

Getting a feel for the landscape: the Peak District



Landscape of the Peak District.

Source: [wikipedia](#)

My first two months working on the project started off with several expeditions to the Peak District. These included a visit to the Mining Museum at Matlock Bath, where I stocked up on books and explored inside the Temple Mine; a talk on the geology and mineralisation of the Peak District at Buxton; and a visit to the Derwent Valley Mills UNESCO Heritage site to see Richard Arkwright's cotton mills, the first of which made use of the Cromford Sough. These fieldtrips also allowed me to visit the lovely Chatsworth estate, where I learned about water landscaping and enjoyed the autumn colours.



Richard Arkwright and Co, Masson Mills, Derbyshire. Source: [Wikipedia](#)

Getting a feel for the physical landscape and the sites I will be researching provided a good background to help me get stuck in the literature on soughs and the history of Derbyshire lead mining. Much of the work on soughs is written by geologists who surveyed the mines in the 1960s and 1970s, when they were still active as fluorspar mines. They collected a wealth of

knowledge about the physical characteristics of the soughs, but no environmental history drawing out the connections between trades and people that these features represent. At same time, and still ongoing, I am reading about the social history of the Peak District, especially its mining industry and the mills and cotton legacy along the river Derwent.

On 12 November Georgina and I had the honour to meet Dr Jim Rieuwerts, who has been researching Derbyshire mines and soughs for 60 years and is still going strong. Jim imparted some of his encyclopedic knowledge on everything related to the history of Derbyshire lead mining to us, and proved great company to boot. He was very supportive of our project and suggested several cases of conflicts surrounding the soughs that we can use as case studies to look into the different stakeholders involved. In the afternoon we took Jim to the University of Nottingham's Special Collections for him to see an early eighteenth-century document he hadn't been able to access before, which made the trip useful for him as well. Jim was an absolute wealth of information and I am still following up on leads that came up during this meeting.

On 3 December Georgina and I visited the Peak District National Park Authority's office in Bakewell, where we met Ken Smith and John Barnatt. The PDNPA have agreed to collaborate on the sough-strand of the project (together with the Derwent Valley Mills UNESCO heritage site). Together we identified which soughs would be useful for them to know more about. As there are current issues around the implications of soughs around the Lathkindale Site of Special Scientific Interest and how they affect the water level of the river they are keen to hear about its history and how changes in water levels affected local people. This site was on our list of conflicts from Jim so it will definitely become one of our case studies. Ken and John also showed us some of their collections. The PDNPA has conducted research into landscape changes over time in the Peak District, and has tons of information available which they were very happy to let us have access to. I did not realise that institutions like these did so much original research so this was a great discovery for the project!

The last week before Christmas will be spend on identifying appropriate archival sources for the soughs conflicts that we aim to focus on, and I am looking forward to get into the archives in January.

Source: <http://powerwaterproject.net/?cat=3>