AUDIOTRAIL: THE GREAT LANGDALE LANDSCAPE

TRACK 1 – Introduction

Welcome to Cumbria Wildlife Trust's audio trail: High Fell – the Great Langdale Landscape.

Cumbria's fell landscape is iconic, the picture on the postcard that draws millions of visitors every year. Great Langdale, where you will walk today, is no exception. Its deep U shaped valley and rugged spectacular skyline make it one of the most popular mountain valleys in the country.

It is a landscape of much diversity – from its lofty ridges and mountains tops, steep fell sides of bracken and juniper, to its tumbling waterfalls, ancient woods, farm pasture, and flowing becks or streams in the valley below.

It is also home to a wealth of plant and animal life. Peregrine, Raven, Buzzard, and a mix of smaller birds live among the valley and fells, whilst mammals such as rabbit, deer, hare, fox or badger may be spotted. Brown trout swim in the becks and tarns or ponds.

Great Langdale, like all of Cumbria's valleys, has been shaped by man for thousands of years. Aside from the hill farms with their hardy Herdwick sheep, there are remnants of other industries - ranging from the Neolithic Stone Axe Factory to the former mines, quarries and gunpowder works.

The period after World War Two was a time of particular change. Within the last 60 to 70 years, developments in farming practices, increases in tourism and other modifications in land use have led to great changes in the landscape and the wildlife we see today – not just in Great Langdale but throughout Cumbria's fells.

It is this period around World War Two that you will be exploring along this walk, whilst listening to the memories and perspectives of local people. Stop and listen to the audio tracks at the marked points on the map. Make your way now to Point 2, following the directions on the leaflet.

TRACK 2: Sawrey's Wood

You are now walking along the walled path through Sawrey's Wood. Sawrey's Wood is an example of the type of ancient natural woodland that was traditionally managed over the past 400 years, leaving it in what's known as a semi-natural state.

Coppicing is one of the traditional methods of managing woodland. The trees were cut off at the ground and allowed to regrow. This was done on a rotational basis to promote re-growth. The coppiced wood was used for a whole range of products like charcoal, or bobbins for cotton mills. The bark was also used for tanning leather.

Much of Cumbria's woodland was once a vital part of the rural economy. Jim Spedding was born in 1917 in nearby Skelwith Fold. He has memories from his time working in coppice woodlands.

"They had bobbin mills at Ambleside, Staveley and Stott Park, that was our three main. Also in Kendal there was a brushworks, made farmyard brushes and they were made of Alder and that... At one time there was nothing in a wood that was wasted, only a few little lengths, coz if they were long enough you made them into bundles and they were used for fenders in a port, well now of course it's tyres....There was three sorts of besoms. There was besoms for brushing, for brushing leaves up say, there was a brush used for vinegar straining. So there was three sorts of use for birch twigs.... A lot of Hazel went down to Staffordshire, that was used for making baskets.... And then of course there was the garden use for grow peas on, so that took care of the hazel and all it's twigs and everything except an odd bit of waste... but you see all those things have gone, like I say the cheapest thing to produce today is plastic that used to be steel and wood. And that closed the coppice wood, there's no coppice wood now as such."

The long history of coppicing has greatly influenced the wildlife found in many semi-natural woods. Coppicing has great benefits for many plants and animals, especially those that need open woodland habitats. Jim has memories of coming across one of our most illusive and mysterious birds, the Woodcock. This long billed- wading bird is largely nocturnal and spends most of its day hiding in woodland.

They were lovely, the woodcock . I used to go through little coppices and a woodcock. You could walk within a foot of it, it wouldn't move unless you were going to put your foot on it and it's absolutely bad to see where there are dead leaves. Many a time you didn't find one even though you knew there should be one there. A woodcock nesting, it pops its beak right down on his breast and it's so well camouflaged. Absolutely gorgeous chap, we used to have a few of those about."

By 1960, much of the coppice industry had stopped, and today only a small fraction of woodland remains actively coppiced. Some coppice woodlands were neglected; others may

have been grazed by livestock or planted with conifer. This decline in coppicing woodland has resulted in habitats disappearing for some woodland species.

Coppicing is now being revived in some areas, including on several Cumbria Wildlife Trust nature reserves. Walk on now along the path until to you reach a junction by Crossgates House, near the working quarry. This is the entrance to Baysbrown Wood, point 3 on the map.

TRACK 3: Baysbrown Wood

You are now walking into Baysbrown Wood, another ancient semi-natural woodland. In spring or early summer, you may see a colourful array of woodland flowers such as bluebells, primrose or common dog violet, and in the wetter parts of the woodland, plants such as opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, ladies mantle or common spotted orchid.

Lots of different tree species grow here - oak, birch, holly, hawthorn, rowan, and hazel. Ted Bowness, who grew up in Chapel Stile just across the valley, has memories from his childhood of dense stands of hazel.

"We would go nutting in late August and September, shake the trees and the nuts would come down like snowflakes. Beautiful, brown hazelnuts. Lovely. You could get pockets full in quite a short time. They were so rich on these trees that when they were ripe, you shook the tree and the nut would come out of its husk and there they were on the ground in front of you."

Listen out for the different birds living in these woods – you might see or hear the wood and willow warbler, redstart, tree pipit or great-spotted woodpecker. Red squirrels are also present here, although there are far fewer now living in these woods than when Ted was a young man.

"We had red squirrels, plenty of red squirrels. They were in the Baysbrown woods. There are still some … not very many .... the basic woodland hasn't altered, that they used to inhabit. There's still the same nut trees growing. I wonder if they were better a long time ago because they were used as coppice woodlands where they were felled every few years and then the new growth would be strong and vigorous and might have had better nuts on than the trees now that will be left untouched for thirty or forty years."

"There was a man who made his living in the woodland and his job would be to keep the trees in good order, to take out the poor varieties, to stop overcrowding ... You could buy bean poles or peas sticks from him, things like that. You can still see in the woodlands lots of places where charcoal had been burned ... plenty of those through the Baysbrown woods. So they must have coppiced the woodland and that may be why the nut trees were vigorous in those days because they were chopped down and then re-growing."

Continue now along the main track until you come out of Baysbrown Wood. Rest there at point 4 on the map, and listen to the next track as you look out onto the Great Langdale Valley

TRACK 4: Farming 1

You are now looking out over the magnificent Great Langdale valley and its surrounding fells. How would this view have looked 6 or7 decades ago? Where you may now see machinery and tractors, and black plastic silage bales, you would have seen horses, carts and men working the fields by hand.

This valley would also have once contained many flower-rich hay meadows, grown to produce winter feed for sheep and cattle. Ted remembers the hay meadows were vibrant with wild flowers.

"The meadows where they grew the hay were in the lowest part of the valley. It was only cut once instead of today probably where they're cutting three times off the same grass and getting three times the amount of food from it. Then, those meadows were the life of the farm really, to provide the winter food. It would be hay time in late July and during August if the weather was good. There used to be quite a lot of rich meadow flowers as there would be because they weren't using herbicides to kill the weeds or anything like that. In fact I think they welcomed so called weeds - white clover, red clover. There used to be a plant called burnet which used to be used for making burnet wine, a very, very potent drink. I've gathered burnets for an aunt of mine who used to make it into burnet wine. She never let us try the end product though. Oh we collected the burnets, bags full of them..."

These hay meadows supported a multitude of colourful wild flowers - from the whites of the meadowsweet and ox-eye daisy, the yellows of the yellow rattle and hawbits, the blue and purples of the cranesbill and self heal to the pink and reds of the clover, and great burnet.

The hay meadows would be an important home for other wildlife too, including butterflies, birds and mammals. Jim Spedding, who grew up on a farm, remembers the birds and flowers of his childhood hay meadows.

"Oh I used to see a lot of birds but they would use the meadows you see, because a lot of them were seed eaters, and of course grasses and all that have seed. Then there were others that were outside the meadows, but still it was a good cover for pipits and things like that that nested in there.

...The old type meadows they always were colourful, early in the year there was buttercups and then they disappeared as the hay grass grew over them and then the other ones... they called it a yellow rattle because you could do it as a child you used to play about with it … in our day we used to make our own little games and the yellow rattle you could pick it up and make it rattle … it was like a child's rattle accept on a mini scale … and I was laughing about it many a time …"

Traditional farming practises would have been very different in this valley 60 years or so ago. There were few artificial fertilizers or pesticides and silage was not yet widely made.

The only products that would have been put on the meadows to improve the hay grasses would have been substances such as lime - to reduce the acidity of the soil and encourage grass growth.

Hugh Parker is a farmer in Great Langdale. He lived as a boy at Thrang farm across the valley in Chapel stile.

"A wagon o' lime now and again, cob lime come tipped up in the yard, taken out by horse and cart and put in little heaps until it rained, labour intensive, seven strides apart. When it rained it slacked the lime and made it steam and then the lad was sent with the shovel to spread it. And if it was raining a little bit, or if it was still dusty in the middle, which it often was you got it on your hands and it peeled all your hands off, hot lime. So that wasn't a very pleasant job at all, but it was done, part of the ritual, one or two wagons o' lime a year for most of these fell farms, tipped up in a heap."

Farmyard manure and basic slag were also traditionally put on the hay meadows too. Basic Slag, a black dusty by-product of the steelmaking industry, had a high phosphate content that helped to 'sweeten' the soil and keep the land in good condition

"The hay meadows yes you did put a bit of Basic slag in …to help the meadows and it never seemed to do any hurt but of course they didn't have all the stuff that they have today which does away with the old type hay grass...and they used to manure them with the cattle manure and all that. In those days you didn't have a machine, you pulled it in a cart, poured it out in heaps and then went round spreading the manure all round you that's how you improved your meadow when I say improved you just kept it healthy. But we didn't seem to do away with the old type of grasses; the grasses were the same as in the ancient days."

Walk on now along the path up through Baysbrown Farm. Follow the bridleway signed Great Langdale & Dungeon Ghyll, to pass through Hag Wood. As you come out of Hag Wood, stop and listen to Track 5

TRACK 5: Farming 2

“The hay meadows were full of little herbs and burnets and all kinds of different little herbs and spices of the uplands meadows. But they didn’t yield very well and most of these farms ran out of fodder before the spring came, if it was a late spring. People were getting really desperate as to how they could feed their stock before they could turn them out...This was what the war did, it altered things, it made people plough up some of these old meadows and sow different grasses when the time came, after they cropped them and they saw that they could produce more by putting new seed into these old meadows. That was the start of the change in upland farming to me.”

The flower rich hay meadows that Ted and Hugh remember would once have been a familiar sight. Sadly, hay meadows have suffered a catastrophic decline since the Second World War.

In the Lake District, many meadows were ploughed up during the war so that potatoes could be grown. Greater demands were made on the land in the drive to improve production and grow more food to feed the country.

The intensification of agricultural practices after the war - such as ploughing, the introduction of artificial fertilizers, herbicides, the re-seeding of meadows with commercial grasses, and silage making - converted most flower-rich 'herb meadows' and pastures to more productive 'improved' grasslands. These were dominated by fast-growing lush grasses. Ted Bowness remembers how the changes began.

“It would be in the fifties and sixties when they began to use, as one farmer called it, ‘bagged stuff’ - artificial fertilizers he was putting on and putting bagged stuff on today. And he was putting on nitrogen to make the grass grow very fast and very strongly. Well to the farmers this was making their life easier in many ways because instead of having to cart farmyard manure from what the cows had produced in the winter and spread it by hand, which they did, they could now have bags of fertilizer, which were much easier to spread and would give you a far faster result. You would get nutritious grass several weeks sooner I would think than by putting on ordinary farmyard manure.”

The modernisation of agricultural practises enabled farmers to produce more fodder for their stock, and keep more sheep on the fells. It also corresponded with a decline of wildflowers and other wildlife. Birds which use meadows to feed or nest have declined - the corncrake has been one casualty. Its rasping call was once synonymous with hay meadows, but the bird has all but vanished from Cumbria.

Some farmers do still manage their meadows in a traditional way and there are also agri-environment schemes now to encourage farmers to create and manage flower-filled hay meadows appropriately. You may see some meadow flowers still along your walk today. Follow the directions now on the map until you reach point 6

TRACK 6: Bracken

As you walk along the Cumbria Way you will pass dense stands of bracken on the fell side, and will also see extensive areas of bracken on the slopes on the other side of the valley too. Bracken is a large fern, whose green, leathery fronds can be seen from early July. These fronds change to a rusty brown colour in the autumn as they die back.

Bracken stands can be a distinctive feature in the landscape and they can benefit wildlife too. Rare butterfly species like the high brown and pearl-bordered fritillary are closely associated with bracken. Birds such as the whinchat and stonechat often nest and feed within bracken stands.

Historically, bracken has been used and managed by man, including in the Great Langdale valley.

"The farmers used to cut it. Some of them used to cut it, for two reasons I suppose, to keep the intakes clear of bracken if they could do but one farmer that I certainly saw and photographed, he was cutting it to make bedding for the animals during the winter because it was cheaper to do that than to buy straw from East Yorkshire or somewhere, on a wagon, that would cost an immense amount of money. Bracken bedding was good bedding..."

"Most years, bracken was cut for bedding 'cos it was cheap, but labour intensive. It was to roll down the fell side into the road an' load onto trailers or carts and get it into the stack or the barn, so it was all hard labour intensive work. It was to cut with a scythe to start with and then get dry and roll up and cart home, but it spared the cost of straw… it's quite rich in potash as you maybe well know and it breaks down really well and you can spread it in the first year, whereas straw you have to put it in a big midden and compost it for a year to make it into good muck haven't you. An' there's brackens all down the road to Elterwater there just waiting to be cut, but nobody cuts them now. One man can't really do it himself and most of these farms are run by, on a one man band today, with any casual labour they can hire."

Bracken was originally a woodland fern, but is now found in a wide range of habitats such as grass and heathland, and upland heather moorland. It is fast growing and can threaten other wildlife habitats, as well as replacing grazing pasture.

In past times, there would be enough farm workers available to suppress its growth by cutting or breaking down the stems. Changes in sheep and cattle numbers on the fells and the decline in the use of bracken as animal bedding have also helped bracken spread. Ted has noticed the increase of bracken in Great Langdale.

"More, more bracken now I think because we tried to walk probably about five years ago I think in Langdale we started at the end of Silver How near to Elterwater and we went up onto the summit of Silver How and we walked the length of Silver How and tried to walk

down paths that I knew well as a boy behind Lingmoor View near where I lived and we had to fight our way down bracken that was waist deep shoulder high almost in places where the paths used to be wide open . There is certainly more bracken on those paths because it was an extremely difficult walk to come down at a place where I expected to walk on easy open surface of grassland."

Continue now on the path towards Side House, stop at point 7 along the way to admire the view of the head of the valley and listen to the next track.

TRACK 7: Bowfell

You are now looking towards the head of the Great Langdale valley and the rugged grandeur of Crinkle Crags and Bowfell beyond. Ted remembers first climbing Bowfell in the 1930s when he was still at primary school

"Now I imagine we got a bus to the head of the valley and then we walked up Bowfell just in ordinary shoes, no special walking boots, no walking equipment, probably carrying our sandwiches in a brown paper bag or something like that and a bottle of home-made lemonade if we were lucky. Otherwise we'd be drinking water out of the streams. I don't remember it being difficult or anything."

The skyline of the great mountains that surround the valley cannot fail to impress and draws an estimated 1 million visitors to the Langdales every year. Increasing wealth amongst the general population in the decades since the war, led to a new concept in Britain, that of leisure time. This, combined with the opening up of the lakes with improved road infrastructure and increasing car ownership, has led to a massive increase in tourism.

"Well we've put boots onto the mountains in greater quantity within the last 30 years. I would think in particular with the opening up of the Lake District to easy transport people can live in Birmingham and walk for a day in the Lake District and go home the same night, people have guide books that are better than they ever had, people have better outdoor clothing than they ever had and can go on a wet day and still stay dry if they are wearing the correct garments we never could you used to have an ex-army gas cape and a pair of second hand army boots well they would give you blisters on your feet and the ex-army gas cape was letting the rain through but otherwise it was good walking."

An increasing network of path and walks has grown up since the war. The stamping of many feet has taken its toll on the fells, including the path that Ted first walked on Bowfell in the 1930s.

"When we walked it recently, Well, I'd say ten or fifteen years ago. It was wide. It was eroded, loose earth, stones. The grass had been killed by thousands of walker's feet whereas in 1938, or whenever, there scarcely was a path that you could remember. There was a path of sorts but now it was hugely eroded. I think since then it has been pitched by The National Trust or the National Park authorities. You can see the path on Bowfell from ten miles away now. You can see the eroded scar, given good light conditions. You couldn't attempt to see anything like that when we walked it."

The increase in tourism has provided a welcome income boost to communities within the Lakes but has had an impact on the landscape, local communities and wildlife that surrounds it. Work is ongoing by organisations such as Lake District National Park, The National Trust and Friends of the Lake District to repair footpaths and mitigate the impact

that tourism has on the fell landscape and wildlife, so visitors and locals alike can continue to enjoy it.

Follow the map now to point 8, at the National Trust car park opposite the Stickle Barn.

TRACK 8: Climbing

Look up towards Stickle Ghyll, and its waterfalls, which tumble down below Stickle Tarn and the rocks of Pavey Ark and surrounding Pikes. Great Langdale is one of the most famous locations in Britain for rock climbing. Climbers have been enjoying the challenge of its steep crags and routes, for over a century.

The East Wall of Pavey Ark is ideal for climbing. Cumbrian Jennie Massie began climbing at the age of 10, taught by her Aunt Mabel – who was a famous climber in her day. Jennie has memories of climbing Pavey Ark - and as a keen botanist, keeping an eye out for flora among the crags. These high and remote crags can be refuges for plants, such as sedum and other saxifrage species.

"And scrambling got you to things where a sheep were not easily able to get to them, so you did find things. When I was at university we were climbing on Pavey Ark which is in Langdale, which is south-facing crag and quite a broken crag, and the flora and fauna are wonderful! I was looking at all the things growing on it, all the unusual things growing on it and I was getting "Are you here to look at plants or climb this bloody crag? [laughs] Get up it!" And get into trouble for botanising. But to me it was second nature to look at the plants as you went past… Sedums, you don't often get those, apart from in remote little cracks. Um... the small mountain sedum. Saxifrages of various sorts, which again you have to get fairly high and fairly remote to find."

Great Langdale is still a popular challenge for climbers today. But Jennie says there are less climbers here now compared to when she was climbing as a young woman.

"Well the numbers of people climbing peaked I would think late-sixties. A lot of the climbs that were very busy in those days are getting mossed over and grown over again because they're not used. So I think people now climb indoors, they climb on climbing walls much more. We didn't in our day. And when you were climbing in nails it didn't matter if the rock was wet 'cause you didn't slip. Once you got on to climbing in vibram soles, then slippy rock is very dangerous... So I think that the nail climbing knocked a lot of the edges off the rock. Climbs that were easy in Aunt Mabel's day became harder by my day because the tracoonies had rounded all the holds. And by the time you get to modern times, climbs that were very easy in those days now become hard...the holes are knocked off."

"A lot of the easy climbs the edges are so rounded that in fact they're now desperate, they're quite hard to get up, although they still graded as easy. The bits of rock that count – the edges that you actually stand on - you can see a lot of its limestone, it gets polished as memorials and churches get polished."

Now take the track out of the other side of the car park alongside the beck until you reach point 9. As you walk along the path look out for the dark green stands of juniper on top of Lingmoor fell, and further along on the left up above Chapel Stile.

TRACK 9: Juniper

Look up to the slopes on either side of the valley. On Lingmoor Fell and the fells above Chapel Stile, you can still find good stands of the dark green juniper bush.

Juniper is one of Cumbria's oldest plant species, and was one of the first plant species to colonise Cumbria after the glaciers of the ice age receded. It is adapted to cold, harsh conditions and these features make it ideally suited to life on the Lake District fells.

Over the centuries it has been put to a number of uses, such as charcoal for gunpowder and as flavouring for gin. Ted Bowness also has memories of collecting Juniper on the fell side above Chapel Stile.

"Where we lived there was a big larch plantation. Beyond that we were straight out onto the open fell side with bracken, juniper (Sevin - as we used to call them.) Sevin bushes, rough grass and going high up onto Silver How behind onto rocks, scrub, bare grassland, the open landscape. Sevin is what we called them in the dialect. That was the juniper bush."

"We went gathering bracken and juniper for a November 5th bonfire. This would start probably in October, often at October half term of the school, hopefully with dry weather and we'd go up onto the fell side straight above the house within two or three hundred yards of where we lived and you could cut brown bracken... and you could get what we call the Sevin which are junipers and bring those down hopefully before November 5th when we had a tremendous bonfire. It burned incredibly fast. Dried juniper and dried bracken was a wonderful burner. I suppose we were destructive but the amount that smallish children could really gather from a big piece of juniper fell side was negligible compared to the amount that was left. There's still plenty up there now...there was a lot of juniper. Big, thick … thick trunks to the stems, as thick as your wrist, quite ... several inches across … big, big strong shrubs."

Like many other parts of the Lake District, Great Langdale still has a number of large stands of juniper, which provide an important habitat for birds and insects high on the open fell-side. Birds, such as willow warbler and redpoll breed each year in this habitat, whilst the ring ouzel will feed up on juniper berries before embarking on its autumn migration.

However, juniper is in decline across the UK. Cumbria has more extensive stands than any other county, but it faces problems here too from heavy sheep grazing and an aging juniper population. Increases in sheep numbers since the 1970's alongside an increase in numbers out-wintered, have prevented regeneration in many stands, meaning they are now dominated by old trees and less new growth.

Continue now on your walk, until you come to the next stopping point, number 10, on the bridge crossing Great Langdale Beck.

TRACK 10: Fishing

You are now standing on the bridge, above the clear waters of Great Langdale Beck. See if you can catch a glimpse of any dappled brown trout below. Ted often used to fish the rivers in the valley as a boy

"I caught my first trout at the age of ten. The fly it was caught on was one called Broughton Point, which I still have in my case of flies, which I haven't used for thirty years, more. We used to fish the rivers. You used to catch a lot of small brown trout when the river was in flood. Go worm fishing. I've caught 29. I meant to catch 30, but I lost count, in one visit, yes, in one day. I went out with another man who used to teach me fishing in the river and he caught 26 on a Saturday in a flood and 52 on the Sunday fly-fishing."

"The river, Langdale Beck, through the valley, was full of brown trout. There's been times since then when there's been nothing. Then they've returned and then they've disappeared again. So what's happened to the trout in Langdale Beck, I don't know. Whether it's run-off from the farms when they've started using bagged stuff, as they term it, the artificial fertilizer, nitrogen, phosphates. Something's affected the river, one of the two or possibly both."

The Great Langdale beck along with the streams and tarns in the valley is another key wildlife habitat, and the brown trout are important biological indicators of its health. Fluctuations in fish numbers in Cumbria can also be linked to changes in farming practises and the drive for food production during and after the Second World War. The combination of intensification of farming, the drainage of marginal land to grow food, and the human engineering of water courses – all impacted on the watery habitat of fish such as brown trout.

Work is now being done though to restore some rivers in Cumbria.

Turn left from the bridge and continue on the path again, signposted to Chapel Stile. Stop when you come to the last stopping point on this walk, the stone arch of New Bridge.

TRACK 11: Tourism

As you stand now on the stone arch of New Bridge, you can look up to the road and Chapel Stile. In Chapel Stile you can still find Firgarth - the ivy-covered childhood home of Ted with its stand of larch trees.

"My grandfather owned fourteen houses plus this big piece of land and I would guess he had planted the larch trees. They were big trees in 1930, so he may well have planted the larches. They were big trees, girth two feet across at the base, I should think, going up into the sky seemingly forever when you are a little child looking up at them. It was a frightening wood to walk through when it was windy."

"My cousin John inherited it eventually and it was felled when I left Langdale to work in the fifties or sixties. These were mature trees that were felled for timber and then John had the far-reaching vision that if he could get permission to build holiday chalets he would have a good lucrative source of income. He eventually had ten holiday chalets in the place where this woodland had been. He replanted and lots of the trees he replanted now are twenty, thirty feet high. The scars where the woodland was cut have gone. The holiday chalets are hidden amongst the trees. You can pass by and never see them. So, all in all, it wasn't a vandal occupation in any way. It was good economic usage."

There have been a great many changes in Great Langdale since Ted was a young boy - not least in the shape of the community itself. Hill farming still continues here but many of the quarries are now closed; another industry, the Elterwater Gunpowder works closed in 1929. By far the greatest contributors to the economy of the Langdale today are the people who come to stay in the holiday chalets, hotels or campsites to walk or climb among the fells.

Each year millions of tourist visit Cumbria. It brings welcome opportunities, employment and resources, but undeniably has shaped the landscape, wildlife and local communities.

"Many inter-war paths, where it was trackless fell, now there are paths everywhere. The number of people, the use of the fells, the fact that so many people are getting out there. I mean in my day people were limited by the free time they had. It was still the playground of rich people in my day. Unguided climbing and climbing for everybody came in really in the fifties and the sixties. And that's a wonderful freedom. Nothing changes the fells apart from the use of them. They're there, they don't change. Its what people do to them that changes them, not... not what the people are themselves. I worry about the erosion but on the other hand I want everybody to enjoy them. I get very upset when I see mountain bikes cutting great grooves into the turf. I worry when I see four-by-fours wanting to go on the green roads and up on to the fells because just... just the weight of people. What one person can do is nothing, what one vehicle can do is nothing. But its the endless repetition of that that causes the problems... But the benefit for people being able to get on the fells, the freedom to do that, outweighs the problems. I wouldn't want to keep it just for the few."

Cross the stone arch of New Bridge and follow the route on the map to return to the National Trust car park in Elterwater where this audio trail began.

Thank you for downloading this audio trail from Cumbria Wildlife Trust, we hope you enjoyed learning about the history of Cumbria's landscape and wildlife.