

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

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| Name of Project | Peak Land Lives |
| Delivery Partner | The Farming Life Centre |
| Name of Person Completing Report | Rachel Metcalfe |
| Start Date of Project | January 2017 |
| End Date of Project | December 2021 |
| Date of Report | September 2021 |



Aims and Objectives of the Project

Peak Land Lives was a research and oral history project which aimed to tell the story of the agricultural heritage of the South West Peak from 1945 to the present. Drawing on personal testimony it documented the journey of the farmers and the landscape they have cared for over the last 70 years, exploring the complex web of factors which has led the South West Peak to the crossroads it has reached today. It also sought to understand and portray the current challenges

faced by those living and working on the land and how they view their future within the South West Peak.

Project Delivery

This project comprised a series of face to face interviews with farming families which were all audio recorded, photographs of each interviewee were taken. This material was transcribed and edited to produce a full-colour book charting the story of farming since the second world war.

Staff resource

The project was coordinated by the charity manager at the Farming Life Centre. Over the course of the project delivery this individual changed 5 times.

Budget resource

The initial planned project budget for Peak Land Lives was £58,675 (figures including VAT) and was subdivided as follows, showing planned and actual costs incurred against each budget heading:

| NLHF budget heading | Example items | Intended cost | Actual cost |
|---|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Repair and conservation work | Book sales proceeds back into farming projects | £16,800 | £8,887 |
| New staff costs | Project manager | £6,032 | £6,112 |
| Travel for staff | | £477 | £425 |
| Travel and expenses for volunteers | Mileage for educational talks/walks/ presentations | £203 | £0 |
| Equipment and materials (activity) | Photographic prints | £396 | £15 |
| Professional fees relating to any of the above (activity) | Writer and oral historian / Transcriber / Design and Print Contractor | £29,555 | £29,825 |
| Publicity and promotion | Promotional resources for book | £420 | £72 |
| Other costs | Venue and refreshments for book launch | £1,620 | £928 |
| Full cost recovery | | £3,172 | £2,592 |
| TOTAL | | £58,675 | £48,856 |

In addition, the project received non-cash contributions of £25,750 and volunteer time valued at £1,325.

Partnership working – team involvement, steering group etc:

The project was supported by the SWPLP Scheme Manager, the farming Life office Manager who later stepped up to manage the project and the two consultants who interviewed and edited the book. These individuals formed a steering group which met as required, more regularly in the latter stages to get the book published.

Volunteers

25 farming families volunteered their time to be interviewed for the project and provided materials and resources such as historic photographs. Trustees of the Farming Life Centre supported book sales and visited different outlets to increase sales. A volunteer has spent many hours editing the audio content and written transcripts to be uploaded onto the SWPLP website, which would have been an impossible task without this input.

Consultants and contractors

The project was delivered in partnership with an oral historian/local farmer, and wildlife photographer/writer who acted as contractors but also gave a huge amount of time in-kind to the project. Vertebrate Publishing was contracted for the design and print of the book.

Community involvement

Talks were given by the two book editors to a range of audiences, including local rural community groups, local Wildlife Trusts and the Festival of the Mind organised by Sheffield University.

What Has (and has not) Been Achieved

Outputs

| | Intended Output | Delivered Output |
|----------|---|---|
| 1 | Interviews with SWP farming families transcribed, edited and reviewed x25 | 25 interviews with 30 individuals, see appendix 1 for a map of the farm locations |
| 2 | 1 book produced | 1 book was produced |
| 3 | Copies of book printed or electronically available x2000 | 2000 books were printed |
| 4 | 1 book launch | 1 book launch |
| 5 | 10 Walks and talks | 5 walks and talks were delivered |
| 6 | People buy the book - 2000 | 1065 books purchased |

Key Outputs

The **Book Launch** held in October 2019 was a key event. This was an opportunity to come together and celebrate farming past, present and future in the South West Peak. We were able to promote the book and increase book sales. Julian Glover gave a key note speech at the event and Colin Tudge of the Oxford Real Farming Conference, who wrote the foreword for the book, sent a pre-recorded video message. An audio recording of the speakers at the book launch can be found here: [E8 \(Inspiring Adventure\) The Land That Made Us Book Launch - YouTube](#)

Buying the book – Through book sales this ensured that money came back to the Farming Life Centre enabling us to continue to provide services and develop projects to support farmers and rural communities. The Covid-19 pandemic somewhat hampered the selling of books. There were very few opportunities to attend natural gatherings, livestock markets and local events due to restrictions.

Outcomes

| | Intended Outcome | Delivered Outcome |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Improved understanding and relationship between different communities. | The book establishes a record of the effects of environmental and farming policy over the past 70 years, providing a resource for future generations which can be shared. It is hoped that it provides a better understanding of the 'journey' which has been undertaken by people and place to get to the point reached today. Farmers have been given an opportunity to tell their stories in their own words. |
| 2 | People have a stronger sense of place, they are engaging with the landscape, have better experiences, and have gained respect and understanding. | Readers of the book gain a greater insight into the life and landscape of the South West Peak and will be better informed. The farming community is celebrated and valued and hopefully better understood. |
| 3 | People have gained skills and knowledge about the landscape. | The reader review below indicates an improved knowledge |
| 4 | People living nearby who don't currently have a connection to the landscape are supported to build a relationship. | By providing audio and transcribed content on our website we offer a wider range of people the opportunity to hear the voices of the farmers featured in the book. |

Key Outcomes

The most important outcome is the book which has been produced that provides a record of the farming journeys over a highly significant 80 years. It can be used by local communities to look at changes to the landscape over time.

Online reader reviews:

"The portrait format of this book might lead you to expect endless images of handsome cows and sheep, sheepdogs and green views. Those are here (and oh those cows and sheep really are handsome) but there is also meaty text here in the voices of those with farming lives in the South West Peak district and I found it fascinating and thought-provoking. There is a wide range of perspectives - no-one could read this and think that there is a unified 'farmers' view, not even all emanating from those who work in this distinctive upland terrain.

Women's work is clear here, the other jobs that people do alongside working their own land (and not always out of pure financial need, it was interesting to hear the positives of contracting) The issue of management for conservation is clearly very complex and the framework of a history of farming in the area since the early middle of the 20th century works well to show some of the issues (and the reason for the frustration) I was keenly aware of there being a whole language to farming which the editors don't overly translate and some preconceptions I needed dispelling... for example I don't know why I had not really registered that many cattle were tethered in tiny dark shippens all winter.

It will definitely enhance the experience of visiting or passing through the area, and improve my understanding."

"A wonderful book that reveals the lives of the hardy characters that farm in the Peak District. As a keen walker, I recognise many of the people and their lands. The photographs are beautiful too."

"A really interesting read, loads of social commentary & fascinating insight into agricultural changes in that past 50 + years and the effects on our local landscapes and biodiversity. A must read for everyone interested in the countryside."

What Made The Difference

The dedicated time and commitment from the two consultants who worked to a very high standard and were passionate about the project, really made the difference, as did dedicated time from key staff at the Farming Life Centre. Most importantly was the time given by the farming families who were interviewed and told their own stories about their lives and the land.

Challenges

- Staff changes: The project lead who initially set up the project left in the early stages. This was then followed by a series of staff changes at the Farming Life Centre. An established member of staff took a lead but found that it was a lot of extra work, especially in the early stages. Lack of continuity from staff members was a notable challenge, overcome by the commitment of the consultants to producing a quality product and honouring the farmers they interviewed.
- Book sales were always a challenge despite social media promotion, attending agricultural events and visiting potential sales outlets. Small village shops/post offices across the area were very accommodating but once locals/regulars have purchased a copy, sales usually dried up.

Case Studies

Interviews and transcriptions are available here:

[The Land That Made Us: Bonus Audio Content : South West Peak](#)

Audio recording from the book launch is available here:

[E8 \(Inspiring Adventure\) The Land That Made Us Book Launch - YouTube](#)



Teaching the younger generation about livestock management

Legacy

Skills/knowledge/experience

The story of farmers in the South West Peak will live on through the books which have been sold. This will be a reminder of how farmers have cared for the landscape over the past 80 years and the challenges faced over that time. The book is available in local book shops and visitor centres - this can help visitors to understand how the landscape they are entering into has evolved. The book will be a permanent written and photographic record of the evolution of farming and the South West Peak Landscape.

Habitat/species improvements

The farmer's stories include an assessment of the habitats and wildlife where they farm.

Data

A long-term record is available on the South West Peak Landscape Partnership website where audio recordings and interview transcripts are held.

Connections/collaboration

There have been improved connections with farmers and other organisations and authorities involved in the partnership - the book launch was a way in which everyone came together to celebrate the landscape in which they lived, worked or visited.

Educational Resources/Other Resources

The book will be a key source of information for future generations in local villages and communities.

Lessons Learned

This has to be a project which is supported by the staff and directors of such a small charity, with a plan in place if there is a change in staff/leadership. It's not easy selling books during a pandemic, which nobody could have predicted, as key outlets such as agricultural shows were cancelled in 2020.

More book launches in different areas would have helped to have promote the book, more talks sooner after publication may have helped to keep people interested.

A clear contract with the book publisher over sales, marketing and promotion is invaluable, as is an understanding and a plan for distribution outlets. The cover price can only be achieved by direct sales, selling via third parties attracted commissions between 30% and 60%, especially when sold via online retailers like Amazon.

The Big Headline

The end product is fantastic – the photography is stunning and the stories told are amazing and from the heart. This is a record of farming which can be shared for years to come.

Appendix 1. Location of farms participating in this project

