 the buildings took on a new lease of life as the site became a popular Entertainment Emporium. In the grounds of The Mill were swing boats and opportunities for boating on the Mill Dam. The Mill building itself was used for roller skating (in what is now the café), tea dances and popular music took place on the first floor, and there was a restaurant on the top floor.

So popular was the Craggs site that various pavilions and cafes serving refreshments sprang up along the valley for the many thousands of visitors who travelled from Lancashire, Yorkshire and beyond. They came by train from Bradford, Leeds and Manchester. Sometimes they used horse and carriage and later charabanc (motorised coach). There were chalets to stay in and campsites for the more adventurous.

In the 1890s the site was also a popular place for local Glee Clubs – local choirs – to meet and sing together. There were big mass gatherings to hear from local political activists of the time. One such meeting in 1896 had over 2000 in attendance to hear from Keir Hardie, one of the early founders of the Labour party, and Caroline Martyn, an influential early socialist activist.

In later years, the valley became a popular destination for the Swiss communities of the North of England - its steep sides and streams – reminded them of their home country. The Federation of Swiss Clubs held their “Landsgemeinde” at Hardcastle Craggs for a number of years and the area was often referred to as Little Switzerland.

In the 1950s the National Trust acquired the site for its preservation and to enable many thousands of visitors to enjoy the landscape and heritage of the area.

Sheet 1: Before Your Visit – General information

Hardcastle Craggs is a beautiful steeply wooded valley near Hebden Bridge in Calderdale. It gets its name from a rocky outcrop that rises up from the valley floor.



People have lived, worked and played in Hardcastle Craggs for thousands of years. Its trees have been felled for firewood and to make building timber and charcoal. Its rock has been quarried for buildings and walls and its water has been used for cooking, cleaning and to make steam for engines.



Gibson Mill

There is a mill building in Hardcastle Craggs called Gibson Mill. It was built around 1800 and was used to spin cotton for nearly 100 years. People who worked in the mill used to live in the cottages next door, or walk down from Pecket Well and Heptonstall.

Gibson Mill closed down in around 1900 and the buildings were gradually converted into an “entertainment emporium” with a wooden roller-skating rink, tea rooms, dance hall and restaurant. People could camp and stay at hostels in the valley, and every weekend in the summer thousands of people would flock to Hardcastle Craggs to enjoy the beautiful scenery and walk the hills above Hebden Bridge.

In the early 20th Century, there were three attempts to build a large Dam to create a reservoir to provide clean water for the towns and villages; the last attempt was in 1969. The people who loved and cared about the valley came together to protest about these plans and the valley was saved.

Hardcastle Crag is now cared for by the National Trust. The Trust cares for the Mill buildings and the woodland habitat that surrounds it. The site is managed using renewable energy and is completely off grid. This means that it has no access to power and water supplies as we might do in our homes and school buildings but must make its own supplies.

Sheet 2: Before Your Visit – Literacy Focus

Look at the words below and read them aloud. Do you know what they mean?

Crag	Mill	Outcrop	Moors	Off-Grid
Valley	Dam	Reservoir	Beck	Turbine

Now write the words in the boxes below, next to their meaning

A man-made lake, built to store water	
A rocky cliff	
A stream or small river	
A barrier built to hold back water	
A building where people work to produce cloth	
A worn-down (eroded) area of land with steep sides and often with a river running along its bottom.	
A high area of land, often with no trees, often with a plant called heather growing on it.	
A large rock sticking out of the ground	
A word that describes a place that is not connected to mains electricity or water supplies.	
Machinery that uses the power of water to create electricity	

Sheet 3: Before Your Visit - Geography Focus

We are going to look at the landscape of Hardcastle Crag on a computer.

Here is what to do: Go to Google Earth on a laptop or tablet by click on the link below or copying it into your browser:

<https://earth.google.com/web/>

When you have a picture of planet Earth, click the search button and type “Hardcastle Crag” into the search box. Press enter and wait for Google Earth to find Hardcastle Crag.

Zoom out to 1000m so that you can see the landscape around the Crag. Keep the pin in the centre of your screen.

Click on the Compass icon. The red arrow will point up. This means that the compass is pointing North.

Your screen should look like this:



Can you see the Hardcastle Crag valley? Where do you think the river - called the Hebden Beck - runs?

Look at the different shades of light and dark. Dark green colour is where there are the most trees. Pale brown is where there is not much growing.

Zoom into 100m. Can you see the row of cottages where people lived when they worked at Gibson Mill?

Zoom in to 70m and follow the track eastwards (to the left) along from the Hardcastle Crag pin until you reach Gibson Mill. You will have to move the screen to get there and there might be trees in the way.

Can you see Gibson Mill? It was built right next to the river. Why might this be?

There is a dark triangular shape behind the mill? What is it?

What else can you see?

Write down what you have done and what you have seen on screen.

Sheet 3: Before Your Visit – All About Water

In Victorian times water was often taken from wells and water pumps and carried to people's homes.



Village Water Pump in Heptonstall (Hilltop Village above Hardcastle Crag) around 1900.
Pennine Horizons ref ALC02561

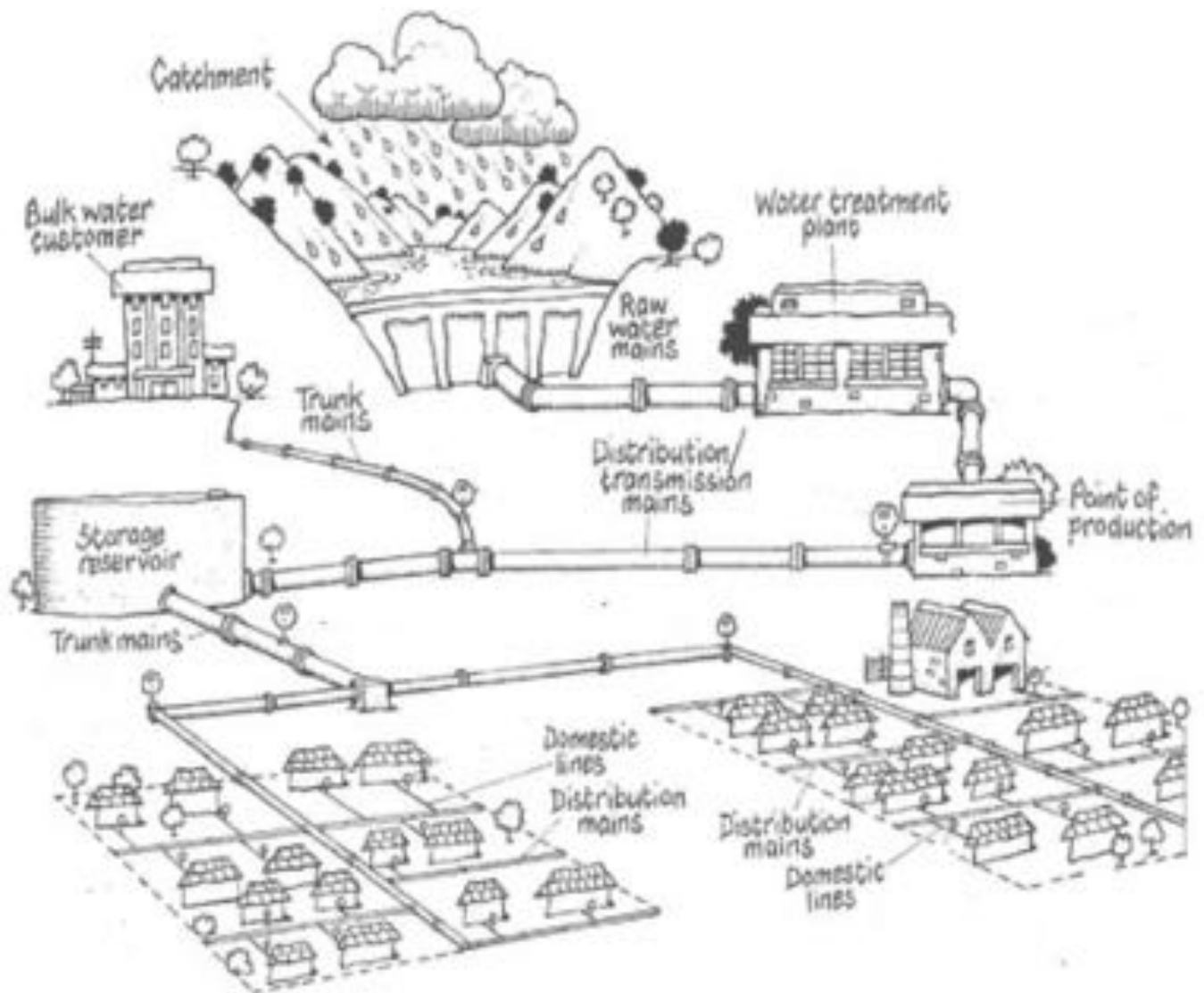
Around 1900 the demand for clean water in the valley began to increase greatly. The population of the valley was growing as more people were drawn from the countryside to work in the mill towns.

Factories and Mills in the valley used water to make steam to power the looms and manufacture the cotton and wool that they were producing.

This increased demand for water resulted in the need to build three reservoirs above Hardcastle Crag. Water companies were then able to pipe clean, fresh water to people's homes for washing, cooking and flushing toilets.

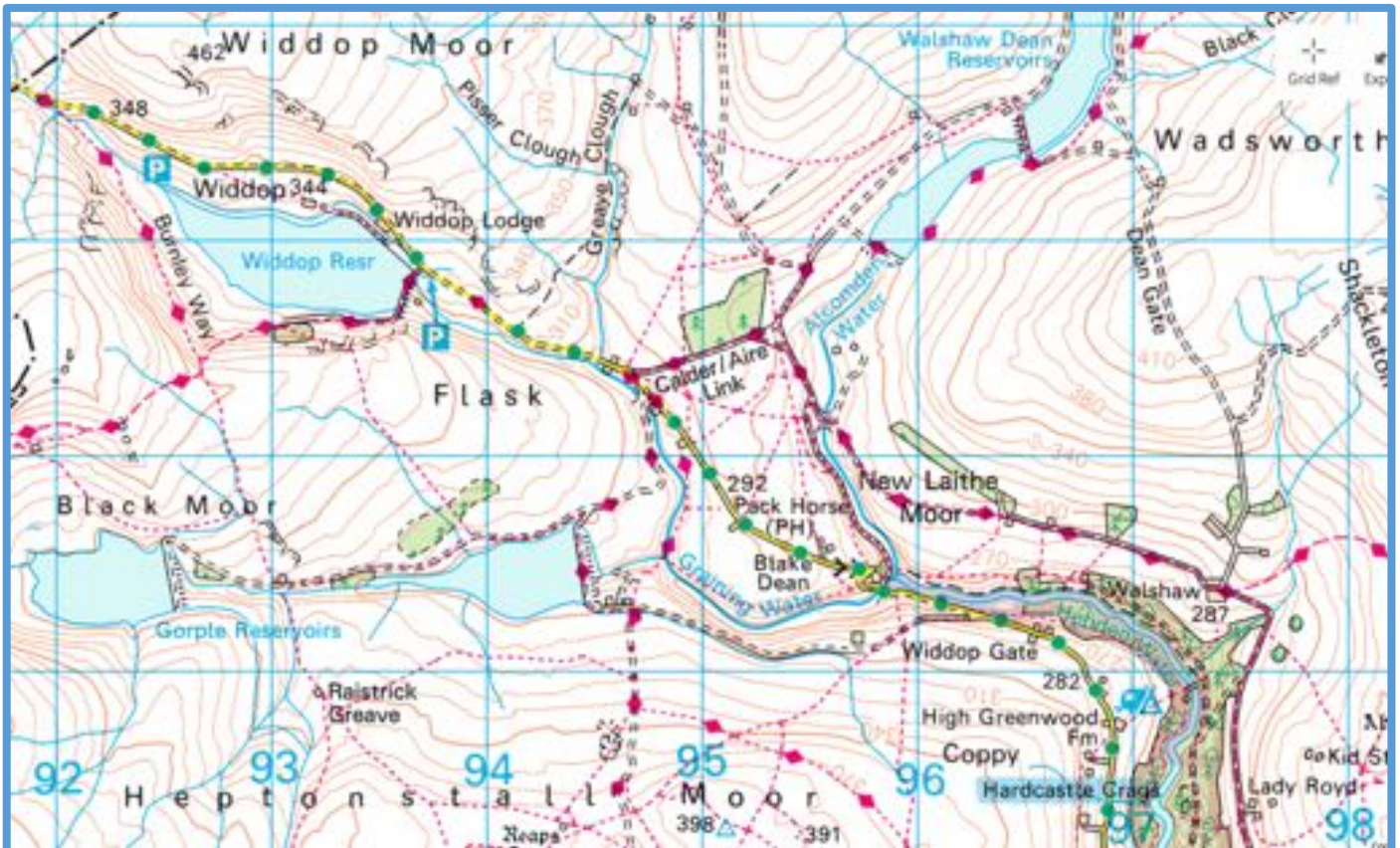
Where does the water in your home, school or work come from?

Have a look at the picture below and see if you can work out what is happening.



SHEET 4: Before Your Visit - Working from Maps

Take a look at the map below. It might look a bit complicated but if you look at the bottom right you can find Hardcastle Crag. Three moors are marked on the map. See if you can find Heptonstall Moor, Widdop Moor and Black Moor on the map.



On the map, find the three reservoirs with their names written in blue. These are the reservoirs that were built to serve the people of Calderdale.

Write the names of the reservoirs here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Building Reservoirs

A reservoir is created by building a dam – a high wall – across the valley to hold the water from a river back, until the valley fills up like a bathtub. On the map each dam can be found by looking for a straight line at the end of the reservoir.

Mark on the map where you think the dam wall has been built for each of these reservoirs.

The construction of the reservoirs was very difficult and took a long time. A special workforce came to live at the site and a temporary town called Dawson City was built there for them to live in.



Photograph taken from Hardcastle Crags National Trust Archive.

So many materials and tools had to be taken to the building sites at the reservoirs that a special train line had to be built too. The railway needed a bridge to be built at Blake Dean.

Go back to the map at the beginning of this work sheet. Mark on the map where you think the rail bridge might have been.

After the three reservoirs were built a plan for a fourth reservoir was put forward, and this reservoir would flood Hardcastle Crag. Look at the map above where Hardcastle Crag is marked. Find the Hebden Water. The dam wall was planned to be built across the stream beside the W of Water. Draw a line to show where the dam would have been.

Take a blue pencil crayon and on the map shade the area that you think the new reservoir would have flooded.

SHEET 5: Before Your Visit - For and Against

Many local people were very opposed to the building of the reservoir. Others wanted to see the reservoir built. Below is a list of some reasons people might be for or against building a dam. Write them into the for and against columns and then see if you can think of some answers of your own.

Here is the list:

We need more water
It would kill wildlife
Progress is important
Hardcastle Crag are too beautiful to spoil
We should care for the natural world
We should put the reservoir somewhere else
It will promote good health and cleanliness
We should think about the future not the past
The reservoir would be good for fishing
Thousands of trees would be drowned
The reservoir could be used for sailing

Put the reasons in the table below. Then add some of your own

For the Reservoir	Against the reservoir

Sheet 6: Before Your Visit - Petitions

A fourth reservoir at Hardcastle Crag was never built. One of the reasons was because 84,000 people from all over the UK signed a petition opposing its construction.

Here is a copy of the Petition opposing a reservoir at Hardcastle Crag. It was signed by the members of the Halifax Ornithological Society.

Try and say 'ornithological' out loud!
What does "ornithological" mean?

Read the words of the petition. Can you understand them? What do they mean?

The petition was sent to the Houses of Parliament along with many, many others.

Not all petitions are that complicated.
Here is a simpler one:

**PETITION AGAINST A RESERVOIR
AT HARDCASTLE CRAGS**

At a General Meeting of the
Halifax Ornithological Society
(being a Society of *60* members) held at *Halifax* *Yorkshire* on
Tuesday the *3rd* day of *September* 1948, the following resolution
was adopted:—

"While recognising the paramount importance of securing an adequate water supply for a large industrial area, this meeting, because of the importance of preserving this beauty spot for the healthy recreation of the inhabitants of the industrial North, views with concern the proposal of the Halifax Corporation to build a reservoir anywhere in the Hardcastle Crag or Hebden Valley, and considers that alternative sources of supply should, and could, be found.

"This Society therefore require and authorise on their behalf the Hardcastle Crag (1948) Preservation Committee to oppose in the strongest possible manner such proposals of the Halifax Corporation, and if the Halifax Corporation present a Bill in Parliament including powers to permit them to construct a reservoir in the said valley, they authorise the Hardcastle Crag (1948) Preservation Committee to present a petition to Parliament against the said Bill, and in support of such petition to oppose and appear in evidence against the said Bill."

Signed *H. Morris*
(President or Chairman)

H. Alderson
(Secretary)

Date *14th Sept 1948*

Please return signed forms to Mr. T. B. SUTCLIFFE, Secretary of the Hardcastle Crag (1948) Preservation Committee, Belvedere, Hebden Bridge, as soon as convenient, but in no case later than September 10th, 1948.
Secretaries of interested Societies can obtain copies of this form from Mr. Sutcliffe.

Petition to make all school meals vegetarian			
We the undersigned, request that all school meals should be vegetarian and meat free from now on. This includes fish!			
Print Name	Form	Date	Signature
Ali Wood	5b	03.05.22	<i>Ali Wood</i>

Now devise your own petition and get people to sign it! What will the petition be about? It can be asking for something or against something. What will you do with it?