

| 509 | Arts |

Hardcastle Ways

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

**Learning Pack
Section 2
During your visit to Hardcastle Crag**

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With thanks to



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.

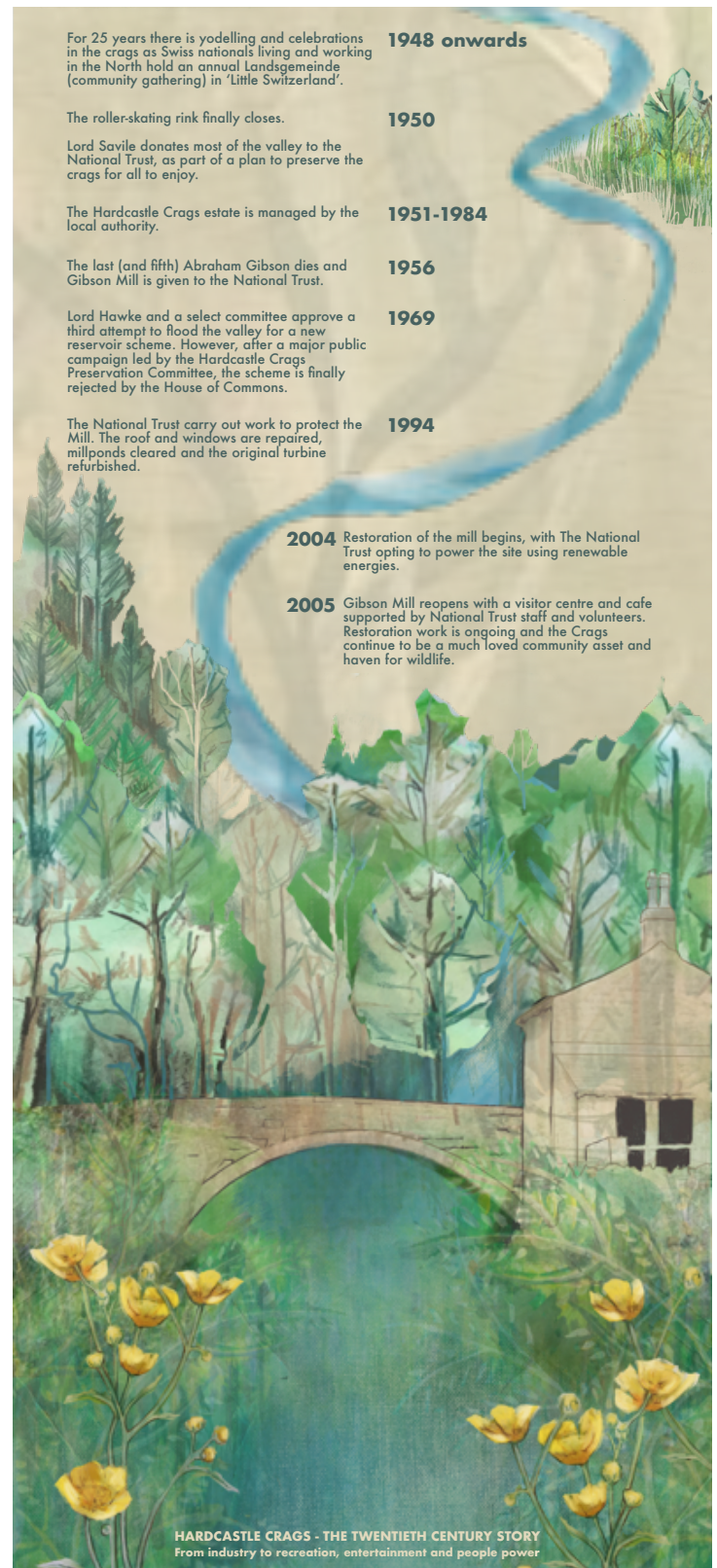
Gibson Mill reaches the height of its popularity as an Entertainment Emporium. People camp and stay at hostels in the valley and every summer weekend thousands of people flock to Hardcastle Craggs.

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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The Learning Pack is in three sections, each with its information and work sheets. These are:

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HARDCASTLE WAYS

SECTION TWO

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

Sheet 7: During Your Visit - Introduction

As you walk (or drive if you have a disabled parking space) along the track to Gibson Mill, think about the people who will have walked that way when the Mill was working. Before you go, do some research to find out what was their life like.

- Was mill work hard?
- How many hours do you think they worked every day?
- What kind of jobs did they do?

After Gibson Mill stopped making cotton it was used for other things. People came to and Hardcastle Crag for fun and entertainment.

Sometimes they would stay in chalets and tents. There was a roller-skating ring where the café is now, there was a restaurant on the top floor of the mill and a dance hall on the middle floor. There were swing boats outside and boating on the mill pond.

Look around you as you walk along the path. Imagine it's a hundred years ago and you are going on holiday to Hardcastle Crag. Who might you be with? How do you feel?

Think about all the things you might do, like:

Exploring	Camping	Tree-climbing	Stepping stones
Hide-and-seek	Paddling	Singing	Storytelling
Hiking	Map-reading	Bird spotting	Bug hunting
Lazing about	Picnicking	Roller skating	Star gazing

Sheet 8: During Your Visit - Gibson Mill, Leisure in the Landscape

It's time to explore! When you get to Gibson Mill, have a good look round. When the mill stopped producing cotton and cloth its owners had to think of a new way of using it to make money.

Mill workers in the big towns and cities had been given time off at the weekends and they were keen to escape the smoke and dirt of the cities during their leisure time.

The top floor of the mill became a dining room for hundreds of people and people also used the mill building for roller skating.



Image taken from Pennine Horizons STW00199

Look at the picture of the mill building. How different is it today? Think about the kind of activities happened there after the mill closed in 1900? Imagine people roller skating in the café!

Sheet 9: During Your Visit - Swing Boats and Boating Lake

Cross over the bridge to the left of the mill and follow the signs down to the picnic field. This is where the swing boats used to be. Next to the swing boats was a building called the Pavilion. Below is a picture of the Pavilion and swing boats.

When you walk to the picnic field, see if you can find out the place where they used to be.



Walk back to the Mill and stand on the bridge. Can you see the mill pond? Once it was used for boating.



Sheet 10: During Your Visit - Beyond the Mill



When you have looked around Gibson Mill, you might want to explore further. Here is a map of the Railway Walk



Details of the walk are here: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardcastle-craggs/trails/railway-walk-at-hardcastle-craggs>. It is quite a long walk – up to 3 miles, so make sure you have enough time. It can easily take 2 hours.

There is no wi-fi or mobile signal at Hardcastle Craggs so look at the website before your visit.

If you make it up the valley look for the route of the old train line. If you follow the railway walk you will see a straight section of path around halfway between Gibson Mill and Blake Dean which marks the site of part of the train line.

You can also see the supports for the wooden bridge if you walk up to the Blake Dean site.

There are many shorter walks around the Craggs. Keep your eyes open for evidence of water management in the valley. See if you can spot an open space just off the track above the Mill. It used to be a school playground and was used by singing groups in the 1920s.

Sheet 11: During Your Visit – Managing Water

The building of the reservoirs above the valley is just one of the ways that humans have tried to change and control the flow of the water through the Craggs. See what other man-made structures you can see that are connected to the control and management of water. You might see the following:

Mill Ponds are man-made pools that help to manage the flow of the water to the mill. There are mill ponds above Gibson Mill.

Sluice gates and weirs. Sluice gates are metal or wooden barriers used to control the flow of water through a channel. You might see the gears from their mechanism if the gate is no longer there. Weirs are low man-made barriers in the stream or river that change the speed and/or level of the water)



A weir



A culvert

Culverts and conduits are channels to control and direct water flow. Culverts are small channels and conduits are larger, usually to/from the reservoirs. You'll only see these if you walk as far as Blake Dean.

Flood Management

Logs and large branches are sometimes laid in the channels that appear when streams form on the hillside when it rains heavily. The branches slow down the speed of the water and redirect it to prevent flooding.



Slowing the Flow

Heavy rains have fallen in Calderdale in the past few years and when this happens the people living in the valley – in towns like Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd – are at serious risk of flooding. In 2015 the rainfall was so intense that thousands houses and businesses were flooded and many people lost their homes and jobs.

In order to control the water that falls on the hillside an organisation called Slow the Flow has been formed to find natural ways of controlling the water as it runs down the valley sides.

You can find out more about Slow the Flow here: <https://slowtheflow.net>.

Sheet 11: Listen, reflect and write

Read or listen to this section of “Footfall” by Alan Dix, written to mark the 50th anniversary of the successful campaign to prevent the reservoir at Hardcastle Crag. The soundtrack is downloadable.



<https://soundcloud.com/509arts/footfall-part?in=509arts/sets/footfall>

FOOTFALL

Raise your eyes and look up
At these high sloping valley sides
Like decorated pages of a half open book
That shows the changing sky beyond
And with a river as its spine

A beck that washes boulders smooth
Freezes cracks
Splits ancient seams
Tugs and pulls at loose round stones
And shapes ancient rock -
A soft slow knife that made
A valley that is home and hide
To plant and beast
And bug and bird

Stand now and listen
to the whisper of trees
As they tell of the time
When this place of peace
Of patience, of slow ways and solitude
Was threatened with a drowning so complete
That the land upon which we now stand
Would sit beneath still water to a depth of one hundred feet

And all about you now -
The smells, the soft ferns
The sound of summer crickets, the ancient ways -
Would be lost to a darkness so profound
It would be as if a cold dank spell
Had been cast upon the land
And all around forever drowned

If you have downloaded the poem, you might be able to listen to it when you are at Hardcastle Crag. It invites you to look, listen and smell the environment around you.

Take some time now to do this and make notes of your experience.

Things I can hear	Things I can smell
Things I can see	Words to describe Hardcastle Crag