



19 INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

... our countryside and the landscape are a result of a dynamic and delicate balance.

The landscape of Stainforth attracts many visitors. Its appearance, plant and animal life owe much to the underlying geology but man's influence is to be seen on every side. The evidence of farming from medieval times to the present day can still be traced on our hills and fields. Place names pay tribute to the languages of those, long forgotten, who cut down trees, drained the land and worked to increase its fertility. Sheep grazing, with close cropping of grass, has maintained large tracts of open grassland and prevented the encroachment of scrub, moor and woodland.

Hill farming is currently uneconomic. BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy or 'mad cow disease'), the removal of subsidies from sheep and historically low prices for milk have combined to render hill and tenant farming a marginal activity. Whether one blames supermarkets for forcing down prices or the Common Agricultural Policy and subsidies, or the lack of them, the effect is clear: farm gate prices no longer provide an adequate return for the capital and labour invested. Without long-term financial viability for farming, farmers' custodial role in preserving our countryside will be lost. European and Lottery funding provide sporadic help in the short term, but they are unlikely to make more than a small impact, given the uncertain duration of grant funding over the longer term.

Quarrying of coal and limestone for lime burning have provided past employment. Only quarrying for aggregates for road building now provides significant local employment. There is a negative impact on the scenery, but agreements about reinstatement and landscaping of the quarry sites have recently been negotiated in return for extensions of existing quarrying licences, which had no such requirements. Road transport of aggregates also impacts on Stainforth and more widely. Nevertheless, monitoring and consultation mechanisms between local councils, quarry and haulage operators should ameliorate the worst effects whilst maintaining an important source of local employment.

Major local industry

Tourism now constitutes the major local industry and this seems likely to continue growing. Settle and Stainforth bypasses have diverted much through traffic out of and away from the village and the impact of tourism appears sustainable at present. The caravan site at Knight Stainforth to date has been well managed and so positioned and screened that it is not imme-

diately apparent from many viewpoints.

Car parking in the village is a problem. Not all visitors choose the car park owned by the Yorkshire Dales National Park, preferring to leave their cars without charge on the roads. On sunny Sundays the area around the Foss on the River Ribble attracts many visitors. Sadly, considerable numbers leave litter, bring radios and seem intent on destroying the tranquillity of the area they are visiting. Obtrusive double yellow lines in the village and on Dog Hill Brow leading down to the river have proved necessary but, despite the efforts of police, these are often ignored. A public footpath alongside the Foss limits action by the landowners and reminders about litter or danger have often been met with abuse. That said, the majority of our visitors are well behaved and take care to follow the country code. We welcome such visitors and hope that this publication will increase their enjoyment of the area in which we live and are justifiably proud.

Resolving conflict

The Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) planning authority has crucial and conflicting roles. It seeks to preserve the buildings, barns and walls and conserve its wildlife and landscape. The authority also has to encourage development in keeping with the Park's character and promote employment and economic development. It is difficult to encourage such development without destroying the very nature of the countryside. Nevertheless, without a viable local economy, residents would simply become quaint exhibits in an open-air museum.

There is a need for all of us to understand that our countryside and the landscape are a result of a dynamic and delicate balance. If we wish to continue to enjoy it, we must all work hard to preserve it, to consider the impact that we are having on it and to accept restraints on the way in which we use it.

As a nation, are we prepared to pay higher prices for perhaps, better +quality, locally produced food to enable those concerned to make an adequate living and so care for and maintain the countryside? This would seem preferable to paying farmers and landowners directly for looking after the land for us, creating a large-scale theme park for the recreational use of a largely urban population.

International, European, national and local government policies on trade, transport, employment and economic development all impact on village life—often in ways which were not those anticipated. What cost do we put on our unspoilt open countryside in our cost benefit analyses? How do we balance the need for transport to work, shops and schools with the effect that increasing use of cars has on our climate? Do we encourage increasing numbers of visitors to the extent that all they see is a series of tarmac car parks, relieved only by tearooms, gift shops and gentrified cottages surrounded by a landscape scarred by the passage of countless feet, trail bikes, motorcycles



Stainforth Residents in 1900 on Stockhill - photo courtesy Brenda Greenbank

and four-wheel drive vehicles?

Village life, pleasant though it undoubtedly still is, is difficult to maintain against external economic forces. We are fortunate in Stainforth in still having a church, village hall, pub, Post Office, garage and working farms. We have a real community. It is not until such institutions disappear that their true worth is recognised. Perhaps those pictured in our Millennium photograph should adopt 'Use it or lose it' as their watchword!

We have tried to trace the long history of our village with habitation going back well before written records began. Each period has left its mark on the landscape and we hope that, with care, future generations will still be able to enjoy living in and visiting Stainforth through the coming millennia.

Our village's story—like our stepping stones—has gaps. Many questions remain unanswered. If readers can add to what we know, we would be pleased to hear from you.



Sainforth Residents in 2000 on the Village Green - photo courtesy Ken Hill, The Studio Settle