

Opposition to the creation of national parks: the case of the Yorkshire Dales*

by R. W. Hoyle

Abstract

The ten first-generation national parks created under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 generally disappointed those who had advocated national parks in the 1930s and 1940s. Their governance was much less strong than had been envisaged, their administration mostly being no more than the planning committees of the county councils within whose boundaries they lay. Here we explore the establishment of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, designated in 1952 and confirmed in 1954. The idea of a Dales National Park had been canvassed since the early 1930s. We find little public opposition to the designation of the park but little public support for it either. Farmers expressed fears of the damage which an influx of walkers would cause, but it is hard to ascertain whether their fears were well founded. Opposition came mainly from the North Riding County Council. The West Riding County Council seems to have been more accepting of the park, but was reluctant to be yoked to the North Riding in a Joint Board as the act envisaged, so both councils could readily agree that they wanted a weaker Joint Advisory Committee. It was this unsatisfactory arrangement that was finally implemented in 1956.

National parks are now a familiar and largely uncontentious part of the English and Welsh landscape: the seventieth anniversary of the statute enabling their creation has just passed without attracting much comment.¹ Of course, they are complained about by those who live under their jurisdiction and who believe that they place unreasonable restraints on such matters as house extensions and replacement windows. And having had their budgets cut, in some cases quite severely, they are less of a presence than they were a few years ago: in the Yorkshire Dales for instance, some visitor centres have closed. Seen over a long period of time, there can

* An earlier version of this paper was prepared for Rural History 2015. I am grateful to the *Review's* referees for their comments, not all of which I have been able to incorporate, and for some additional references.

¹ There is a large corpus of writing on national parks, much of it now quite old. For an assessment written about the time of their thirtieth birthday, Ann MacEwen and Malcolm MacEwen, *National parks: conservation or cosmetics* (1982); at the time of their fortieth birthday, John Blunden and Nigel Curry (eds), *A people's charter. Forty years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949* (1989) and at 50 years Gavin Parker and Neil Ravenscroft, 'Benevolence, nationalism and hegemony: fifty years of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949', *Leisure Studies* 18 (1999), pp. 297–313. None of these works make much (if any) use of the records of the National Parks Commission in the National Archives. There is a useful summary of developments in John Sheail, *An environmental history of twentieth-century Britain* (2002), pp. 115–22.

be no doubt that their record has been mixed. They have often failed to prevent quarrying or industrial development within their boundaries. But in any assessment, they may well be seen to have slowed the speed of development, especially of housing, whilst managing the influx of the public into areas of landscape beauty by providing car parks, marking routes and undertaking remedial works where the volume of visitors was in danger of destroying the very footpaths on which they trod. If they have both encouraged and managed access, they have also had a mission to educate visitors, whether through the provision of visitor centres or literature.

National parks not only had a difficult gestation but were brought up by quarrelling parents, by a government that could not quite believe that they were necessary, and local authorities who were reluctant to cede power to what they considered to be an unnecessary intrusion into existing arrangements. The dilution of the administrative arrangements proposed by the Hobhouse Report (1947) by the 1949 Act establishing the parks has been described elsewhere.²

Both the report and the act wished to remove the parks from the control of the county authorities and place them under the supervision of boards nominated by the county councils and the minister. The Boards would be free from direct local government interference and able to concentrate on the needs of the park. Only one such board was ever established (in the Peak District). The other parks had advisory committees which were dependencies of the local government authorities in whose area the park lay. Implicit in these arrangements was the assumption that a board would know better than a directly elected body what was best for a park, and so a special planning regime would be imposed on local residents without them having any control through elected councillors over what the national park authority decided. We can recognize an element of democratic deficit here. Within the area of the Yorkshire Dales National Park (and doubtless others), this was – and continues – to be a matter of complaint.³

This paper wishes to revisit the politics of the late 1940s and early 1950s, looking at the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. It shows how the idea of a Dales national park was in circulation from the years around 1930. It seeks to recover local attitudes to the creation of the national park, and to show that opinion was by no means favourable to it. Indeed, there were some who argued that the Park would, in effect, do exactly the opposite of what its promoters sought, that it would damage the countryside rather than maintain it in its present state. The larger public seems, however, to have been largely indifferent to it. Most of the opposition seems to have taken the form of local authority ‘turf wars’, as county councils dug in their heels against being forced to cede control.

I

The essential timeline is well known and can be quickly run through here. As Catherine Glover has shown, the phrase ‘national park’ was used in popular discourse throughout the late nineteenth century but rather loosely: it was often applied to the New Forest.⁴ Whilst the first

² G. Cherry, *Environmental Planning*, II, *National Parks and recreation in the countryside* (1975).

³ See, for instance, the complaints of Keswick Town Council against the Lake District National Park Authority and their vote of no confidence in the

authority, reported in *The Guardian*, 14 Oct. 2019.

⁴ Catherine Glover, “‘In good hands.’ The preservation of the New Forest and the long journey towards National Park designation”, above, pp. 251–82.

American national park (Yellowstone) was established as early as 1872 and others created from time to time, the United States National Park Service was only established in 1916. There was some awareness of these developments in Britain. Charles Bathurst, Lord and later Viscount Bledisloe (1867–1958), then Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, made a private visit to parks in Canada and the Yellowstone in the USA in 1925, and returned a committed advocate of the idea. He particularly saw the Forest of Dean as a potential national park and lobbied within government for this end.⁵

A more formally established lobby group emerged with the foundation of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) in 1926. This served to focus concerns over the industrialization and suburbanization of the countryside, many of them resulting from the increased ease of access brought by the motor car and lorry. The formation of CPRE was prompted by a manifesto, 'The preservation of rural England' published by Patrick Abercrombie in *The Town Planning Review* for May 1926.⁶ Abercrombie summarized contemporary anxieties and then offered a range of suggested solutions. Under the heading of 'Wild Country', Abercrombie suggested 'the creation of a series of National Parks or Nature reserves (as exists in Canada) in which Crown lands, such as the New Forest and Forest of Dean, would be merged, and many of the great private parks, such as Ashridge, which frequently preserve primeval sections of country'.⁷

Through their Standing Conference on National Parks, CPRE emerged as a leading lobbyist for national parks. In 1929 it wrote to the new Labour Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald, asking for an enquiry into the need for national parks, and he acceded to their request by establishing a committee under the chairmanship of Christopher, later Lord, Addison (1859–1951). The Addison Committee had the misfortune to report in 1931 just as the economy went into recession.⁸ The implementation of Addison's recommendations was an objective of the national parks movement in the 1930s, but it achieved little resonance in government. The concerns that were widely expressed in the 1920s were, to a degree, answered by the enhanced powers given local authorities by the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act. After this, there was a tendency in government to believe that a framework to deal with the worst aspects of development had been put in place.⁹ The 1932 act offered nothing for a different lobby which emerged quite rapidly in the early 1930s, the Ramblers, where a number of long-established societies were drawn together in a new national organization, the Ramblers Association. Whilst they shared Abercrombie's ideas about despoliation of the landscape, their chief concern was access to high ground, a demand which was not met by the Access to Mountains Act of 1939

⁵ John Sheail, 'The concept of national parks in Great Britain, 1900–1950', *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 66 (1975), pp. 42. For Bledisloe, see ODNB (although this article makes no reference to his interest in national parks).

⁶ Sir Patrick Abercrombie (1879–1957) was the leading planning consultant of the inter-war years. See ODNB. His essay can be found in *Town Planning Rev.* 12 (1926), pp. 5–56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15 (capitals as in the original).

⁸ C. Addison, *Report of the National Park Committee*

(Cmnd 3851, 1931) (hereafter, Addison Report).

⁹ See, for instance, the comments of the Bowland-Malhamdale National Reserve Committee in 1935, cited at p. 273 below or the letter of R. S. Hudson to CPRE after he had received a delegation from them, HLG 52/716, 27 May 1937. See also John Sheail, 'The introduction of statutory planning in rural areas. The example of the North Riding of Yorkshire', *Town Planning Rev.*, 50 (1979), pp. 71–83 and a forthcoming paper of mine, 'Some consequences of a bungalow at Malham Cove: inter-war planning in the West Riding Yorkshire Dales'.

which offered access but also put multiple impediments in the way of its achievement.¹⁰ For the national parks lobby, the 1930s were a lost decade.

This changed with the war. As has often been commented, Labour captured the domestic post-war planning agenda during the war and in a series of reports laid out a progressive programme. Hence national parks were part of the vision of Lord Justice Scott in his eponymous report of 1942. John Dower, already a prominent lobbyist for national parks, was commissioned at about the same time to survey potential park areas. His report appeared in May 1945 as a government paper but with a disclaimer that it was published for discussion only.¹¹ But a further committee under Sir Arthur Hobhouse was appointed in July 1945 with a brief to make a reality of Dower's report, and this in turn published its report in July 1947.¹² Legislation followed, and the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act received the royal assent in December 1949. The first park was created in 1951: the last of the ten first-generation parks in 1957.

Even in its full title, the act reflected the concerns of the two pressure groups which had emerged in the 1930s, the CPRE, opposed to inappropriate development, afforestation (especially in the Lake District), the penetration of the countryside by the motorcar and advertising, and housing and industrial development, and the rambling lobby, represented by the Ramblers Association who shared many of the preoccupations of CPRE but were chiefly concerned with access to the countryside for walkers. Both shared deep-seated assumptions about the superiority of the walker over the motorist. Conservation was treated as a separate question with its own enquiry under J. S. Huxley and this led to the establishment of the Nature Conservancy in 1949.¹³ It was assumed that national parks would neither restrain or restrict farming.

The tortuous process by which Hobhouse became an act has been traced by Cherry.¹⁴ The 1949 statute fell between the enthusiasm of the national parks lobby and their supporters in government and the scepticism of the Treasury and the county councils. The latter had stated their opposition to national parks as independent, freestanding entities as early as 1941.¹⁵ Their planning powers had been strengthened by the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. They saw no need for a National Parks Commission. The Treasury took the view that if the national parks were to be controlled by the county councils, then they could also pay their costs. The National Parks Commission was in effect subordinated to the Ministry of Health and Local Government: it 'designated' the parks but the minister 'confirmed' them, had the power to fix their boundaries and laid down the park's administrative arrangements. There is a view that the Commission was weakly led.¹⁶ Its first chairman was a retired career civil servant,

¹⁰ John Sheail, 'The Access to Mountains Act 1939: an essay in compromise', *Rural Hist.* 21, (2010), pp. 59–74.

¹¹ John Dower, *National Parks in England and Wales* (Cmd 6628, 1945).

¹² Sir Arthur Hobhouse, *Report of the National Parks Committee (England and Wales)* (Cmd 7121, 1947).

¹³ Nature conservation was separated out from planning and treated as a scientific (as opposed to a planning) issue. Sheail, *Environmental History*, pp. 127–8.

¹⁴ Cherry, *Environmental Planning*, II, ch. 5.

¹⁵ MacEwen and MacEwen, *National Parks*, p. 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–2. The MacEwens perhaps reflected a larger disillusionment with the achievements of national parks current in the late 1970s. They headed their account of the years 1949–74 'downhill (nearly all the way)'. But they had no access to the NPC's own papers and their assessment is ripe for reappraisal. I am grateful to a referee for information on the MacEwens.

Sir Patrick Duff (1889–1972).¹⁷ Its founding secretary (1950–63) was Harold M. Abrahams (1899–1978), the Cambridge Athlete and gold medallist in the 1924 Olympic Games.¹⁸ Neither man had any previous connection to the national parks movement although many of the initial commissioners had been recruited from the lobby groups.

The 1949 act laid down that where a park included land from more than one county, there was to be a joint planning board. But the minister was also given discretion ‘in special circumstances’ to place the administration of a park in more than one county in the hands of county council committees with a Joint Advisory Committee to bind the committees together and represent the interests of the park as a whole. The Joint Advisory Committees had no resources, staff or executive role and so were bound to be weaker than a Planning Board. The only park to be given an executive Planning Board was the first to be created, the Peak District. The arrangements for the Lake District were diluted. The third park, Snowdonia, only had county council committees and a Joint Advisory Committee. Thereafter the parks which spanned county boundaries were managed by committees of the county councils and a joint advisory board. This served to ‘breach the principle that each park should be administered as a geographical entity’.¹⁹

As the arrangements for the governance of the national parks (the Peak District apart) were weak from the beginning, they were bound to disappoint. Moreover, as Lord Strang (Chairman of the Commission 1954–66) admitted, the National Park Commission’s views had little purchase on government. They were unable to keep industrial development and quarrying out of the park areas. (The boundaries of the park areas were in any case drawn to exclude towns and existing industrial developments, for instance the Peak District boundaries neatly skirted both Buxton and the quarrying around the town.²⁰) They also proved to be unable to resist road schemes.²¹ But rather than ban cars, which would have been the aspiration of the older generation of walkers, the parks attempted to manage cars through the provision of car parks and even buses. Where there was something of an exclusionist streak in the rambling movement, the national parks justified their existence by encouraging visitors, and then attempted to educate them through visitor centres, posters, displays and printed leaflets.

We need to be clear that the national parks as they emerged did not normally own land: they controlled land through the planning process. This was not invariably understood at the time and has often been misunderstood since. The assumption in the 1930s was that

¹⁷ Duff was chairman from 1949 to 1954, when he retired. His successor was a career diplomat, William Strang (1893–1978), created Lord Strang in the New Year Honours in 1954 and appointed chairman of the NPC a few weeks later (*The Times*, 1 Jan., 2 Mar. 1954). He served as chairman until 1966.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21. Abrahams’ biography in ODNB reduces his 13 years at the NPC to one short sentence.

¹⁹ Cherry, *Environmental Planning*, II, pp. 109–113; Blunden and Curry, *A people’s charter*, ch. 5; MacEwen and MacEwen, *National Parks*, pp. 21–2.

²⁰ MacEwen and MacEwen, *National Parks*, pp. 14, 22.

²¹ For example, the Dartmoor National Park Authority was powerless to stop the A30 Oakhampton bypass (approved in 1986 and opened in 1988) running through the park rather than circumventing its boundaries. For a useful account, see Dartmoor National Park Authority, ‘Dartmoor Factsheet: the Okehampton bypass – a case study in planning’, https://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/814483/lab-okebypass.pdf (accessed 30 June 2019).

government would purchase all the land within a national park area. The model here was, in some respects, the National Trust, which had acquired considerable estates in the Lake District and also in Dovedale in the Derbyshire White Peak. Informed opinion saw the Trust's landholdings as the nuclei from which national parks could develop in the future. The idea that land would be compulsorily purchased did not seem strange at a time when the water boards were actively acquiring land within the catchment of their reservoirs, when the Forest Commission was building an extensive estate to plant and respectable opinion could advocate the wholesale nationalization of agricultural land so that a rational planned agriculture could be instituted. Land nationalization remained a policy of the Labour Party until late in the war.²² Arguably it was dropped because the sums involved in compensation would have been enormous (and could not be afforded in post-war conditions). It may also have been thought unnecessary because landowners and farmers had proved to be pliable in wartime conditions. Dower showed the way forwards when he argued in his report that the acquisition of all the land within a national park was not 'essential'. Indeed, he saw the costs of acquisition as being so high that they would limit the number and size of the national parks. He certainly saw a role for the acquisition of land by the national parks, to place it in public hands, whether it was areas over which voluntary access had proved impossible to achieve, or sites of archaeological interest which might otherwise be damaged, or simply beauty spots which required management. Dower acknowledged a particular argument for the acquisition of hill farms by the state but he did not recommend the blanket acquisition of land.²³

In this light it is helpful to see the 1949 act as a further dimension of what has come to be called 'state-directed agriculture'.²⁴ The third part of the act, on the provision of access to open ground, established a process which could compel landowners to allow access to uplands if they would not enter into a voluntary agreement. Compensation might be offered. This was a device to allow access to areas such as the Dark Peak in Derbyshire where land had been closed to walkers in the 1930s by a mixture of private and municipal owners, the former concerned about their grouse and the latter about the maintenance of pure water supplies. The arrangements reflected a form of hybridity characteristic of the post-war Labour government. The freehold of the land would not be confiscated, but the owners would have their palms crossed with government gold, and if that were not enough to bring them into line, ultimately they would be compelled to implement the government's policy.

As we noted, this was not fully understood at the time. The very word 'national' created expectations. People occasionally behaved, and voiced the belief, that all property had been thrown into some form of communistic form of possession with the creation of the parks, and, in effect, there was no longer such a thing as trespass. A letter from the Lake District Safeguarding Society – apparently a lobby group for landlords and tenants – told a possibly apocryphal story in late 1938 but made a serious point:

²² M. Tichelar, 'The Labour Party, agricultural policy and the retreat from rural land nationalisation during the Second World War', *AgHR* 51 (2003), pp. 209–25.

²³ Dower, *National Parks*, pp. 45–6.

²⁴ Brian Short, Charles Watkins and John Martin (eds), *The front line of freedom* (2006); Brian Short, *The battle of the fields. Rural community and authority in Britain during the Second World War* (2014).



FIGURE 1. 'This land is yours'. Cutting from *News Chronicle*, 8 Dec. 1953

It was felt that misapprehension arises from the rather unfortunate name by which the project has become known. One member told of a party of hikers who had invaded his grounds. When gently informed that they were on private property, they retorted, 'Ah, just you wait till we've got our national park here'. The word 'park' conjures up ideas and suggests rights and privileges for the public which are certainly not advocated by the most ardent supporters of the proposal. It is difficult to find the right title, but 'National Reserve' might be better than 'National Park'.²⁵

Attitudes such as this and some wild rhetoric in the press plainly served to alienate not only landowners but also the residents of the national parks. As an example of this, when the Designation Order for the Yorkshire Dales was published in December 1953, a newspaper published a map of the projected park under the headline 'This Land Is Yours' with an opening paragraph 'All this land, rugged and wild, pastoral and lovely, is to belong to the nation. The Yorkshire Dales National Park will be its name and it will cover 680 square miles' (Figure 1).²⁶

²⁵ *Yorkshire Post* (hereafter *YP*), 25 Nov. 1938.

²⁶ *News Chronicle* 8 Dec. 1953 (a clipping in NYRO,

NRCC/P/YD1), echoing Woodie Guthrie's song, 'This land is your land', recorded by him in 1944.

This was a problem of which the National Parks Commission was all too aware. Pauline Dower, John Dower's widow, who was one of the founding members of the commission, reported on:

the almost universal ignorance revealed as to the effect of designation [of land as a national park], many people thinking, for example, that access to all privately held land would automatically follow.²⁷

Roland H. Wade, over many years a voluble correspondent to the *Yorkshire Post* on behalf of national parks²⁸, had a letter published in October 1950 after a West Riding County Councillor had been quoted as arguing for the exclusion of land in the south of the county from the Peak District National Park.

The area is a water collection area for local authorities and they want protection from contamination. Naturally, if it becomes part of the National Park, there will be people walking over it and there will be danger of contamination.

Wade replied:

the idea seems to be based on a misconception as to the purpose of the National Park. When a National Park is created the land within it does not become public land ... There is nothing in the National Parks and Countryside Act, 1949, to say that the public can have unlimited access to all land in the National Parks.²⁹

Two years later Wade had a full length article in the Leeds paper titled 'Misunderstandings about the National Parks' which started with the anecdote that that 'an enterprising motor-mower firm recently asked the National Parks Commission for a contract to cut the grass in their parks'. He went on:

The National Park idea has probably suffered more from its name than from any other cause. There is confusion with the national parks in the United States and Africa, which are nature reserves where wild animals are protected; the word 'national' suggests nationalisation of the land and an invasion by hordes of unruly townsmen; 'park' suggests railings, turnstiles, litter. A national park means none of these things. ... there is no change of ownership, no railings surround it, there is no more access than before.³⁰

Lord Bolton told an anecdote to a reporter from the *Yorkshire Post*. He had found two unknown people in the entrance hall of Bolton Hall in Wensleydale admiring the paintings.

They were a respectable couple ... They were very polite but I pointed out, equally politely I hope, that Bolton Hall was a private house. They said they thought it was going to be in the

²⁷ COU 2/1, Minutes of the National Park Commission, 13th Meeting, 13 Mar. 1951, Minute 149 (1).

²⁸ The first letter of Wade's in the *Yorkshire Post* on a conservation topic is of 11 Apr. 1936. He was active in both CPRE and the Friends of the Lake District. John Cousins, *Friends of the Lake District: the early years* (2009), pp. 101–2.

²⁹ YP, 16, 25 Oct. 1950.

³⁰ 'Misunderstandings about the national parks', YP, 1 Nov. 1952. On this occasion Wade was writing as Chairman of the Leeds and Lower Dales branch of the CPRE. (This had been established in 1948: YP, 6 Oct. 1948.)

National Park area and they did not think that it would be wrong to anticipate that. They were rather indignant that I should ask them to leave.

This drew a further letter from Wade. 'The root of the misunderstanding about National Parks seems to be the word "park" which gives the impression that the land in a national park is open for the public to wander at will. This is, of course, a fallacy.'³¹

So whilst the establishment of a national park stopped well short of the nationalization of land, it is interesting to ask whether landowners had any choice about being included in a national park. And the answer is that they did not. Here we need to consider the processes to be gone through to secure park status. The areas of potential parks had been identified first by Addison, then in greater detail by Dower, and then by Hobhouse who provided maps of the twelve parks that he proposed. The 1949 Act lay down a two-phase process to create a national park. First the National Parks Commission, after consulting locally, brought forwards proposals which were advertised and which contained a right of appeal. This was designation. Objections went to the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, and it was for the Minister to convene a public enquiry to consider the National Park Commission's proposal and hear objections to it. He then received a report from the enquiry's inspector and on the basis of this issued a confirmation order. Now it can be argued that this process was, in a real sense, undemocratic. The selection of national park areas had been made by government committee – of course, one could argue that they chose themselves – and there was a degree of horse trading involved within the committees.³² The National Parks Commission went to some trouble to inspect the areas before announcing its designation proposals, and acted on suggestions it received. In the case of the Yorkshire Dales it adjusted the boundaries originally proposed to remove the towns of Settle and Richmond, and some small areas of agricultural land. But in effect the decision that there would be a Yorkshire Dales National Park had been taken some years before anyone locally was asked their opinion, and when a public process was commenced, it was less about the desirability of the park than its exact boundaries. Hence we might find that popular opposition was articulated less rather than more, simply because opposition might well be seen to be hopeless. Occasionally local opposition had an effect: the Quantocks escaped being a part of the Exmoor National Park after local opposition, but it might be held that the whole idea of a national park in Somerset was unpopular, and the exclusion of the Quantocks was an expedient manoeuvre to secure the larger objective.³³

II

As an area of scenic beauty, the Yorkshire Dales lagged in the public mind behind the Lake District and the Peak District in Derbyshire. Nonetheless, the establishment of the Addison Committee in September 1929 provoked some discussion of whether the Dales should be a

³¹ YP, 8 Apr., 10 Apr. 1954.

dozen recommended parks

³² See here Cherry, *Environmental Planning*, II, pp. 52–5 for the volatility of the Hobhouse committee's

³³ Ibid., p. 113.

national park (although what was thought of seems to have been a fairly narrow zone around Malham rather than the more extensive tract of land designated in 1952).

In January 1930 the *Yorkshire Post*'s London correspondent published an article on 'National Parks in the North'. He had evidently been talking to the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society whose spokesman suggested that the commons of Yorkshire and Cumberland were particularly suited for national park status. An unnamed authority was quoted as saying that the Pennine watershed area from Northumberland to Derbyshire would make a suitable national park: another one might be the Yorkshire coast from Whitby to Scarborough. The Lake District, this unnamed authority suggested, was less of a concern being 'generally remote from threatened development schemes'. The Yorkshire Moorland area would serve well as both an area for public recreation and for wildlife preservation. This article provoked a letter from J. C. Appleyard of Torver near Conistown who pressed the claim of the Lake District, adding that it was not safe at all but was being subjected to new 'hideous buildings' on an almost weekly basis 'and one of its fine valleys is even now threatened with a long line of unsightly electricity pylons'. He ended by saying that in his opinion, the two leading candidates of the north of England for national park status were the Lake District and the sea coast. This small controversy was followed by an article by the popular Yorkshire novelist Phyllis Bentley in which she expressed herself in favour of national parks, and, weighing the possibilities, came down in favour of the 'Pennine chain' between Lancashire and Yorkshire. There was, then, no consensus over the most desirable areas for national park status.³⁴

There was some developing interest in the Yorkshire Dales. On 15 February 1930 the *Yorkshire Post* carried a notice of a meeting of town planners in Manchester to consider the designation of the Forest of Bowland as a national park (an ambition still to be achieved). Before it had met, the Keighley regional town planning committee passed a resolution recommending Malham Cove be given park status. There was concern during 1929–30 over buildings being erected close to the Cove; this attracted some newspaper interest with one columnist asking whether Malham could not be put under the control of an authority like the National Trust.³⁵ At the conference on 10 March, the Manchester and District Joint Planning Advisory Committee agreed to recommend to Addison's committee that national park status should be conferred on the Forest of Bowland, the area around Malham (including the Cove and Malham Tarn) and Dovedale in the Peak District, with selected areas acquired by the authority of an act of parliament.³⁶ Two of the witnesses who appeared before the Addison committee also suggested areas of the Dales suitable for treatment as national parks. Professor Patrick Abercrombie suggested the area of the Three Peaks or Swaledale. The geographer Dr Vaughan Cornish argued that the parks should be chosen as representatives of landscape types, and recommended a broad sweep of land between Ingleton and Kilnsey from west to east and from Settle to Horton in Ribblesdale, but including the summits of Ingleborough and

³⁴ YP, 7, 10 and 14 Jan. 1930.

³⁵ I hope to write about this episode on another occasion: 'Some consequences of a bungalow at Malham Cove'. See the *Yorkshire Post*, 3 Oct. 1929, 'A nature

lovers diary. National Parks'.

³⁶ See the summary of their proposals in the Addison Report, pp. 80–4: a copy of their printed advocacy document is in TNA, HLG 52/720.

Pen-y-Ghent.³⁷ Addison's committee drew back from making recommendations about which areas should have national park status conferred on them, simply offering a résumé of the suggestions they had received.

The idea of a Bowland-Malham park received some support locally. Local initiatives came together at a meeting convened by the West Riding Ramblers Federation in February 1933 which established an action group to press government for the creation of a national park in Malhamdale and the Forest of Bowland.³⁸ But a year later the annual conference of the 'Bowland-Malhamdale national reserve committee' were told that '[N]o aid would be forthcoming from the State with regard to the establishment of National Parks for some considerable time'.³⁹

The government had made it clear that they could give no financial support to any such schemes and could take no action beyond that made possible under the Town and Country Planning Act 1932.⁴⁰

Planning controls might well have offered the way forwards. The rural district councils covering the southern Dales area (Sedburgh, Settle and Skipton) announced their intention of producing a joint planning scheme in 1937. By the outbreak of war, planning protection had been extended to virtually all of the area later incorporated into the national park but in very different ways. Under the act, planning was a responsibility of the rural and urban district councils. The Clerk to the North Riding County Council, H. L. Thornley (later Sir Hubert) seized the initiative by commissioning a county-wide report from Abercrombie and then persuading the second-level authorities to cede their planning powers to the county council, which all but two agreed to. Thornley then appointed a planning officer, S. Lee Vincent, in 1934. The result was an organized and centralized planning regime conducted by the County Council. In the West Riding however, the County Council was much more hands off and left the various urban and district councils to develop their own joint planning authorities.⁴¹ This difference of approach had important consequences after the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act had transferred planning functions to the county councils.

Overall there was little pressure on the landscape of the Dales: no arterial roads were planned.⁴² There was the usual problem of inappropriate buildings, roadside garages and advertising hoardings but nothing out of the ordinary. The Forestry Commission was sniffing around for land to purchase on the eve of the Second World War, but no afforestation took place until long after the war.⁴³ The limestone uplands in the upper Dales were generally open to walkers. The moors where access was restricted by the requirements of either grouse moor owners or water companies were on the millstone grit lower down the Dales. The problem which emerged later was that of quarrying, but there seems to have been little concern about

³⁷ Addison Report, p. 106.

³⁸ 'National park plan campaign'; editorial, 'Bowland and Malham', 4 Feb. 1933.

³⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 17 Sept. 1934.

⁴⁰ YP, 26 Feb. 1934.

⁴¹ Hoyle, 'Some consequences of a bungalow at Malham Cove'; Sheail, 'Introduction of statutory

planning'.

⁴² See here the wartime assessments of John Dower, especially his 'Reconstruction in the Yorkshire Dales, IV, Building', *Yorkshire Dalesman* 4 (6) (1942), p. 104 and W. S. Cameron, 'A suggested West Riding regional park', *Yorkshire Dalesman* 5 (12), (1945), pp. 224-7.

⁴³ *Manchester Guardian*, 30 Nov. 1937; 24 Jan. 1938.

this in the 1930s. Conversely, the Dales had no pressure group or amenity society to make its case. A suggestion of a society for Yorkshire Dales folk, both local and scattered, in 1936, seems to have come to nothing: it had as one of its aims the conservation of the Dales.⁴⁴ The *Dalesman*, initially the *Yorkshire Dalesman*, was launched in April 1939: its readership (then as now) may well have been Dales people living away as much as Dales residents. CPRE seems to have come late to the Dales.⁴⁵ As there was little or no conflict with landlords and their gamekeepers, the ramblers' groups were much less of a force than those of Manchester and Sheffield.

III

Whilst in the 1930s there was little government interest in the national parks agenda, they came to feature prominently in the planning for post-war reconstruction. The Scott Report thought that national parks were long overdue. The idea of the national park ceased to be the possession of the lobby groups and became a concern of government.

There was no danger that the Yorkshire Dales would be overlooked as a potential national park. The reason for this was the emergence of John Dower (1900–47) as one of the leading advocates of national parks.⁴⁶ Dower was born in Ilkley. He trained as an architect and was responsible for designing the Malham Youth Hostel which opened in July 1938.⁴⁷ He later lived in Kirkby Malham. In 1938 Dower wrote the Standing Committee on National Parks pamphlet, *The case for national parks in Great Britain*, and then appears speaking to a number of sympathetic societies: to the National Housing and Town Planning Council in Harrogate in November 1938 and at the annual meeting of the Friends of the Lake District in May 1939 (where he expressed optimism that attitudes had changed over the previous few months and that public support for a national park policy was growing).⁴⁸ In 1942, after being invalided out of the army (having contracted the TB which was to kill him), he joined the civil service. Dower was then given oversight of rural policy successively in the Ministry of Works and Planning and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. He was commissioned by the ministry to investigate possible locations for National Parks, work which finally resulted in the publication of the eponymous Report of May 1945.

Between June and November 1942 Dower published a series of six articles in the *Yorkshire Dalesman* on post-war 'Reconstruction in the Yorkshire Dales'.⁴⁹ In the third of these ('The open air') Dower argued that open-air recreation was second only to farming in the uses made of the Dales landscape. The Dales were 'a beautiful country, to be kept beautifully'. He did not underestimate the problems of retaining that beauty and restraining unsightly and unwelcome development and promised to deal with them in a future article. Here he

⁴⁴ YP, 6 Mar. 1936.

⁴⁵ The establishment of a Craven branch was announced in 1948: the *Yorkshire Dalesman* 9 (12), (Mar. 1948), pp. 423–4; also 10 (3) (June 1948), p. 88.

⁴⁶ For Dower, see ODNB; also John Sheail, 'John Dower, national parks and town and country planning in Britain', *Planning Perspectives* 10 (1995), pp. 1–16.

⁴⁷ YP, 18 July 1938.

⁴⁸ YP, 23 Nov. 1938, 22 May 1939.

⁴⁹ John Dower, 'Reconstruction in the Yorkshire Dales', *Yorkshire Dalesman* 4 (1942), (3), pp. 44–8; (4), pp. 64–7; (5), pp. 84–6; (6), pp. 103–4; (7), pp. 124–7 and (8), 144–6.

turned his attention to rambling. He did not think that there was any inherent conflict between farmers and ramblers. He accepted that some ramblers were 'careless, ignorant or loutish' but thought that farmers stood to gain far more from the ramblers than they would cost them. It was in the desire of ramblers to have access to the high moorlands where he envisaged trouble. The 1939 Access to Mountains Act was unsatisfactory and he expected its repeal before its terms had been put into effect. Rather he expected conflict with the owners of grouse moors and the water boards, the one concerned about their shooting and the other the purity of water. He advocated access to grouse moors except on shooting days. The water boards should chlorinate the water they supplied. He looked for better signposting of footpaths, the provision of more accommodation 'to deal with the post-war flood of visitors'. There needed to be stronger protection of both flora and fauna including 'nature sanctuaries' to which public access was limited.

Preservation of the landscape (and of the farming on which it depends), freedom and facilities for open-air recreation and protection of wildlife in the best of Britain's larger stretches of beautiful, wilder country, these are precisely the purposes of the 'National Parks' which people so widely desire and which government seems at last to regard with favour as an element in post-war reconstruction

Dower thought that the Lake District had an unanswerable claim to being a national park but that at least some of the dales – Wharfedale above Bolton Abbey, Malham, Upper Ribblesdale and the Three Peaks – should all come high on any list of potential national park areas. He did not, on this occasion, make any mention of Swaledale and Wensleydale.

His final article discussed the 'ways and means' by which his vision could be achieved and was therefore chiefly concerned with planning, but here he barely mentioned national parks as the vehicle through which control might be exercised. The fullest discussion of a future Dales national park came from another writer, W. S. Cameron who was at this time the Leeds City Engineer.⁵⁰ Cameron argued that 'the wilder type of country' was best suited for national parks and here he mentioned the Lake District, Snowdonia and the Grampians. He also saw a need for parks placed nearer to the industrial conurbations which were accessible by urban populations on a weekend, and this led him to argue for a system of 'lesser national or regional parks'. Their status would prevent them suffering the wrong type of development. They might be elevated to full national park status at a later date. Cameron particularly wanted to see the development and marking of footpaths, but also provision to be made for people who wanted country cottages or to retire to the country. For this reason he urged the controlled development of villages. The careful planning of holiday camps and camping sites would be permitted: ribbon development would be banned. Bungalow and shack building would be held in check. Cameron, hardly surprisingly given his professional concerns, saw the answer as lying in the careful zoning and planning of the countryside. The area he had in mind for his regional park was essentially the northern part of the West Riding from Skipton

⁵⁰ Cameron, 'Suggested West Riding Regional Park'. He also gave a lecture on a similar theme, *YP*, 1 Dec. 1943. For Cameron see the account of his career in *YP*, 8 July 1942 when he was elected President of the Town Planning Institute. He retired in 1947 after 44 years of service: *YP*, 30 Apr. 1952.

to Dent, but he also included the south side of Wensleydale in the North Riding. The map accompanying his article excluded all the major towns (so Skipton, Settle, Ingleton, Sedbergh, Hawes and Askrigg) but it included a much larger area than Dower had envisaged.

Dower's and Cameron's contributions showed how the whole question of national parks was developing quickly in the middle war years both in terms of the institutional form a national park should take but also the areas that they might encompass. There was an initial assumption that there might be only two or three national parks. Elsewhere small areas of supremely important landscape might be protected, but over time the number of projected national parks came to grow in number and to incorporate much larger areas. So in the case of the Yorkshire Dales the Dower report placed the Craven Pennines (upper Wharfedale, upper Airedale (including Malham) and upper Ribblesdale in the first tranche of national parks, and then the 'Swaledale Pennines' (with parts of Wensleydale and the Howgill Fells) in his second list of 'possible future national parks'.⁵¹ Dower was a member of the Hobhouse Committee which identified a Yorkshire Dales National Park consisting of Dower's Craven Pennines and Swaledale Pennines, and finally Dentdale and the Howgills were added to make the Yorkshire Dales National Park as it was created in 1954.⁵² As it developed in this way, the national park came to incorporate much larger areas of farmland within its boundaries and this was to produce dissension. It also crossed a county boundary and so the park acquired two masters. Overall though, it is important to appreciate that the idea of some form of Yorkshire Dales National Park had been canvassed for twenty years before the passage of the 1949 act. The idea was surely a familiar one: it was not called into existence by either Dower, Hobhouse or the implementation of the 1949 act.

IV

Everyone must have been aware of the direction of the wind after the publication of the Hobhouse report. The Yorkshire Dales were to become a national park. Of course, what this meant in practice was not plain for a few more years. But at this stage there is little evidence of opposition, or local grumbling. Perhaps people were sanguine about the implications, or perhaps they thought that it would not happen. In November 1949 Tom Stephenson, the honorary secretary of the Ramblers Association, told an audience of ramblers at Bradford and a Youth Hostels Association meeting at Halifax later in the month that the creation of a Dales national park was not inevitable, and it needed to be lobbied for. A year later it was reported that youth hostellers were 'apathetic' towards the creation of a national park.⁵³ It was October 1952 before the boundaries of the projected park were sent to the relevant local authorities for comment. The one that moved to reject the whole idea was Sedbergh Rural District Council which may not have been expecting to be included within the national park's boundaries. (It was not included in the park as projected by Hobhouse.)⁵⁴ Councillor Parkinson was quoted

⁵¹ See Glover, "In good hands", Map 2. This map shows all of Dower's candidate areas but only appeared in an earlier draft of the report and not in the published version.

⁵² Cherry, *Environmental Planning*, II, pp. 42-3, 53.

⁵³ *YP*, 2 Nov., 28 Nov. 1949; 11 Dec. 1950.

⁵⁴ For the following, *YP*, 31 Oct. 1952.

as saying that 'It is going to be like living in a native reserve with a lot more people telling us what to do'.⁵⁵ Another councillor expressed a fear of new regulations.

We have seen what has happened in the Lake District and we do not want it to happen here. Roofs of farm buildings would have to be painted some colour or other and there would be all sorts of regulations.

Several members wanted the rural council area to be omitted from the park: 'It was agreed that no opportunity should be lost of objecting to the inclusion of the area if the district was not going to benefit'. The Conservative member of parliament for Skipton, G. B. Drayson, put in an appearance at Dent, saying 'he wished to congratulate rural councillors on their determination to resist further interference by officials'. Drayson viewed the National Parks Act as a 'Socialist measure to nationalise the countryside': 'the Yorkshire Dales are what they are because they have always been left alone'.⁵⁶ Drayson though seems to have made no further public utterances about the national park, or at least none that can be discovered. An account of his annual meet-the-people tour of his constituency in the summer of 1953 does not suggest that the national park was a subject of complaint.⁵⁷ Whilst Sedbergh failed to escape the park, Settle and Richmond both did, the park's boundaries being redrawn to exclude them.⁵⁸ But the national park does not seem to have met any local demand or caught local interest and of the local councils, only Richmond Borough went so far as to lodge an appeal against the designation notice.⁵⁹

V

Opposition to the national park came less from the rural district councils and councillors than from the two county councils between which the Dales were divided (Map 1).⁶⁰ The North Riding County Council (NRCC) under its clerk H. L. Thornley, had some experience of national parks having already been forced to accommodate the North Yorkshire Moors National Park which had been designated in February 1952 and confirmed (after an enquiry had been held) the following November. Thornley appears to have been eager not to lose a

⁵⁵ In 1949 the Vicar of Staveley in Westmorland went so far as to express fears that under the National Park, Lakeland residents would be treated 'as a type of American Indian, dwelling there by kind permission of the authorities' and that 'the inhabitants should live in reservations for the curious gaze of visitors'. *YP*, 18 Feb., also 30 Mar. 1949. The colonial overtones are made explicit here, but the word 'reserve' was used in the 1930s as an alternative to 'park' (as in the Bowland-Malhamdale National Reserve Committee) and see the example on p. 289 above.

⁵⁶ *YP*, 1 Nov. 1952.

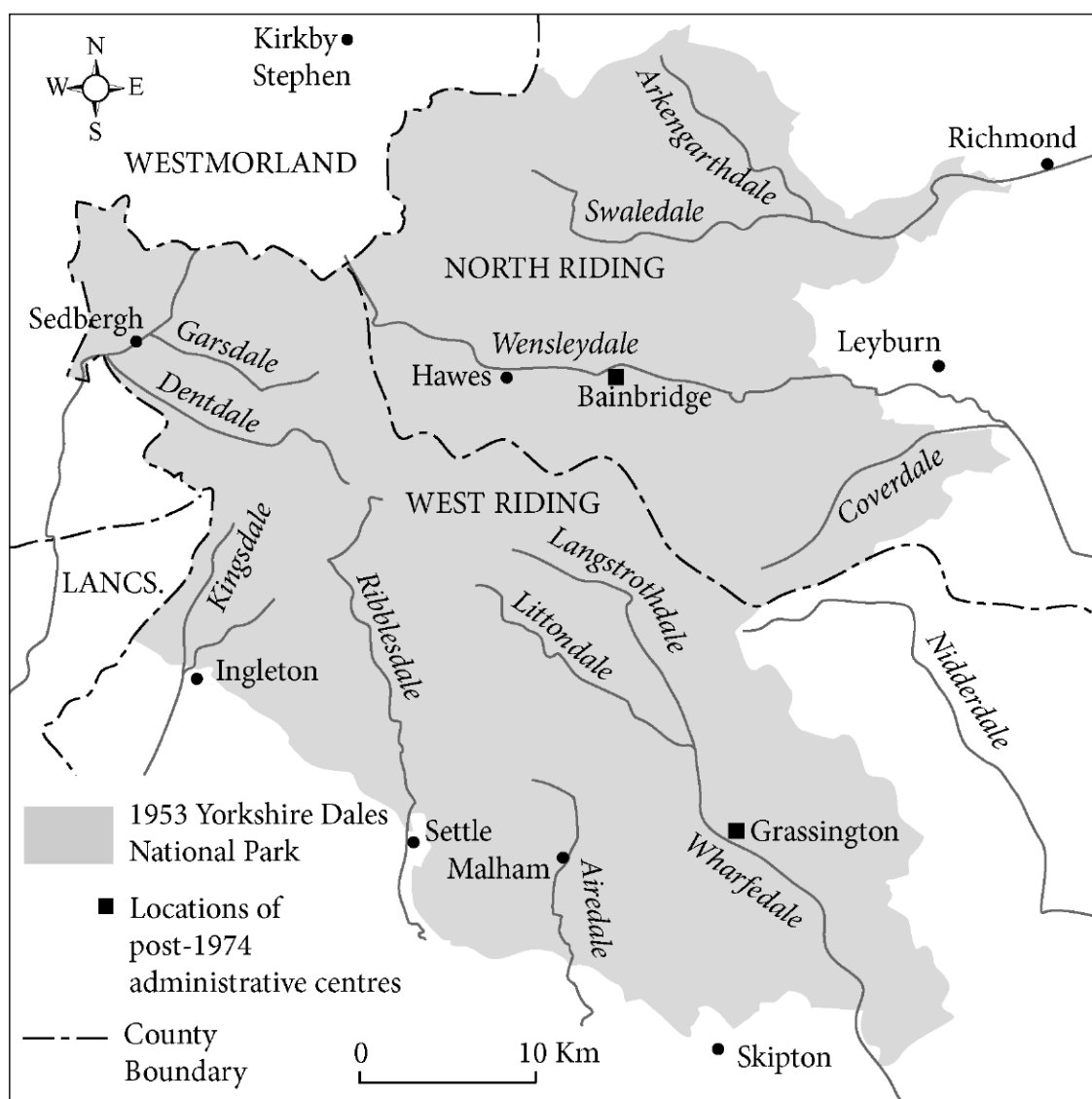
⁵⁷ 'Few questions for Skipton MP', *YP*, 13 Aug. 1953, '550 miles tour of constituency', *YP*, 22 Aug. 1953.

⁵⁸ 'Settle may be excluded from National Park', *YP*, 8

Dec. 1952. YD1, letters from Reeth, Leyburn and Richmond RDCs saying they would not oppose designation, Dec. 1953.

⁵⁹ COU 1/845 (1C), 'Summary of comments received from local authorities'.

⁶⁰ This section is largely based on the NPC's files now in the National Archives and two files of papers from the archive of the North Riding County Council, NYRO, NRCC/P/YD1 and 2 (hereafter YD1, YD2). A third file is labelled 'Mr Thornley's National Park papers'. Kenyon shared his correspondence with Thornley and so taken together these files contain most of the correspondence between the two councils and the NPC. It should be noted that the title of Clerk applied to what we would now call the chief executive of the county council.



MAP 1. Yorkshire Dales National Park. Drawing: Catherine Glover.

further part of his county to a national park and worked to have the confirmation delayed or, if that were not possible, to neuter the park authority. Bernard Kenyon, the clerk to the West Riding County Council (WRCC), seems to have been more accepting of the national park, perhaps because his authority had more Labour members who were sympathetic to it. The WRCC were already the junior partners in the joint board for the Peak District National Park.

On 3 June 1952 Harold Abrahams, the secretary of the Commission, wrote to the clerks of the two county councils, alerting them to the fact that the Commission was going to consider the designation of the Dales as a national park, and would be sending a party of commissioners

and officers to spy out the terrain one weekend in July. He was at pains to say that no decision had been taken, and if it was decided to proceed to designation, then there would be an opportunity for consultation.⁶¹

The West Riding's attitude at this stage and the practical problems that it anticipated were outlined at a private meeting of Abrahams and Kenyon in July. Kenyon warned that there would be considerable opposition to a joint board. Abrahams countered by saying that the Commission would press for the Act to be implemented in the way parliament intended and it would not agree to a joint advisory committee. Kenyon outlined his opposition to a board on several grounds, the first, geography. The county boundary followed natural geographical features. Second, the organization of the counties was very different, The West Riding delegated where the North Riding had centralized everything.⁶² A joint board would span very different arrangements and, if it was created, and was seen to work, then the NRCC would be faced with arguments for the same delegation to be extended throughout the county. Third, he expected strong opposition to the appointment of a single planning officer covering the whole area. But Kenyon was plainly not ill-disposed to the West Riding Dales being made a national park, and he made the practical suggestion that the Commission should meet with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the County Council. He thought that the gesture would be appreciated and helpful for both sides.⁶³ The idea of a meeting was not immediately followed up.

The intention to move to designation was communicated to the two county councils by a letter of 10 September. Thornley replied expressing surprise at the extent of the area to be designated and requesting the NPC's assurance that there would be no attempt to establish a joint board.⁶⁴ Kenyon wrote to Thornley clearly trying to concert a joint response: Thornley was cool about this, suggesting that there was no point meeting until his planning committee had met, but urging that they agree to oppose any idea of a joint board.⁶⁵

Abrahams wrote to Thornley on 18 September acknowledging that the council's committees needed to meet before the council could offer a response, but also saying that as the National Parks Commission was being criticized in parliament and elsewhere for the slowness of its progress, it would have to press on by circulating the park boundary maps. The issue of management boards having been raised, Abrahams pointed to the clear intention of the 1949 act to create Joint Boards where a park spanned a county boundary.⁶⁶ Writing to Thornley on the same day, Kenyon thought that his council would resist any suggestion of a national park for the Dales. If they failed in this point of view, then they would object to a joint board and argue for an advisory committee alone.⁶⁷

As the date for the announcement of designation drew close, Abrahams revived Kenyon's suggestion of a meeting with the Chairman of the WRCC.⁶⁸ This was agreed within the Commission and it was arranged that representatives of the two sides would meet for

⁶¹ Copy in YD1 with commissioners' itinerary.

⁶² Kenyon did not expound on this, but it reflects the way in which the different implementations of the 1932 Town and Country Planning Act (see above p. 293) had been carried forwards as arrangements under the 1947 act.

⁶³ Memo for NPC chairman, COU1/908 (27).

⁶⁴ YD1, Abrahams to Thornley 10 Sept. and reply 12 Sept.

⁶⁵ YD1, Kenyon to Thornley, 11 Sept. and reply 13 Sept.

⁶⁶ YD1, Abrahams to Thornley, 18 Sept. 1952.

⁶⁷ YD1, Kenyon to Thornley 18 Sept.

⁶⁸ COU 1/908 (28).

dinner at the Queen's Hotel in Leeds on 6 October. Representing the NPC were Sir Patrick Duff (chairman) and Abrahams.⁶⁹ For the WRCC, the chairman of the council, Alderman Tomlinson, the chairman of the Planning Committee, Alderman Sir Bertram Wilson and his deputy chairman, County Councillor Nicholson, attended together with Kenyon and Arthur Bates, the County Planning Officer. Duff opened by saying that the NPC had decided to move to designation. Once the designation had been published, suggestions for amendments could be submitted. As for administration, parliament had made provision for the establishment of a Joint Board when a park spanned planning authorities and the NPC would argue for this, although the final decision lay with the minister.

Alderman Wilson immediately conceded the suitability of the Dales as a national park and turned to questions of administration. He reiterated a point made by Kenyon to Abrahams. 'The North and West Ridings were very different in temperament and outlook and the mere paper construction of a Joint Board would not produce the unity of purpose desired by the National Parks Commission'. He spoke from the experience of trying to operate a joint board for agricultural education. Hence he thought that the WRCC would be 'wholeheartedly' supportive of a separate planning committee, and if a Joint Advisory Committee was set up, they would find that the County Committee would really listen to their views. They would employ a planning consultant. So Wilson argued that the NPC should agree to the creation of a Joint Advisory Committee for five years: if at the end of that period the results were unsatisfactory, then they could proceed to establish a joint board. Duff, however, stood by a joint board. He did not see how the park could be seen as a single unit without one. Each county would only be concerned with its own portion of the park rather than the needs of the park overall.

Because of their preoccupation with a Joint Board, the NPC seem to have missed the subtext of what was being said to them. The West Riding welcomed the designation of the Dales. Given an agreement to have a county committee, they would take the park seriously and fund it appropriately. There was no expectation on their part that the North Riding would do that and whatever the practical problems of administering a park which crossed a major watershed, the West Riding did not wish to be held back by the North Riding who they saw as temperamentally quite different to them. The dinner at the Queen's Hotel ended amicably but without any agreement. There was no parallel meeting with the North Riding authorities: there was discussion within the NPC about whether there should be, but as the North Riding had never asked for a meeting, it was finally agreed that a meeting was unnecessary. This seems to have been a major mistake as well as showing a lack of courtesy.⁷⁰ Thus, not really understanding the local politics, the NPC plunged into designation.

⁶⁹ See the minute of the meeting at COU1/908 (57).

⁷⁰ Kenyon told Thornley of the meeting (but in deliberately vague terms) and stressed that the West Riding

had stated its opposition to a Joint Board. YD1, Kenyon to Thornley, 16 Oct. 1952.

VI

On 8 October Abrahams wrote formally to the councils announcing the Commission's intention to designate the national park and supplying a printed account of its boundaries. An announcement was made in the press.⁷¹ At about this time the Number One planning sub-committee in the North Riding declared its objection to any new national park in the county, and insisted that if one was to go ahead, then Richmond and lower Swaledale must be omitted. The county planning committee, when it met on 31 October, took a softer line. It accepted the idea of a park but on three conditions: that the existing planning arrangements were left unaltered, that a joint advisory committee be established, and Richmond and the townships of lower Swaledale excluded. This was relayed to Abrahams on 5 December. The West Riding seemed more accepting of the park. Kenyon, on the other hand, told Thornley on 8 December that his planning sub-committee had agreed to the principle of a park provided it had a joint advisory committee, and had asked for the adjustments of its boundaries in small respects (notably the exclusion of Settle). This was communicated to Abrahams after the full county planning committee had met on 22 December.⁷²

The Commission responded by sending three commissioners to look at the areas recommended for exclusion. On their recommendation the boundary at Settle was redrawn to exclude the town and the West Riding appears to have been satisfied with this and a number of other small changes. On 19 March though, the NPC wrote to the NRCC to say that it would concede the exclusion of Richmond but not the townships of lower Swaledale: and after inspection, it wished to include more of Coverdale in the park.⁷³ When it met on 24 April, the North Riding county planning committee was unable to decide its attitude and referred the NPC's proposals back to the sub-committees. When it met again on 31 July, it offered no view of the area to be designated, but referred to the objections being made by Leyburn RDC about the inclusion within the park of their water-gathering grounds which, they feared, would be polluted by walkers. It also suggested that this was not the right moment for designation and that the county council should first gain experience of managing the North Yorkshire Moors National Park.⁷⁴

This was relayed to Abrahams on 6 August.⁷⁵ He wrote back on 14 October after a meeting of the Commission.⁷⁶ The time for consultation had ended. Although the NPC had been unable to persuade Leyburn to withdraw its objections, they now proposed to move to designation. They could not accept the argument that the designation should be deferred.⁷⁷ Thornley then

⁷¹ YD1, Abrahams to Clerk of NRCC, 8 Oct. The map was published in the *Evening Gazette* 9 Oct., and mentioned in the *YP* on 10 October.

⁷² YD1, Thornley to NPC, 5 Dec.; Kenyon to Thornley, 8 Dec., Kenyon to NPC, 22 Dec. Bates had canvassed the omission of Settle and other small boundary revisions on 7 Nov.; COU 1/839 (3) and subsequent correspondence.

⁷³ COU 1/840 (12A), Minutes of the Commissioners' visit to the Dales 23–5 Feb. 1953. YD1, Rathbone (NPC) to S. Lee Vincent, 19 Jan., Vincent to Rathbone, 27

Jan., Abrahams to NRCC, 19 Mar. The adjustments to boundaries are described in COU 1/838 and COU 2/203, Committee A, meeting of 9 Mar. 1953.

⁷⁴ YD1, Abrahams to Thornley, 19 Mar, 15 May; minutes of 24 Apr and 31 July; correspondence with the clerk of Leyburn RDC.

⁷⁵ Original letter COU 1/840 (20), circulated with commentary by Abrahams on 25 Aug. (25).

⁷⁶ COU 1/840 (26), copy in YD1.

⁷⁷ YD1, Abrahams to Thornley, 14 Oct. 1953.

wrote to Kenyon saying that as the Commission declined to defer designation, he was inclined to harden his position and oppose it, especially if the West Riding would take the same stance. Kenyon replied saying that he had heard nothing from the Commission since an acknowledgement of his letter of 22 December of the previous year. He had heard informally that the boundary revisions the council had sought had been accepted and he could not see how, having engaged in a discussion of boundaries, the West Riding could now move to oppose the whole idea of the park. On the other hand, he was still opposed to the idea of a joint board but was waiting to see what was proposed.⁷⁸

At the North Riding Planning Committee held on 31 October, a resolution was passed saying that if the deferment of designation was unacceptable, then they reserved the right to oppose the scheme, and in particular they continued to insist that there should be no joint board. Again this was relayed to Abrahams in a letter saying that the Council felt that there was no advantage in having a Dales national park. This letter was communicated to the Commissioners at their meeting on 10 November 'and its contents noted with regret'. By this time the designation notice had been published with slightly amended boundaries from those which had been proposed initially. On 13 November, having been warned of the impending publication of the designation order, Kenyon wrote to Thornley seeking a meeting to concert their response. Whether they met is never disclosed.⁷⁹

VII

The designation order was signed on 7 December 1953. The initiative then passed to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government with whom objections had to be lodged, and in whose gift the convening of an enquiry lay.⁸⁰ Kenyon wrote to the Ministry lodging his council's objections to the designation. It was plain that he had resolved the problem he mentioned to Thornley, of facing in two directions at once. He acknowledged that the West Riding's advice had been taken in making adjustments to the boundary. The council's planning committee had decided that they should not formally oppose the designation, but Kenyon had also been asked to express their view that they could not 'see that any advantage to the public will accrue from the setting up of the proposed park'. They were 'firmly of opinion that the powers of the existing local planning authorities were quite adequate to control development and preserve amenities within the area'. The committee would not be disappointed if the Minister shared their view that the park was unnecessary. Their attitude had also changed with their growing experience of the joint board for the Peak District National Park. They felt that it was far too expensive. To establish a joint board would involve unjustifiable expenditure. Results every bit as satisfactory could be achieved by continuing the existing arrangements under a Joint Advisory Committee.⁸¹

⁷⁸ YD1, Thornley to Kenyon 16 Oct. and reply 22 Oct. 1953; Thornley to Kenyon 23 Oct. 1953.

⁷⁹ YD1, minute 31 Oct. 1953, Thornley to NPC, 2 Nov. 1953 (copy in COU 1/840 (28)), and Abrahams to Thornley, 18 Nov. 1953. Kenyon to Thornley, 13 Nov. 1953.

⁸⁰ The objections received are presented, with the

response of the National Parks Commission, in the file prepared for their counsel at the enquiry, contained in COU 1/845.

⁸¹ HLG 92/134 (original letter): copy in YD1, Kenyon to Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 31 Dec. 1953.

Thornley penned his own response to the Ministry on 11 January 1954.⁸² He offered four grounds to show that he was not to be left behind in the obfuscation stakes. First, his council was not 'wholly opposed', but thought that it was too soon to proceed to the designation. The public needed longer to become attuned to the 'idea and ideals' of a national park. Moreover, the County Council already had one national park within its boundaries and wished to gain experience of managing that before becoming involved in the administration of another. In time, the experience of the first park might persuade farmers and landowners that their worst fears were unjustified. Second, he contended that the part of the proposed park within their county was already adequately protected by the exercise of the existing planning powers. Third, if it was really felt that some stronger protection was needed, then it should apply only to the upland areas, the valley floors being given status as an Areas of Natural Beauty under Section 87 of the 1949 act. Indeed, Thornley argued that the valleys did not meet the criteria laid down in Section 5 of the act, of offering opportunities for open air recreation. (In their brief for the enquiry, the NPC commented, somewhat acidly, that the council envisaged a Yorkshire Dales National Park 'which contained no Dales'.⁸³) Fourth, he insisted that a joint board would be both unnecessary and complicated to administer.

Given the fact that both councils had written letters which, if not quite objecting to the national park, contained considerable reservations about its creation, a public enquiry was probably inevitable. Perhaps anticipating one, Thornley had written in early December to the chairman of the County Planning Committee, Alderman W. R. Burrill-Robinson of Leyburn asking him to canvass opinion amongst his fellow landowners. He received a letter in mid-January from the County Secretary of the NFU asking about the council's attitude and suggesting that they would consider their response to the national park at a meeting to be held in February: Thornley warned them that they had only a matter of days left in which to lodge an objection, which they did.⁸⁴ He also sought the advice of other clerks of county councils as to their experience of the National Parks Commission, maintaining a correspondence with R. L. Rickards, the clerk of Somerset County Council, who was opposed to the designation of the Exmoor National Park (announced in January and confirmed in October 1954).

Other than the objections of the two county councils, the most important submission came from 750 members of the National Farmers Union submitted on their behalf by Freeman, Son and Curry solicitors of Darlington. Its arguments were largely congruent with those of the NRCC.⁸⁵ Freeman, Son and Curry pointed out that the valley bottoms of Wensleydale and Swaledale were exclusively agricultural land. It therefore proposed that the whole of the lower

⁸² HLG 92/134, Thornley to Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 11 Jan. 1954, copy in YD2. A different view of the thinking of the NRCC comes from a minute of a conversation with S. Lee Vincent on 1 April. Vincent said that he personally favoured a park and believed that most of the county councillors did so too. The request of the county for a deferment until they had digested the North York Moors Park was perfectly genuine as was the request for a Joint Advisory Committee. Vincent thought that geography alone made a joint board unworkable. If there could be

agreement on these points, he thought that opposition would disappear. COU 1/840 (34).

⁸³ COU 1/844, Brief for counsel, p. 2.

⁸⁴ YD1, Thornley to Burrill-Robinson, 10 Dec; YD2, Secretary, North Riding and Durham branch of the NFU to Thornley, 14 Jan. 1954, with reply.

⁸⁵ Freeman, Son and Curry of Darlington were the solicitors for the NFU's North Yorkshire and South Durham branch and had appeared on their behalf at the enquiry into the North Yorkshire Moors National Park in 1952: YP 16 July 1952.

land in the two valleys be excluded and the boundaries of the national park redrawn to include only the high land. It justified this proposal by saying that the area was under an eradication plan for bovine TB. It feared that visitors to the Dales would leave gates open and allow the mixing of animals. Moreover it argued that the disease could be spread by them from one holding to another. Increased access would therefore undermine other government initiatives and waste government money. Moreover, a policy of encouraging tourists into the Dales would worsen the problem of sheep stealing by making it harder to identify and apprehend thieves. There was the possibility of conflicts between walkers and bulls. At a time when farmers were being encouraged to produce more for the national interest, the damage caused by walkers (and their dogs) would be an additional cost. All in all the national park would do nothing to advance the 'government's policy of full agricultural production'. For these reasons the minimum they sought was for the designation order to be deferred for three years: but they also argued that a national park authority would merely bring additional expense without any improvement in the efficiency of the planning authority. An assessment of their objections noted that:

The exclusion of the agricultural areas from the park would leave the main areas of undeveloped moorland but remove from the control of any park board or committee almost all development within the areas as well as the places of rest, refreshment or recreation outside fell-walking.⁸⁶

And this was doubtless the intention.

The Commission took the question of bovine TB eradication seriously and took advice to establish what weight it carried.⁸⁷ But overall they were somewhat dismissive of the objections. The Chairman of the Commission, Sir Patrick Duff, turned to Col. Gerald Haythornthwaite, a longstanding advocate of national parks, member of the Hobhouse Committee and of the Peak District National Park committee. He had been called on to give evidence at the North Yorkshire Moors enquiry the previous year. Would he be willing to do it again?

In the Dales I have had representations submitted on behalf of 750 farmers whose apprehension is, as usual, that designation will lead to increased trespass and damage, sheep stealing etc etc. ... You can see the sort of ammunition that will help me in resisting the objections of the Yorkshire Dales farmers: I wonder whether you would be able to provide me with any based on experiences in the Peak. An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory.

Haythornthwaite was willing to say that overall the Peak District National Park had had a positive effect. It was hard to assess whether there was less damage and nuisance to farmers, but he did think that as there was now some 'serious attention being paid to improving countryside behaviour, farmers are less agitated by the problem'. He also thought that there was more public interest in farmers' problems than there had been, and some valuable initiatives were now taking place. He concluded, 'There is no doubt that, far from increasing farmers'

⁸⁶ COU 1/844 (5).

⁸⁷ COU 1/844 (10)–(14). The Ministry of Agriculture thought that there was nothing of substance in the

argument. HLG 92/134, Minute of meeting with representatives of MAF, 7 Sept. 1954.

troubles and bad behaviour in the countryside, the National Park in the Peak is the means of putting an end to them'.⁸⁸

One has the impression that the NPC were somewhat under-estimating their local opponent. In April, some weeks before the hearing, the *Yorkshire Post* carried a report by a correspondent who had plainly spoken to the county council and interviewed Lord Bolton at length.⁸⁹ The paper had been a supporter of national parks over the previous 20 years, but this article began:

Who wants the Yorkshire dales area to be made into a national park? There appears to have been little public demand for it ... Enquiries I have made in the area show that there will also be considerable opposition from the farming community. They will base their arguments on the adverse affects of an increase in the use of the countryside by people who have no knowledge of it and little respect for it. This fear ... is shared by landowners in the area. ... Inquiries show that the agricultural communities in the great cultivated valleys of the Dales area are very disturbed by the prospect before them. Some would go further and say that they are quite alarmed.

Lord Bolton, who we have already encountered chasing strangers out of the entrance hall of Bolton Hall, was acting as spokesman for this body of opinion although, as he admitted, his estate was only partly in the park. His opposition was based on the fact that large parts of the area designated were unsuitable for a park:

Some areas, such as the Lake District and Snowdonia, both of which consist largely of mountains, are obviously suitable. But in this area there are large tracts, mainly in the valleys, which are intensively cultivated farmland. Townspeople who have not yet come to appreciate the countryside may not be able to do much damage on mountains, but they can do a tremendous amount of damage on agricultural land.

He accepted that in time people might be educated into how to behave in the countryside, but thought that this was a gamble, especially at a time when farmers were being encouraged to develop their land to the full, 'it seems quite iniquitous to lay the land open to the abuses which may come in with a national park'. So whilst Bolton acknowledged that there were 'real country lovers', some of whom were writing to him to oppose the park because they thought it would increase the number of visitors to the Dales:

There is good reason to assume that there will be more hooliganism in the countryside, more gates left open, more ricks and woodlands fired, more dogs chasing sheep and sometimes being encouraged to do so, more poaching on private lands, more rabbit netting round young plantations broken down and more broken glass lying around.

In common with the county council, he was in favour of planning, but believed that the existing powers were perfectly adequate.

The article drew two letters in response, including the one from the veteran letter-writer Roland H. Wade which we cited earlier. Both drew attention to the fallacy that the national park would make the land any more open to visitors. The first pointed out that the law of

⁸⁸ COU 1/845 (4), (8), (11).

⁸⁹ YP, 8 Apr. 1954. 'Landowners' fears of Dales park'.

trespass remained in force. Wade made the observation that fears that the establishment of the park would produce 'an invasion of cultivated land by hordes of unruly townsmen' had not occurred in the Lake District and seemed unlikely to occur in the Dales.⁹⁰

Bolton embroidered on his themes in a memorandum sent to the enquiry.⁹¹ He was not against national parks, not even the Yorkshire Dales one. He was merely against the inclusion of Wensleydale and land like it in the park. This was, he argued, intensively cultivated land and therefore quite different from the parks already created. The moorland in the park could be made open to access whether the park was established or not, but:

the land of the dale itself is enclosed into fields, many of them very small, which are farmed to the limit of their capacity by farmers and smallholders. It is my contention that the formation of a park would gravely endanger the livelihood of the community.

He envisaged gates left open, and problems if TB-attested cattle got out and mixed with those which were not attested. He was concerned about dogs running sheep; litter, and damage by fire. He poured scorn on the arguments of those in favour of the park. He accepted that the creation of the park did not give any additional rights of access, but in his experience 'the mere prospect of the Dale becoming a national park has, during the last two or three years, tended to give rise to the assumption that everything within it is open to the public'. He thought that the introduction of bylaws would do nothing to mitigate the problems he foresaw, nor the introduction of wardens, and argued that if those who maintained that the creation of the park would not increase visitor numbers were right, then why do it?

VIII

And so the scene was set for the public enquiry held at Northallerton on 13 May 1954.⁹² The National Parks Commission was represented by counsel, J. Ramsey Willis. The two county councils were represented by their respective clerks. Leyburn RDC sent its clerk. The other opponents of the designation were the Bradford Angling Club, one private landowner and the NFU, North Riding and South Durham Branch, represented by Mr Freeman of Freeman, Son and Curry. Lord Bolton was represented by his agent. On the pro-national park side, there was Col. Haythornthwaite appearing for CPRE and the Standing Committee of National Parks, representatives of the Ramblers Association, the Youth Hostels Association, the Skipton Chamber of Commerce and the Cave Research Group.

Willis opened proceedings by attacking the objections made by the County Councils. He considered their objections to be really about the administration of the area and this was not properly the concern of the enquiry. The county councils maintained that the 1947 Planning Act was adequate: but Willis argued that parliament had held that it was not adequate when it passed the 1949 act which placed on the NPC the obligation to designate national parks. The suggestion that the Dales themselves should be excluded made a nonsense of the whole idea

⁹⁰ YP, 10 Apr. 1954.

⁹¹ Copy with correspondence in HLG 92/134.

⁹² The following is based on the minute of the enquiry

in COU 1/846 (34). The inspector's report in HLG 92/134 gives a full account of the evidence presented.

of a Yorkshire Dales National Park. The NPC, he said, was not without sympathy for the idea that the designation be deferred until after the North Yorkshire Moors Park had bedded in, but could not accept it. He had sympathy too for the farmers and their anxieties: it was part of the Commission's job to educate people into good 'country manners'.

The North Riding was then called to give evidence. The County Planning Officer, S. Lee Vincent made three points. Strict planning controls in Wensleydale and Swaledale had been instituted in 1939 and 1942 respectively. He did not think that the valley bottoms fell within the terms of Section 5 of the act as they did not provide facilities for 'open air recreation'. And finally there would be no cost savings to the county council if a new authority was established. Alderman Burrill-Robinson, the chairman of the County Planning Committee, then gave evidence. He praised the job that his authority had been doing: 'he could not conceive of any improvement which could be effected by a new authority'.

Mr Kenyon was then called. Kenyon was not happy. He argued that Willis, appearing for the NPC, had made no case for the park and he thought that the inspector should adjourn the inquiry until he did. Kenyon stressed that the Dales were intensely cultivated: the park was merely an invitation for people to trespass. And Kenyon ended by saying.

So far as we can see no advantage will accrue. It will merely be costly and we in Yorkshire do not think that is any virtue. We may be heretics in this, but we think it is going to cost a lot and produce little. We think it should be left alone.⁹³

He then called on the West Riding's County Planning Officer, Mr Bates. He argued that the park was not a national one, but of interest only to people in Yorkshire and to a lesser extent Lancashire. The council had exercised a strict control over advertisements, camp sites and other developments: they could show that recreational facilities in the area were adequate. Bates went on to argue, contrary one might say, to the mind of parliament, that the 1947 Planning Act had made the Hobhouse Committee's report redundant. He felt that the area fell short of the requirements of Section 5 of the act for designation. In addition, nominations by the minister to the planning boards were undemocratic and likely to be unpopular. (In this, history proved him right.) The clerk of Leyburn Rural District Council appeared to argue for the exclusion of their water-gathering grounds from the park: they feared contamination of their supply and felt that the creation of a national park would increase the danger.

Counsel then appeared for Mr Hirst and the Bradford anglers, but contributed nothing of significance. Mr Hirst was forced to concede that the public could already walk along the banks of the rivers whose fishing they owned. Mr Freeman opened on behalf of the farmers with an account of a previous attempt to reduce Yorkshire to a national park (by the Normans). He enlivened matters by tipping a bag of litter and rubbish gathered by one of his clients from the shore of Semerwater onto the table in front of him, asking rhetorically how much more litter would be left if the national park came into existence. This was seized on in the following day's papers. But Freeman's main request was the exclusion from the park of the lowland pastures in Wensleydale and Swaledale (up to the 1000-foot contour).⁹⁴

⁹³ COU 1/845 (34), p. 3.

⁹⁴ See the clippings in COU 1/844 (27a-d).

Freeman produced as a witness an Askrigg farmer, R. M. Hodgson.⁹⁵ His statement retails a number of now familiar objections: the dangers of bulls, the likely cost to the rates, the persistent damage to dry stone walls by people climbing them, the tuberculosis eradication scheme and the litter left by tourists. He thought that there was sufficient access to the open land of the fells and no need to make any new paths through the enclosed agricultural areas. Mr Hodgson agreed that farmers feared an increase in damage and trespass and the establishment of rights of access to the rough upland pastures. Mr Orde-Powlett spoke on behalf of Lord Bolton, but we have already reviewed his opinions.

The other witnesses spoke on behalf of the designation, including the Ramblers Association who called for an early designation under a Joint Board with executive powers, and relied heavily on the experience of the Peak District Park to argue that there was nothing to fear from this. Some witnesses thought that the farmers (or rather their wives) might benefit from the enhanced tourist trade. Mr Batts, speaking on behalf of the Youth Hostels Association, complained that the North Riding County Council had deliberately inflamed rather than allayed farmer's fears.⁹⁶

Willis wound up by reducing the arguments against designation to three. There was a fear of trespass which the minister had addressed in his confirmation letter for the Peak District National Park: the authorities had a duty to understand and respect the needs of farmers. Second, there were those who felt that the 1949 act was not necessary. He could not accept this and reminded the enquiry of the terms of the 1949 act. Third, there was the objection to the inclusion of agricultural land, but the Minister had already ruled that the inclusion of such land was unavoidable. The fears that an inflow of people would hinder TB eradication was based on a misapprehension but the matter would be discussed further between ministries.

The inspector, in his report of 24 May, weighed the inclusion of agricultural land within the park.⁹⁷ He expressed himself appreciative of the farmer's fears.

Designation may for them be the thin end of the wedge; it may mean a small scale invasion of their country by the urban population with all the bad manners of the town dweller, who has done so much to build up an unfortunate reputation; they know that no codes or regulation can insure the protection of their farms, flocks and herds; they foresee years of effort to build up on attested land brought to nought by the carelessness of a passer by. But at the same time it must be realised that Wensleydale, Swaledale, Bishopdale and Coverdale are not without roads and footpaths already open to the public.

⁹⁵ Hodgson described himself in his statement as a JP and ex-Chairman of the South Durham and North Yorkshire County Branch of the NFU. He held other public offices. He had been at Lowlands farm, Askrigg, since 1921 and farmed 240 acres with sheep rights. YD2, proof of Richard Mason Hodgson.

⁹⁶ COU 1/844 (34) (minutes of enquiry), p. 6. Batts's claim is almost certainly true. Thornley brought 'independent' witnesses forwards: Kenyon did not. We know that Thornley had seen and corrected Lord

Bolton's statement: the drafts are in his file. Likewise Burrell-Robinson. He was told by Freeman of his stunt in advance. One suspects strongly that he inspired the newspaper coverage. YD2, letter, Bolton to Thornley, 23 Apr. 1954 enclosing draft statement; Thornley to Bolton making suggestions for amendments, 24 Apr. copy draft statement (n.d.); Freeman to Thornley 8 May 1954.

⁹⁷ HLG 92/134.

He could not support the exclusion of agricultural land from within the boundaries of the park and certainly could not accede to the request for the withdrawal of the whole of Wensleydale and Swaledale. There was no right of access to this land. 'The very name of the Park would lose its force if two such important dales were to be excluded.' Hence the inspector recommended that the designation order be confirmed.

The Minister saw no need to make any amendment to the order and wrote announcing his confirmation of the order on 8 October.⁹⁸ He had weighed the arguments made by the farmers' representatives and whilst not finding them groundless, did not consider that he would be justified in excluding areas of agricultural land from the park. Rather he placed some emphasis on the education of visitors to the countryside, and the fact that the establishment of the national park gave the public no additional rights of access. 'It would be impossible to confine the park to the uplands without removing some of the most attractive scenery'. He acknowledged, but gave short shrift to the arguments of the two county councils. As for Leyburn, he simply did not accept that an area should be excluded from a national park simply because it was a gathering ground for water. The Ministry recognized that to reduce the area of the park, or limit it to the upper moorland 'would bring about a great outcry and might set up frictions between the farmers and the ramblers rather than quieten it down'.⁹⁹

The press response to the Minister's letter was perhaps muted. The *Yorkshire Post* carried a long précis of the Minister's letter with a map. At the end it quoted Mr Hodgson of Askrigg who expressed his disappointment and reiterated his fears of poor behaviour by visitors.¹⁰⁰ Leyburn renewed their protest about the inclusion of their gathering grounds. They were reminded that the protection of the water supply was their responsibility and that they might like to consider chlorination. As they had raised the matter, the Ministry looked forwards to being told how they would proceed.¹⁰¹

IX

This is far from the end of the story. Kenyon was dissatisfied with the conduct of the enquiry and took up his view that the NPC should have offered itself for cross-examination at the enquiry with Sir Thomas Sheepshanks, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Ultimately there was agreement that nothing could be done but Sheepshanks acknowledged that parts of the process were unsatisfactory and communicated this to the National Parks Commission.¹⁰²

A note in the Ministry's file by A. B. Valentine of a conversation with Kenyon suggests that some of his complaints were feigned but pursued with a purpose.¹⁰³ Kenyon had only attended

⁹⁸ HLG 92/134 (a copy at COU 1/845 (35)).

⁹⁹ HLG 92/134, Macmillan to Sir Thomas Dugdale, [early] Oct. 1954.

¹⁰⁰ YP 13 Oct 1954, 'Victory for planners of Dales Park'.

¹⁰¹ HLG 92/134, clerk of Leyburn RDC to Minister, 16 Nov. 1954 and reply.

¹⁰² The correspondence between Kenyon and Sheepshanks, and Kenyon and Thornley about procedure can be found in 'Mr Thornley's file'. The question of appropriate process was discussed by the NPC: COU 2/1, 48th meeting, 15 June 1954, minute 594.

¹⁰³ HLG 92/134, Memo, A. B. Valentine, 14 July 1954.

the enquiry because the County Planning Officer, Arthur Bates, could not arrive before lunch. He was dissatisfied with Ramsey Willis's opening statement which, he claimed, only lasted ten minutes. But the North Riding's objections ended half an hour before lunch and so Kenyon was forced to get to his feet and introduce the West Riding's case. As he wasn't familiar enough with it, he extemporized with a critique of the Commission's procedure at the enquiry. If this had come about by accident, Kenyon also told Valentine that if he could be reassured:

that there is not to be a board, his indignation about the proceedings would evaporate at once but implied that if we [the ministry] confirmed the order and tried to set up a Board, or had not by that time made our intentions plain in this regard, he might still try to go to court on the basis that no inquiry as required by the Act had taken place.

Kenyon had noticed that a different process had been employed at the Exmoor Enquiry in June. Lord Strang had appeared for the NPC and justified the need for a park.

Once the Minister had given his consent to the establishment of the park, the local planning authorities had three months in which to consult with the National Parks Commission on the administrative needs of the park. There was agreement – as we have seen – between the two counties that a Joint Board was unacceptable. They therefore sought the creation of a Joint Advisory Committee under Section 8 (2) of the act. The Councils took the initiative on this by sending near identical letters to the Ministry at the NPC at the beginning of December. The letters claimed that they had proved at the inquiry that the Dales were well managed by the councils. Whilst the designation would give them additional powers, there was no question that the two councils could continue to manage the Dales in an entirely satisfactory manner. A joint board 'would be an impediment to proper administration and would at the same time add costs'. In the West Riding's letter, they reiterated a point made two years earlier; 'that the West Riding cannot be accused of putting economy before the amenities of the area'. The council exercised its planning responsibilities through six area offices, one of which was at Skipton, which could continue to administer the West Riding Dales.

A meeting of the two councils with the NPC was held at the end of January: its minutes cannot disguise the fact that it was acrimonious in the extreme.¹⁰⁴ The county delegations were supplied with a copy of the Joint Advisory Committee arrangements for Snowdonia on their arrival. Once the meeting started, Kenyon immediately tore into them, saying how unacceptable they were. Abrahams was finally forced to intervene to say that it had been given to them to show the *minimum* they believed the minister would accept if no joint board was established. Lord Strang said that it was up to the counties to persuade the NPC that special circumstances existed in the Dales: Kenyon replied that the special circumstances were self-evident. Strang retorted that the NPC did not accept that view. In fact some commissioners were coming to favour a joint advisory committee. Pauline Dower wrote to Strang saying that an advisory committee would be better than having the park managed by two 'unwilling and resentful authorities forced into too close association on a Joint Board'.¹⁰⁵ Negotiations dragged on through 1955.¹⁰⁶ In March 1956 the minister conceded the establishment of an advisory

¹⁰⁴ See the minute, COU1/848 (34).

¹⁰⁵ COU 1/848 (25).

¹⁰⁶ There is much material on this in 'Mr Thornley's file'.

committee for an initial three years, not because he was persuaded that by the arguments of the two county councils that the park was not a single unit and lacked a natural administrative centre, but on grounds of economy.¹⁰⁷

The new park was therefore hobbled from its origins by the two county councils. In effect it was run as two halves by the planning departments of the parent county councils with an 18-member Joint Advisory Committee, of whom six were appointed by each county council and six by the minister. The West Riding committee met for the first time on 11 April 1957 and the North Riding committee on 17 July 1957. The Joint Advisory Committee did not meet until September 1957. These arrangements – which had been envisaged to be temporary – remained in force until 1974.¹⁰⁸

The two committees were supported by the planning departments of the two county councils without any dedicated staff. It has been suggested that the West Riding Committee took its business seriously where the North Riding Committee was much more reliant on its officers. There was a view that the North Riding was much more permissive about building bungalows than the West Riding. It was claimed – doubtless scurrilously – that the councillors on the North Riding Committee instructed their officers to be brisk when it met on Test Match days so that the councillors could watch the cricket on television. And the North Riding trailed behind the West Riding in other respects. A visitor centre was provided at Clapham (in the West Riding) in 1968 and another at Aysgarth (North Riding) in 1973. In 1963 the West Riding appointed the first warden and the North Riding one of their own the following year.¹⁰⁹

When the National Parks Commission published a handbook to the Yorkshire Dales in 1970, it found it hard to conceal the fact that the existence of the National Park was still contentious.¹¹⁰ Jointly written by the planning officers of the two county authorities, one of whom had given evidence against the establishment of the park at the 1954 enquiry, their account stopped short well short of justifying the existence of the Park. Its powers, they explained, were essentially the normal planning powers that local authorities had been exercising for some years before the park came into existence. The national park was criticized for restricting building and requiring building to be done to a high standard. But these strict controls would have been implemented whether or not there had been a national park, and indeed had been enforced before the national park was designated. On the perennial problem of litter left by the public, some progress had been made with tougher legislation and the establishment of a warden service. More could have been done to improve facilities for visitors had money been forthcoming: but car parks had been provided, a visitor centre established at Clapham and a mobile one at Malham. And they continued:

Opinion is divided about the desirability of large numbers of visitors. They certainly bring in more trade but many farmers feel that these visitors may cause damage which more than

¹⁰⁷ COU 1/848 (90B).

¹⁰⁸ For the following, Colin Speakman, *The Yorkshire Dales National Park. A celebration of 60 years* (2014), ch. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–1.

¹¹⁰ B. F. Dixon and S. Lee Vincent, 'The work of the

national park authorities', in I. G. Simmons (ed.), *Yorkshire Dales* (National Park Guide no. 9, 1971), pp. 48–52. See also the assessments of Arthur Raistrick, for many years the acknowledged expert on the archaeology and history of the Dales, in *The Pennine Dales* (1968), pp. 144–5, 215–6.

offsets the benefit gained. Again it must be emphasised that this would happen whether or not the area had been designated. ... The visiting public by unreasonable – even if unintentional – behaviour may well damage not only the farming economy of the area but also the very things which they have come there to enjoy.

In a sense the National Park as an institution only came into existence with the local government reorganization of 1974 which gave the national park its own chief officer and staff for the first time. Local government reorganization could not change the geography of the Dales however, and the new park authority was forced to split its administration between Grassington and Bainbridge.¹¹¹

X

The idea of a Yorkshire Dales National Park had been in the air for over two decades before the designation order was circulated in October 1952. It had been advocated by Dower, developed by Cameron and then taken up by Hobhouse. No one could have been surprised in 1952 when the National Parks Commission brought forwards proposals for designation. The idea was perhaps so familiar that it had lost its capacity to frighten people. It may be, of course, that the real opposition was found at the first confirmations, and that subsequently national parks were seen as a juggernaut which could not be stopped.

We can identify several areas around which objections coalesced. The first were the doubts expressed by many parties about the creation of a new bureaucracy. The councillor from Sedburgh who thought that the national park would determine the colours of house roofs spoke for an element who were fearful of heavy-handed controls, and a few were willing to go out on a limb and see the park as a 'Socialist' enterprise. It was maintained by the county councils that the planning arrangements which had been put in place in the late 1930s and strengthened under the 1947 act were adequate and a new regime unnecessary. It is easy to conclude that neither county council welcomed the national park and both actively opposed it. And yet this is not quite true. It is perhaps more to the point to say that the West Riding had no illusions about the North Riding. Questions of practicality apart, what seems to have been mostly left unspoken is the West Riding's conviction that they could not easily cooperate with the North Riding in a Joint Board and therefore preferred two committees. What Kenyon perhaps envisaged was a two-speed park in which the southern part would have been developed by a committed, go-ahead local authority whereas the northern dales would have been managed by a much more staid one. The NPC seems to have been blind to these nuances, or perhaps they calculated that in a Joint Board the West Riding and the independent members could drive the North Riding forwards. The North Riding, as a largely rural county, had understandable reservations about having two special parks within its boundaries and the level of internal reorganization this involved. In retrospect their request for a pause seems more, rather than less, reasonable.

Second, there was a failure amongst the wider public to understand quite what the creation of a national park entailed. Some assumed that the national park would give access to all parts

¹¹¹ Speakman, *Yorkshire Dales National Park*, ch. 3.

of the countryside within the park's boundaries, that it amounted to land nationalization. National Parks stopped well short of meeting that expectation. The idea that property rights had been, or would be, abolished perhaps contributed to the poor behaviour of a minority.

Third, and following on from this, the major fear on the part of farmers was that the park would introduce into the Dales large numbers of people who were unversed in the ways of the countryside. They would innocently do things which were wrong, like leaving gates open, or climbing over dry stone walls. They would commit acts of vandalism and hooliganism, including lighting camp fires and removing stones from walls. Wherever they went they were alleged to leave litter. It is hard, at this distance, to know whether this was a justifiable fear based on experience or a self-reinforcing prejudice. One may suspect that of all the objections, the belief that the park was an invitation to trespass was probably the one that had the greatest purchase over farmers.

These were general problems of education, hardly limited to visitors to the Yorkshire Dales. There is a history running through the 1930s and into relatively modern times of attempts to improve the behaviour of visitors to the countryside, starting with the codes for good conduct issued by rambling societies before the war and then the Country Code which was widely circulated by the National Parks Commission precisely as the answer to vandalism and hooliganism in the countryside.¹¹²

Fourth, there were two arguments based on disease. The first was the inclusion of small areas of water gathering grounds within the national park area, and the second the fear that the movement of people through the park would undermine attempts to eradicate bovine TB. Both were doubtless reasonable fears, but so far as can be told, both were without foundation.

On the other side, there was a lack of persuasive argument about what the national park was supposed to achieve that was not being done already. Most notably, it brought no special funding. The questions posed by the two county councils – about what additional value the national park was going to bring – were never really answered. It brought no additional government money into the Dales. There is a sense that designation and then confirmation was an essentially bureaucratic process which did not need to be argued for, and that the parks were correspondingly the weaker for being largely imposed without local consent.

XI

There is perhaps room for an afterword. When the history of the national parks in England is reviewed, one thing becomes clear. That we have national parks at all is the result of a very successful piece of pressure group politics. The national parks lobby and the Ramblers Association had good contacts in the wartime coalition who were determined to implement one of the cherished ambitions of the 1930s. But no one in the 1930s really envisaged ten national parks: they often spoke of *the* national park which would probably be the Lake District or perhaps Snowdonia. Dower's report involved a massive expansion in the scale of the idea.

¹¹² Peter Merriman, "“Respect the life of the countryside”: the Country Code, government and the conduct of visitors in the countryside in post-war England and Wales", *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005), pp. 336–50.

Had the Conservatives been returned to power in 1945, we would have heard no more of the Dower report: when they came back into power in 1950, national parks were too far developed for the policy to be reversed. Nonetheless, neither the Conservative party nor individual Conservative ministers evinced much enthusiasm for them, but short of winding up the National Parks Commission, all they could do was reduce the powers of the individual parks by denying them Boards. Local authorities uniformly disliked the national parks for taking away their powers: they disdained them as unnecessary, especially after the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. The solution was to leave the national parks as special planning areas under the immediate control of the county councils, which in turn retarded the development of the national parks and deprived them of their potential. On the evidence presented here, the inhabitants of the parks themselves were largely indifferent to them. And it is not clear that the enthusiasm of the ramblers' and walkers' lobby was quite as strong in the 1950s as it had been earlier. In a real sense national parks had few friends in their first years, and many enemies: but they were fortunate that their friends had been well placed and the institutional framework they created – even if in some respects unsatisfactory – carried them forwards in less clement times.