

# White Hall Centre History

An update on the White Hall Centre archive and on the book project.  
From Pete McDonald, April 2015

## White Hall Centre Archive – Update & Thank You!

A year has passed since the discovery that the Derbyshire libraries catalogue did not list any copies of A B Afford's *The Story of White Hall Open Country Pursuits Centre* (1978). This revelation led to the idea, from Bob Higginbotham and myself, of setting up a White Hall Centre collection at the Derbyshire Record Office in Matlock.

The response to our request of last June for writing and photographs for a White Hall Centre archive has exceeded our expectations in both the range and the significance of the material that has accumulated. We have received documents and photographs and film footage that will be of much interest to future researchers. Thank you, everyone who has sent us items or ideas or information.

In about November 2014, Bob visited the record office and delivered a bundle of physical and electronic material to form the beginning of the archive.

The homepage of the Derbyshire Record Office is at:  
[http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/record\\_office/](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/record_office/)

On the record-office catalogue, the reference number of the White Hall Centre collection is D7786. The collection is unlisted. This means that it has yet to be fully catalogued, a job that might not happen for some time to come. The present catalogue entry merely indicates the existence of the collection. The record office sometimes uses volunteers to assist with the cataloguing of collections. I am looking into this possibility.

## A Book in Search of Authors

A project is under way to produce a complete history of White Hall Centre, 1950–2015. Typical of the enthusiastic responses to this idea was this one: 'Fantastic – I wish you well in obtaining all the support you need: it is indeed a story that needs to be told. It is a subject close to my heart since I am a Derbyshire lad and have spent time there myself, as indeed have some of my kids.'

This venture is likely to be a long-term endeavour. I am working on the period 1950–69. The project needs one or two other volunteer authors and a volunteer editor, a volunteer book designer, and a volunteer illustrations editor. For more information on this proposal, go to: <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/the-story-of-white-hall-outdoor-centre-a-book-looking-for-authors>

All boots abandon,  
Dee who enter here.

# Contacts

## **White Hall Centre archive: where to send your contributions**

Please send your photos or recollections, on paper or digital, to the White Hall office:

Post: Archive Material  
White Hall Centre  
Long Hill  
Buxton  
Derbyshire, SK17 6SX

Email: [white.hall@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:white.hall@derbyshire.gov.uk)

Alternatively, you may be able to deposit some items directly at the county council's record office. There is no charge if you are donating the items, but there may be some formalities to complete:

Post: White Hall Centre Collection  
Derbyshire Record Office  
County Hall  
Matlock, DE4 3AG

Email: [record.office@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@derbyshire.gov.uk)

## **Book Project**

Email: [pete.mcd@vodafone.co.nz](mailto:pete.mcd@vodafone.co.nz)

# Rediscovered

## **Historic 1957 BBC TV film**

This film, titled *Climbing*, is one of our most interesting finds. It is a fascinating half-hour programme, bursting with history. It includes footage of Geoff Sutton and Gordon Mansell with a group at Windgather Rocks. For a review of this film, go to:

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/rediscovered-tv-film-of-climbing-history>

An MPEG 4 copy of this TV film is available for researchers to view at the Derbyshire Record Office (enquire beforehand). We are grateful to the BBC archives department for its producing and supplying this digital copy.

Manchester Guardian, Fri 23 Aug 1957, p. 11.

### **B.B.C. TELEVISION**

11 25 a.m.-1 30 p.m.: Cricket: Test Match.  
2 10: Test Match, 4 15: Watch with Mother, 4 30:  
Test Match, 5 0: Children's Television, 5 57:  
Weather 6 0, News and Sports News, 6 5:  
Test Match 6 45: Glee Club 7 15: News and  
Cricket Scores, 7 20: The British Games 8 0:  
Pleasure Boat, 8 40: The British Games, 9 0:  
Eye to Eye—8, Climbing 9 30: Press Con-  
ference, 10 0: "Vanity Fair"—Ep 1 10 30:  
Semprini, 10 45: News, Weather, Close.

# Obtained

## **TV film clip: *Midland News*, 21 Nov 1958**

An MPEG 4 copy of this TV news item is available for researchers to view at the Derbyshire Record Office (enquire beforehand). The 1-minute 20-second film clip shows the Duke of Edinburgh watching some course-members climbing at Castle Naze. There is also a brief glimpse of some boys kayaking on Combs Reservoir.

We are grateful to the Media Archive for Central England for its producing and supplying this digital copy.

## ***Peter Mosedale's 1975 manuscript: Hill and Water Sports in British Education***

Physical and electronic copies of this unpublished book are available for researchers (any members of the public) at the Derbyshire Record Office.

As far as we have been able to ascertain, until 2014 this manuscript lay undisturbed on a library shelf in Canberra, Australia, for thirty-nine years.

Efforts to locate and contact Peter Ralph Mosedale's relatives have been unsuccessful so far. We need some genealogical help. He was born in Nuneaton on 20 September 1917.

# Royal Visit, 21 Nov 1958

In the 1950s, although obviously a great success, White Hall Centre was not without its critics. As late as 1958, most other local education authorities were still spectating rather than emulating. The second warden, Geoff Sutton, embarked upon an ambitious campaign to gain helpful publicity. The public-relations initiative culminated in a visit by the Duke of Edinburgh on 21 November 1958, reported in local and national newspapers. A B Afford, who was there that day, described the Duke's visit in detail, allocating it an importance that is not obvious in the newspaper reports: 'This event was undoubtedly a crucial turning point in a success story, everyone was impressed by the Duke's obvious real interest and knowledge of the situation and also that White Hall was deemed worthy for inclusion between visits to organisations of technological importance'.



Moir Langmuir collection

The management meet the Duke. Left to right: Geoff Sutton, the Duke of Edinburgh, Eric Langmuir, and Jack Longland. Eric looks very relaxed, chatting away, despite having to ski on the grass. Royal visit, 21 November 1958.

# Help!

## **Ripping yarns**

Legend says that a White Hall Land-Rover once overturned on the Errwood incline. True or false? Can anybody enlighten us?

## **Just a name**

The written records of White Hall's first two decades are male dominated, both in references to staff and to course members.

However, A B Afford does praise the contributions of Betty Mosedale (quoting Ken Oldham), Ann Sutton and Maureen Langmuir. Also, AB twice mentions Meriol/Meriel Evans as having been appointed in about August 1963 as the first female instructor. But, apart from this, she remains a complete blank in our knowledge. Can you remember her?

## **The Buxton Advertiser, the High Peak News, the High Peak Reporter**

Do you like reading old newspapers? Yes! Just the person we're looking for. There are thirty years of the *Buxton Advertiser* waiting for someone like you. About 1,500 copies, on microfilm. Not yet digitised, and with no index.

Similarly, archived copies of the *High Peak News* and the *High Peak Reporter* are available if you don't mind using old technology.

The *Derby Daily Telegraph* and *Derby Evening Telegraph* have been digitised but only up to 1950. Later editions are likely to be important sources.

The Times, 26 May 1950, p. 1.

**DERBYSHIRE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.**  
**WHITE HALL, BUXTON : Open Country Pursuits Centre.**—Applications are invited for the post of **WARDEN**. The Centre will be used for short residential courses for young people in rambling, mountain-walking, rock-climbing and camping. The Warden will act as Director. It will be an advantage if the Warden's wife can fill the post of Housekeeper. Salaries : Warden (A.P.T. V), £520×£15×£20 to £570 plus residence, value £120. Housekeeper : £250×£10 to £350 plus residence, value £100.  
 Further particulars from J. L. LONGLAND, Esq., Director of Education, County Youth Service, 25, St. Mary's Gate, Derby.

# Sought

## **Still awaiting discovery: other artefacts from the age of paper:**

### **White Hall course diaries**

What happened to that diary we made you keep? You didn't like this forced writing practice. You thought it was too much like school. OK, we eventually realised that. But did you keep your diary?

### **White Hall course reports**

White Hall staff spent many hours writing the course reports. They were addressed to school principals. Schools valued them highly. Surely a few have survived? Please check those dusty corners of the office.

It is possible that some schools still have some of these reports but are withholding them for reasons of privacy. The record office could embargo these personal reports if required.

### **Climbing syllabus booklet from the mid-1980s**

### **Map of and notes on Joe's carved number scheme**

DERBYSHIRE Education Committee:  
 White Hall, Buxton. Married couple reqd. for cooking and housework in the Derbyshire Education Committee's new Centre for Open Country Pursuits three miles outside Buxton. Some help with rough work. Residential post very suitable for people fond of moorland country and young people. Comfortable accom. but no room for children. Salary in accordance with Ancillary Staffs Council, at present £5 and £4/7/- less 23/- each for board and accommodation. —Apply as soon as possible to Mrs. P. Mosedale, White Hall, Manchester-rd., Buxton. 298c

Derby Evening Telegraph, Fri 15 Dec 1950, p. 10.



## Did you know?

### ***Janus and the Spectator***

In April 1950, the Buxton Liberal Association strongly criticised Derbyshire education committee's plans to set up an outdoor pursuits centre at White Hall 'when normal schools were crying out for a mere hut to accommodate an increasing number of scholars'. The Liberals' criticism came to the attention of Wilson Harris, the long-serving editor of the *Spectator*, the Conservative-leaning weekly magazine of news and current affairs. The *Spectator* was widely known for its essays on political and literary issues. Harris was a witty and incisive commentator on public affairs, who for eighteen years had helped the *Spectator* to retain a greater influence than its circulation suggested. In the issue of 14 April 1950, writing under the pseudonym Janus, Harris supported the Liberal Association's severe criticism of Derbyshire education committee and he added some further concerns.

In questioning the place of climbing in education, Harris was running true to form. In April 1949 he had used his column to express the opinion that all guideless climbing in the Alps should be banned.

The correspondence on the White Hall issue in the *Spectator* letters column comprised five letters published from May to August 1950. One of these was a detailed response from Jack Longland.

After August 1950, the criticism from the direction of London died away, but a faction of local politicians and possibly one or two officials remained opposed to the county council running a residential outdoor pursuits centre. Jack Longland and White Hall's first two wardens, Peter Mosedale and Geoffrey Sutton, worked frequently to improve the public's understanding of outdoor pursuits and to enhance the centre's standing.

## Did you know?

### ***Boy-centred***

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, written accounts of young people taking part in adventurous outdoor pursuits were dominated by the word 'boys'.

An indication of the boy-centred influences at work is that Percy Blandford, whose 1950s canoe designs spread around the world, had learnt much of his canoe handling skill and canoe design know-how from the *Boy's Own Paper* and from a *B.O.P.* book on canoeing.

The bias lingered on into the 1950s and 1960s. Writing about the White Hall activities of those years, Ken Oldham (in private papers) and Joe Brown (in *The Hard Years*) wrote exclusively of groups of boys. In doing so, their accounts matched the predominant style of accounts of outdoor pursuits from the previous fifty years.

But White Hall was very clearly intended for mixed groups from the start. As early as 1949, Jack Longland was saying 'the mansion will accommodate about 20 boys and girls'.

A noticeable feature of the 1957 TV film *Climbing* and of the 1958 TV Midland News film clip is that in the climbing footage of Windgather and Castle Naze, girls are as prominent as boys.

Sheffield Daily Telegraph  
Thursday 28 Dec 1950, p. 3.

# BOY OF 14 TO TRAIN TOUGH CLIMBERS

**J**OHN LONGLAND, of Crich, Derbyshire, is only 14 years old, but already he has many of the most difficult rock and mountain climbs in North Wales, the Lake District, and the High Peak to his credit.

On Friday he will help his father, Jack L. Longland, Mount Everest climber, to coach the first batch of pupils in mountaineering at Derbyshire Education Committee's new open country pursuit centre at Buxton.

First pupils at the centre, Whitehall, a former hotel standing high on the moors on the edge of the new Peak national park, will be 25 county grammar school boys aged 15 years and over.

## Long Weekend

They will spend a long weekend toughening up in the wintry conditions, learning something of the preparations necessary for tackling difficult mountain and rock climbs, compass reading and route mapping, ski-ing, and climbing some of the local rock faces.

The idea behind the course is to harden the young pupils and to cultivate initiative and a sense of leadership and responsibility.

Warden of the centre is Peter Mosedale, aged 35, a member of the climbing club which instructed in mountain warfare at home and overseas during the last war.

Mr. Jack Longland, aged 45, who is the director of education for Derbyshire, and who has helped to establish Whitehall in the face of much public opposition, said last night: "This centre represents an advance in the physical and general education of normal children and young people."

"Our wilder national playgrounds, like the High Peak, offer disciplines of adventure and self reliance, which are of high educational value."

**White Hall Centre greeted its first course members and voluntary instructors on the evening of Friday 29 December 1950..**

THE FIRST NATIONAL PARK: Peak Designated  
Our London Staff  
*The Manchester Guardian* (1901-1959); Dec 29, 1950;  
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian (1821-2003) and The Observer  
pg. 3

## THE FIRST NATIONAL PARK

### Peak Designated

From our London Staff

FLEET STREET, THURSDAY.

The chairman of the National Parks Commission, Sir Patrick Duff, to-day signed the designation order for the **Peak National Park**. This is the first order to be made under the **National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act**, which was passed on December 16, 1949. The order will shortly be submitted to the Minister of Town and Country Planning, who will make the final decision on the boundary of the park. Copies will be available for public inspection in all local authority areas in the Peak district until February 10; objections to the plan will result in local inquiries or other hearings.

Designation orders for the Lake District and Snowdonia national parks, Sir Patrick said, were to be submitted within the next few weeks. The commission was awaiting the production of the necessary maps. Local authorities, he added, were also being consulted now about the Dartmoor national park. It was hoped to have three or more other areas designated in 1951.

### PUBLIC ACCESS

Sir Patrick said that the mere act of designation meant no change. The land remained in the hands of the present owners. Later, of course, there would be **access agreements, and, if necessary, access orders, in order to allow public passage over land in the park**. No such order could apply to land in cultivation, and there was no reason at all why designation should interfere with farming activities.

Mr Tom Stephenson said later that detailed maps of the Pennine Way, from **Kinder Scout** in Derbyshire to the Scottish border, would shortly be going to the Minister for his approval. Seventy miles of new footpath would be needed, mostly in the south of the area. Other footpaths on which the commission is working are those round the Pembrokeshire coast, along 176 miles of the Thames, from Canterbury to Winchester, from Winchester to Beachy Head, and one round the Cornish coast which would join the Devon and Dorset coastal paths.