

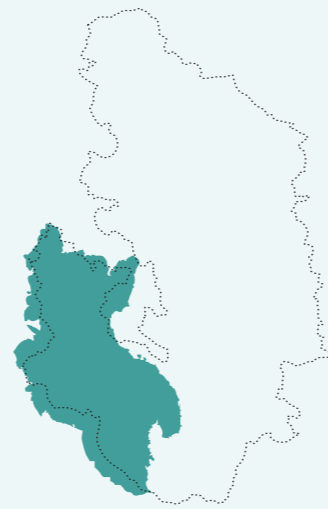
The South West Peak



The Roaches © Peak District National Park Authority

Introduction

The South West Peak is an area of upland and associated foothills in the south-west part of the Peak District National Park. It is bounded by the distinctly different limestone landscapes of the White Peak to the east and the extensive lowlands of the Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain to the west and the Churnet Valley to the south. To the north is the more industrial landscapes of the Dark Peak Western Fringe.



Physical influences

The landscape of the South West Peak has been shaped by the structure and erosion of the underlying Millstone Grit. The sediments were laid down in the Carboniferous era and consist of a cyclic succession of shales, siltstones, and cross-bedded sandstones (locally called gritstones). These represent river sediments deposited in a large delta complex, akin to the Nile Delta today. Sediments were deposited on the summit of the delta and on its moving flanks. As sea level rose and currents shifted, the delta sediments were re-deposited in large gritstone masses which can be seen in the area.

The Millstone Grit is strongly folded in the South West Peak; the dipping beds of gritstone create variation in the landform and define rocky ridges and slopes. The great folds in the rocks have left exposed Coal Measures in some areas, notably in the Goyt Valley and basins such as Goldsitch Moss.

Although the South West Peak was almost certainly covered by glaciers in the early Quaternary (the last two million years), there is little evidence in the landscape today. During the last (Devensian) glaciation, the area was not covered by ice but was strongly affected by the cold conditions on the edge of the ice sheet. These conditions led to rapid erosion of the landscape giving rise to the steep slopes, rocky tors and edges that we see today such as at Ramshaw Rocks and the Roaches. Sediments eroded during these cold conditions were deposited on the valley slopes.

With a rainfall of over 140 cm a year, Axe Edge is one of the major watersheds of England. It is the source of five rivers – the Dove, Manifold, Goyt, Dane and Wye. The rivers and their fast flowing tributaries have cut steep sided rocky

cloughs through the upland landscape which broaden into alluvial valleys in the lowlands. Much of the highest land in the upland area of the South West Peak is covered by deposits of blanket peat, which give a smooth rounded appearance to the landscape. The peat is cut by narrow groughs at the heads of streams.

Ecological influences

The high altitude and heavy rainfall on the moorland hills has created acidic soils dominated by moorland vegetation. On the high moorland plateau of Axe Edge and parts of Goyt's Moss in the north, large areas are covered by blanket bog. The thick peat, which is between 0.5 metres and 2 metres thick, developed during the last 10,000 years, with the maximum growth during a warmer period, 8,000 to 6,500 years ago. Human induced clearance of the landscape and the introduction of grazing animals also played their part. The blanket bogs are characterised by cottongrasses with patches of heather, bilberry and crowberry and support breeding birds such as the golden plover. On the lower moors, where the peat is thin, or there are peaty mineral soils, dry heath is the characteristic habitat with a mixture of dwarf shrubs, especially bilberry and heather. In areas managed for grouse shooting the heath is dominated by heather. These upland heaths support birds such as red grouse, curlew, merlin and short eared owl. Gritstone edges and tors are locally important features of the open moors, most notably along the prominent gritstone ridges of The Roaches and Ramshaw Rocks/Gib Torr, and there are also outcrops of gritstone on steep clough sides. The exposed rock supports important habitats for lichens and ferns.

The rocky outcrops support breeding birds including raven and small numbers of ring ouzel, with wheatear and winchat on

the slopes below. Small patches of willow scrub occur locally in wetter areas on the lower moors, and support a rich flora.

On better land, and where the moorlands have been enclosed and heavily grazed, acid grassland is more common. This is particularly characteristic of the Cheshire hills in the north-west, such as Shutlingsloe, Midgley and Birchenough Hills, Bosley Minn and Sponds Hill. A range of types of acid grassland can be found, with sheep's fescue, common bent and mat grass dominating better-drained slopes. Other grasslands dominated by purple moor grass occur in wetter areas, with extensive examples at Lyme Park. Bracken beds are frequent features of the acid grassland, particularly on dry slopes. The acid grasslands support a range of bird species including curlew, snipe and skylark. Mires are associated with the gently sloping land and upland enclosed pastures.

The steep sided cloughs that cut through the landscape are often characterised by scattered trees or linear woodland. Woodlands are also found in blocks on the slopes in the west of the area and tend to be oak dominated, with some downy birch, silver birch and rowan. Holly and hazel are found in the under storey in the more lowland woodlands. The ground flora includes wavy hair-grass and bilberry. On mineral-rich soils on the lower slopes, a more diverse flora is found with ash in the canopy and a rich ground flora including ramsons, wood anemone and bluebell. Alder occurs along streams. The woodlands support breeding redstart, tree pipit, wood warbler, lesser spotted woodpecker and pied flycatcher. There are also large plantation woodlands in the Goyt Macclesfield Forest which were often planted on former open heath or grassland, although some have replaced semi-natural woodlands and retain natural wooded character in patches near flushes and streams.

In the enclosed farmlands on lower slopes and valleys, there is a strong pastoral character which includes some areas of interesting neutral grasslands. Wet rush-pasture with soft rush and Yorkshire fog is particularly widespread and characteristic, and is important for ground-nesting waders such as curlew, snipe and lapwing. Many areas of pasture have been reseeded and are managed intensively for silage production so unimproved grasslands and hay meadows are relatively rare. The meadows have a range of grasses mixed with oxeye daisy and knapweed, as well as species typical of more northerly meadows such as great burnet and lady's mantle. Acid fescue-bent pastures can support a rich flora including local species such as moonwort and mountain pansy. Fields are often enclosed by hedgerows on the lower slopes, including some mixed species hedgerows with holly.

Acid and basic flushes occur as small features in the cloughs and along the river valleys of the main moorland areas and can support very diverse plant assemblages. Many upland streams with rocky beds rise on moorland edge, some with rich moss and lichen communities. These streams broaden as they reach the lower slopes and are associated with streamline alder. In places large reservoirs have been established that can often be associated with marshes around inlet streams associated with various rushes, tufted hair-grass, marsh bedstraw and water mint.

Human influences

Archaeological evidence suggests occupation of the area from prehistoric times. There is evidence of Neolithic settlement from excavations at Lismore Fields near Buxton. A few Bronze Age barrows survive on hill tops and other

high ground, usually above the range of prehistoric cultivation.

Today, settlement is dispersed throughout the landscape and this is undoubtedly an ancient pattern established in medieval times or perhaps earlier. However, it is often difficult to date individual farmsteads and their fields. It would not be surprising if there is an equal number of farmsteads newly established as populations grew in post-medieval times, both near the older ones and on less advantageous ground. Irrespective of date, the farmsteads are usually surrounded by irregular and sub-rectangular fields which have been created and modified over the generations by individual farmers rather than having been planned communally or by large estates. Farmsteads and smallholdings that have a clear relationship to common land are significant. There is an exceptionally high survival of historic farmsteads in this area.

Although medieval farmsteads would originally have been cruck-framed buildings, these were normally rebuilt during the 17th to 19th centuries, usually using local gritstone and stone tiled or thatched roofs. Staffordshire blue clay tiles are an important roofing material in the more lowland landscapes to the west. The rebuilding in stone often makes it difficult to establish which farmsteads have medieval origins given the frequent absence of historical documentation.

In the northern half of the South West Peak, settlement may well have been inhibited until later medieval times, because of the existence of three medieval hunting forests: Macclesfield Forest in Cheshire, Malbanc Frith in Staffordshire, and part of the Royal Forest of the Peak in Derbyshire. Nucleated villages are not common, with only the old market village of Longnor and the small settlement of Sheen to the north and a series of four larger villages further south at the edge of the limestone plateau. All

but Sheen have field walls that define once open strips within medieval open fields but each of these village areas also has outlying farmsteads of a variety of dates.

Throughout the majority of the South West Peak fields tend to be small to medium in size and irregular to sub-rectangular in shape, reflecting piecemeal development over time by individual farmers rather than planning by village communities and large estates. Piecemeal enclosure presumably began in medieval times and continued to encroach onto the former open moorlands in particular in the 18th century and sometimes the 19th century.

Roads and tracks cross the landscape and in places rise to cross the high upland core. Some tracks link upland grazing to lowland settlements, while others are former transport routes. Some old disused tracks can be seen as braided hollow-ways cutting across slopes. In places 18th century roads follow almost direct routes, while elsewhere such roads were abandoned and more sinuous replacements were built in the early 19th century to avoid steep gradients which wagons could not negotiate in winter.

Coal mining took place in this area from the medieval period to the early 20th century and there are extensive 17th to 19th century remains in the northern half of the South West Peak. The coal seams were thin and of poor quality, and while extensively worked for local industrial and domestic markets, the mines tended to be relatively shallow and accessed by a multitude of small shafts, with less common adits and short drainage levels. It was not normally economic to install expensive infrastructure to remove significant amounts of water to enable mining at greater depth. One exception was the Duke of Devonshire's mines



Upper Valley Pasture, Hulme End © Peak District National Park Authority

south-west of Buxton, at Goyt's Moss and Thatch Marsh, which were accessed by both deep shafts with steam engines, and long drainage and haulage tunnels driven from Burbage; these provided coal for the lucrative lime burning industry at nearby Grin Hill. Occasional quarries for building stone and roofing slates can also be found through the area, often in remote moorland locations. These industries shaped the patterns of settlement: the additional livelihoods from mining and quarrying allowed much denser settlement of agriculturally poor land, particularly in the area around Flash. Copper was worked in this region. Water power was harnessed on the Goyt and Etherow rivers to power cotton mills.

The current agricultural economy of the area is based upon stock rearing of sheep and cattle, with dairying more common on the lower land. Traditionally the moorlands were used by communities for summer grazing, with peat, heather and bracken cut for fuel. Substantial amounts of moorland were enclosed in the 18th and

19th centuries, particularly in the south of the area. On the high upland plateau today there are extensive areas of rough grazing with some areas managed for grouse shooting. Where the moorland has been enclosed there is a complex mosaic of rough grazing and improved permanent pasture. The enclosed farmland on the lower hills is predominantly permanent grassland which varies in intensity of use from long term leys to unimproved rough grazing. The complex pattern of different agricultural management regimes is a key aspect of the South West Peak landscape.

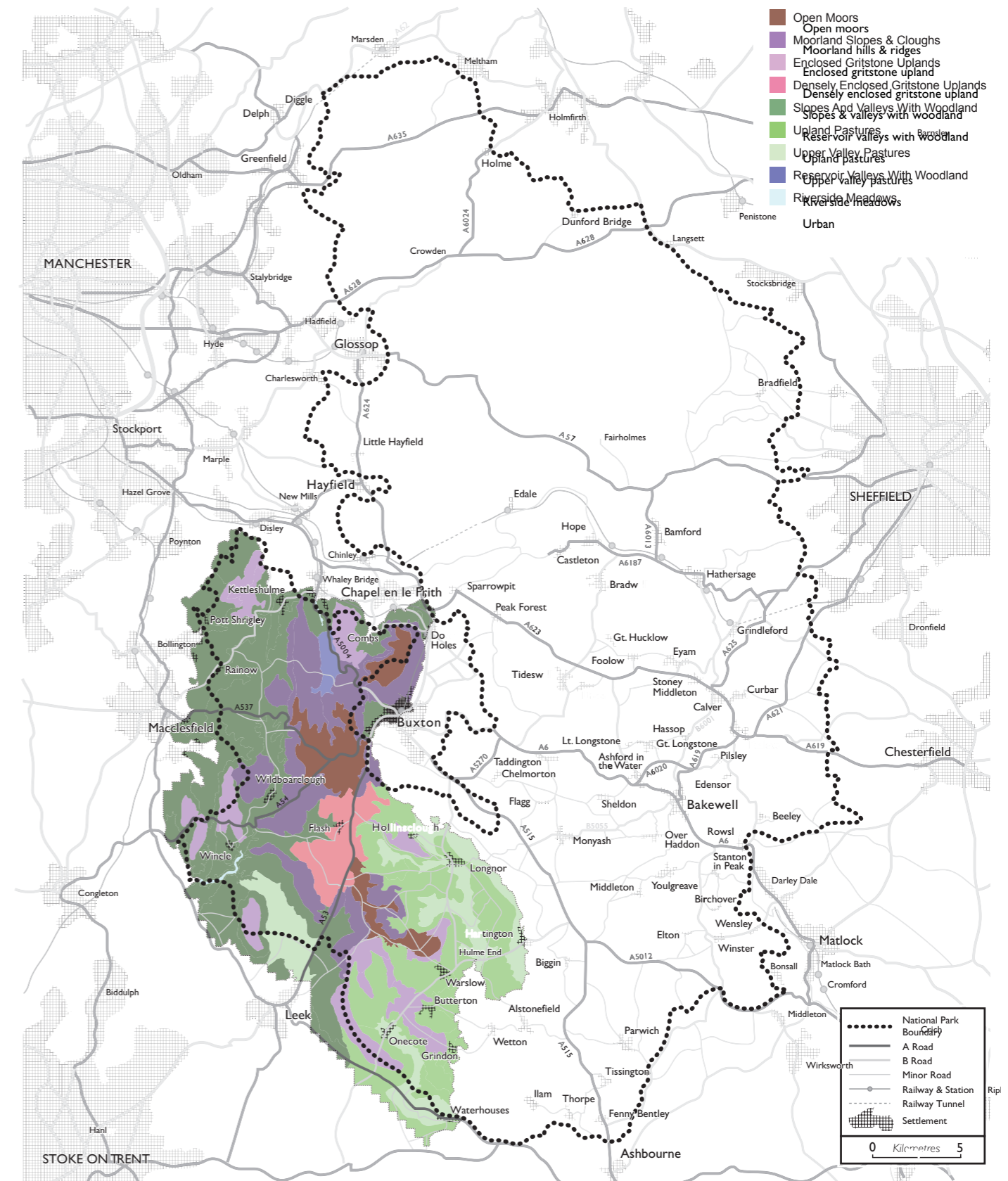
Sense of place

The South West Peak is a diverse landscape with a high, moorland core which is flanked by sloping landscapes, dissected by cloughs that broaden into more lowland pastoral landscapes. The strong contrast between the upland and lowland landscapes creates a distinctive sense of place. The high moorland landscapes are dominated by

wild exposed blanket bog and dry heath which has, in places, been enclosed by gritstone walls, often into large parcels. There are distant views from the hills, both into the Peak District and over the adjoining lowlands to the west and a strong sense of wildness, remoteness and tranquillity.

Lower slopes and valleys are more settled with dispersed gritstone farmsteads, occasional small villages and smaller fields enclosed by gritstone walls and some hedgerows. There is a strong pastoral character in the lowlands to the west, the scattered trees along watercourses and boundaries create a sense of enclosure that is rare in the Peak District.

Eight distinct landscape character types have been identified in the South West Peak. They have been defined by their broadly repeating patterns of natural elements and cultural factors:



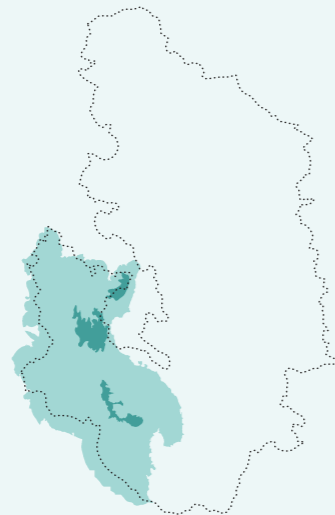
Open moors LCT



Goyt's Moss © Peak District National Park Authority

An open, rolling moorland landscape associated with high gritstone hill summits and broad upland basins. This is a wild, unsettled landscape with extensive areas of blanket bog and patches of dry heath. There are wide views across these moorlands and to surrounding hills. The moorland is crossed by historic transport routes.

This landscape character type occurs in extensive tracts on the highest hill summits and broad upland basins of the South West Peak, including Axe Edge Moor, Shining Tor, Combs Moss and Swallow Moss.



Key characteristics

- Rolling hill summits extending to rounded ridges with wide views to distant hilltops
- Extensive deposits of blanket bog and some thinner peaty mineral soils
- Unenclosed heather moorland extensively grazed by sheep
- Historic transport routes, including packhorse tracks and turnpike roads

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape of high undulating moorland summits. The high ground is underlain by the massive beds of hard Millstone Grit, which is more resistant to weathering than the shales that form the surrounding lower ground.

Blanket bog covers much of this landscape type with peat lying as a mantle over the gently sloping land. The peat is at least half a metre deep and can be up to 2 metres deep in places.

Species and habitats

This landscape is dominated by wild, unenclosed heath and blanket mire. Dwarf shrub heath dominated by heather and bilberry, together with cottongrass blanket mire, provide habitat for the curlew and many other upland birds. On lower ground the peat is thinner and the peaty mineral soils result in dry heath vegetation.

Parts of the moorland are managed for shooting through a combination of regular burning and low level grazing which leads to a dominance of heather.

Tree cover

Due to historic and continuing management practices this is mostly an open landscape with limited areas of tree cover. There are some patches of scrub regenerating on the open moorland which tends to be dominated by birch, grey willow and some rowan.

Land use

This is a rough grazing landscape that supports extensive stock rearing. There are some enclosed pastures on lower land, many reverting to moorland but there are also areas of improved land in enclosures near to farmsteads. Moorland management for shooting is also practiced in parts of the area. Extensive relics of past coal mining and some sandstone quarrying exist on Combs Moss, Goyt's Moss and west of Axe Edge. The coal mining bell pits on Goyt's Moss have 17th-century origins and are of national importance; they helped to sustain the expansion of industry in Buxton.

Enclosure

This landscape is characterised by extensive areas of unenclosed moorland with only occasional gritstone drystone walls defining ownership boundaries. There are occasional areas of enclosed land that encroach onto the moorland from adjacent landscapes, including Parliamentary Enclosure and older enclosure.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

A handful of prehistoric monuments occupy highpoints in this moorland landscape with commanding views over the surrounding landscape. This includes the Iron Age hillfort of Castle Naze on a rocky spur of Combs Edge. Today this is a largely unsettled landscape, except for occasional isolated roadside dwellings or inns. These are robust buildings constructed of local gritstone with stone slate roofs.

Transport, access and recreation

Although a very remote and largely unsettled landscape there are several major roads crossing the landscape. In places 18th century turnpike roads follow almost direct routes, while elsewhere such roads were abandoned and more sinuous replacements were built in the early 19th century to avoid steep gradients which wagons could not negotiate in winter. There are also remains of many older historic tracks and braided hollow-ways across the moorland marking former transport routes.

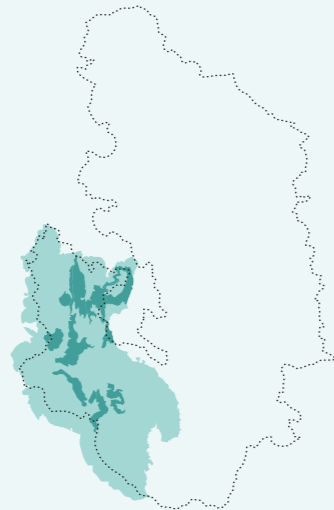
Moorland hills & ridges LCT



The Roaches © Peak District National Park Authority

This is a landscape of steep hill slopes and high ridges with heathland vegetation and prominent outcrops of steeply dipping gritstone. This wild, sparsely settled landscape has panoramic views to surrounding hills and over the lowlands to the west. Drystone walls define large enclosures.

This landscape character type occurs on high hills and slopes along the central spine of the South West Peak. It includes distinctive hill and ridge summits, the steep slopes of the Roaches, Ramshaw Rocks, Shuttlingsloe, Morridge and the steep slopes above the Goyt Valley.



Key characteristics

- Steep hills, slopes and ridges with narrow summits and prominent outcrops of steeply dipping gritstone
- Rough grassland and dry heath extensively grazed by sheep
- Panoramic views to surrounding hills and over the lowlands to the west
- Occasional historic stone quarries, coal mining remains and military training areas

Geology, landform and soils

Steeply dipping beds of Millstone Grit create steep slopes and ridges with prominent rocky exposures. These outcrops are most noticeable at the Roaches and Ramshaw Rocks where they form dramatic features against the skyline. This landscape type includes the steep slopes that rise up to the open moorland summits. This landscape is characterised by poor peaty soils. In places the soils are sandy and free draining.

Species and habitats

The dominant vegetation is dwarf shrub heath with heather and bilberry. Elsewhere there are poorly drained areas, some of which have thicker deposits of peat and there are some areas characterised by cottongrass blanket mire.

Tree cover

Due to historic and continuing grazing pressures there is generally limited tree cover in this exposed landscape, but there are extensive conifer plantations on the western side of the Goyt valley. Thorn bushes mark the course of some former hedgerows and there are occasional patches of willow scrub.

Land use

This is a pastoral farming landscape with patches of rough grazing on heathland. Stock rearing of sheep and cattle predominates. Areas of smaller fields often have improved permanent grassland although some fields are reverting to heathland habitats. There is a large military training area on the sloping moorland to the south east of the Roaches that has controlled access. There are several sites of historic stone and roof slate quarries, while important examples of former coal mines are restricted to the upper Dane Valley, parts of the Goyt Valley and Burbage. There are popular climbing routes on the steep rocky outcrops at the Roaches, Hen Cloud and Ramshaw Rocks.

Enclosure

This landscape was once largely unenclosed moorland but has since been divided by large enclosures bounded by gritstone walls. This is thought to have mostly occurred during the 18th and 19th centuries. As well as the large areas of moorland divided into large parcels, there are areas of smaller fields, some relatively old and others created after Parliamentary Enclosure. Many surviving walls define ownership boundaries and internal walls are often ruined.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

This is a sparsely settled landscape with only occasional isolated farmsteads set into the hill slopes for shelter. Farmsteads are constructed from local gritstone and are roofed with stone slates or Staffordshire blue clay tiles. Presumably most if not all were constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries when the landscape was enclosed. There are frequent sites of lost sheepfolds and outfarms.

Transport, access and recreation

The few roads that cross this landscape often follow historic routes and run at an angle to the slopes, to give a gentler incline. These include roads first built as 18th and 19th century turnpike roads, again with re-routing to avoid earlier un-passable gradients. Some of the initial turnpike roads follow earlier hollow-way routes. There are patches of open access land associated with the areas of heathland.

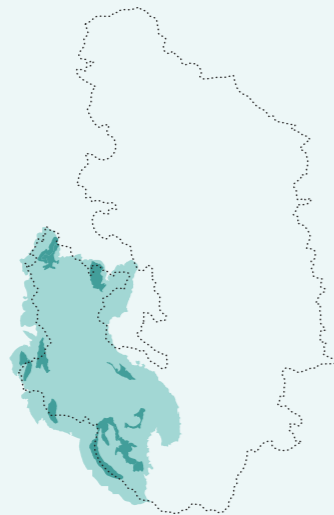
Enclosed gritstone upland LCT



Near Wainstones © Peak District National Park Authority

An open landscape associated with broad, rolling hill summits. This is a landscape of isolated stone farmsteads, straight roads, regular fields of variable sizes enclosed by drystone walls and patches of remnant dry heath.

This landscape character type occurs on the lower hill summits across the South West Peak around the fringes of the highest upland core, including Sponds Hill, Gun Hill, Butterton Moor and the southern part of Morridge.



Key characteristics

- High rolling hill summits
- Permanent pasture with regular patterns of different sized fields enclosed by gritstone walls
- Remnant patches of rough land with bracken and gorse and some heather
- Straight roads with wide grass verges
- Isolated gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape of relatively high rolling hill summits which in places form rounded ridge summits. The high ground is underlain by the hard Millstone Grit, which is more resistant to weathering than the shales that form the surrounding lower ground. The beds of the gritstone are generally inclined and where they dip more steeply, the hill summits are narrower.

This landscape is characterised by poor, peaty soils. In places the soils are sandy and free draining, while elsewhere there are poorly draining areas, some of which have thicker deposits of peat.

Species and habitats

There are signs of the moorland origins of this landscape in the remnant vegetation. There are occasional patches of heathland with heather, bilberry, gorse and bracken and remnants of heathland vegetation in the roadside verges. There are areas of acid grassland, the most diverse of which are dominated by sheep's fescue and common bent usually with a mixture of other species. Other areas of grassland are dominated by wavy hair-grass and are often associated with patches of heather and bilberry.

Tree cover

Due to historic and continuing grazing pressure there is little tree cover in this landscape. Trees are mostly limited to tree groups of mature ash and sycamore that shelter farmsteads. There are occasional small blocks of post-war plantation woodland.

Land use

This is a pastoral farming landscape which supports stock rearing and some dairying. There are some areas of rough grazing associated with the areas of dry heath. Important coal mining remains are found on Bakestonedale Moor and Sponds Moor to the north east of Bollington. Lead rakes and bell pits are found near Grindon and Thorncliffe, to the southwest of the area. The parkland at Lyme Park is an important designed landscape which includes significant areas of moorland. It has its origins as a medieval deer park which was landscaped in the 17th and 18th centuries, and later designed parkland and pleasure grounds associated with the hall. The contrast between the grounds around the Hall and the high and wilder parkland beyond, is of great significance.

Enclosure

Much of this landscape was once open moorland but was enclosed, probably mostly during the 18th and 19th centuries. Drystone walls and occasional hedgerows define regular patterns of fields, some of which resulted from Parliamentary Enclosure and others which were enclosed privately. There are also areas of piecemeal enclosure of the moorland from various dates which tend to be more irregular. In parts the enclosures are large and regular and there are also smaller

enclosures with a mixture of regular and irregular shapes, such as those around Hollinsclough and on Butterton Moor.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

There are a number of barrows on the higher ground and ridges and flint artefacts in soils (for example around Leekfrith) attest to prehistoric activity in the area. Several Anglian or medieval routes on the western edge of the area. This is a sparsely settled landscape with only occasional isolated farmsteads. Farmsteads are constructed from local gritstone and are roofed with stone slate or Staffordshire blue clay tiles. Most farmsteads were presumably constructed during the 18th and 19th centuries when the landscape was enclosed.

Transport, access and recreation

The landscape is crossed by direct roads, with uniform verges often containing remnants of heathland vegetation. In areas of Parliamentary Enclosure, roads are often very straight. The road network is supplemented by a network of footpaths that link isolated farmsteads. There are some areas of access land associated with heathland.

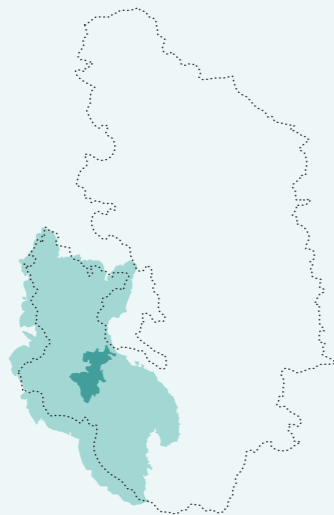
Densely enclosed gritstone upland LCT



Gritstone upland near Flash © Peak District National Park Authority

An undulating upland landscape with occasional rocky summits. There are a significant number of dispersed small gritstone farmsteads and cottages in this remote landscape, some associated with the former coal mining industry. This is a landscape of rough permanent pasture enclosed by gritstone walls. There are patches of heather moorland and areas of pasture reverting to moorland.

This landscape character type occurs in one discrete area in the vicinity of Flash and Goldsitch Moss.



Key characteristics

- Undulating upland landscape with occasional rocky summits
- Permanent pasture enclosed by gritstone walls with patches of heather moorland and areas of pasture reverting to moorland
- Open views over surrounding landscape and to adjacent hills
- Dispersed settlement of small gritstone farmsteads and cottages, some associated with former coal mining industry

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape of high rolling hill summits which, in places, rise to rocky moorland summits. The highest ground is underlain by the hard Millstone Grit. The beds of rock are folded with the younger rocks of the Coal Measures outcropping in the area around Goldsitch Moss. These interbedded gritstones, siltstones and shales have seams of coal. This landscape is characterised by poor peaty soils. In places the soils are sandy and free draining, while elsewhere there are poorly draining areas, some of which have thicker deposits of peat.

Species and habitats

There are signs of the moorland origins of this landscape in the remnant vegetation. There are extensive patches of heathland with heather, bilberry, gorse and bracken. Remnants of heathland vegetation are also found in the roadside verges. There are areas of acid grassland, the most diverse of which are dominated by sheep's fescue and common bent usually with a mixture of other species. Other areas of grassland are dominated by wavy hair-grass and are often associated with patches of heather and bilberry.

Tree cover

Due to historic and continuing grazing pressure there is little tree cover in this landscape. Trees are limited to occasional trees grouped around farmsteads. There are occasional small blocks of 20th century coniferous plantation woodland.

Land use

This is a pastoral farming landscape which supports stock rearing. There are some areas of rough grazing associated with heathland. There are extensive relict coal mines in a band from Orchard Farm southwards to Blue Hills, with a particularly important concentration at Goldsitch Moss.

Enclosure

This landscape was enclosed from open moorland. Map evidence shows that it was mostly already enclosed by the mid 19th century at the latest. The enclosure is likely to be of a variety of dates, mostly in post-medieval times, but some earlier. The enclosure was mainly piecemeal or by private agreement so the field pattern is generally irregular. Gritstone walls define the field boundaries. The enclosure has strong contrasts between small enclosures around farmsteads and cottages, interspersed with larger areas of enclosed moorland and rough grazing.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

Considering the remoteness of this landscape and poor soils, this is a remarkably settled landscape with frequent dispersed small farmsteads and cottages. Buildings are constructed from local gritstone and are roofed with stone slate or Staffordshire blue clay tiles. The most likely explanation for the high density of dwellings in such a remote landscape is that a significant proportion were built to provide housing for people working in the local coal industry, which included small-scale local operations and the somewhat larger scale mines at Danebower, Orchard Common and Goldsitch Moss. The additional income associated with the mining allowed the land to support a larger population than would otherwise be possible. This industry started in the medieval period, was locally at its height in the 18th century and continued into the early 20th century.

Transport, access and recreation

The landscape has a dense network of roads linking the dispersed settlements. Roads tend to be sinuous because the road network was influenced by the topography and the locations of enclosure, dwellings and mines; the key exception is a section of the A53 to the south that follows the course of a Roman Road between Buxton and Penkrige. There is a dense network of footpaths that links the dispersed settlements and there are areas of access land associated with heathland.

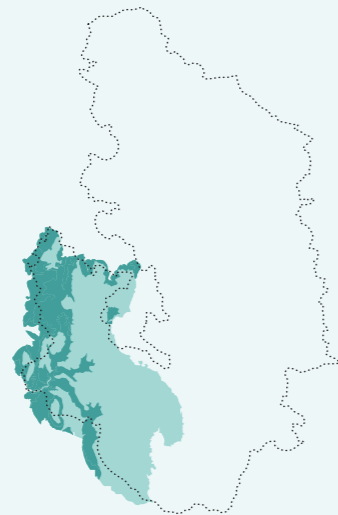
Slopes & valleys with woodland LCT



Dunge Clough © Peak District National Park Authority

This is a pastoral landscape with a varied undulating topography of steep slopes, low ridges and incised valleys. Blocks of woodland are a characteristic feature of this landscape, together with patches of acid grassland and bracken on steeper slopes and higher ground. This is an area of traditional dispersed settlement with probable ancient origins. Views to lower ground are framed by woodlands and valley sides.

This landscape covers extensive tracts of the western slopes of the South West Peak, in the landscapes rising above Macclesfield and Leek.



Key characteristics

- Undulating topography with incised valleys and rounded summits
- Patches of acid grassland on steeper slopes
- Irregular blocks of ancient woodland along cloughs and valley sides
- Permanent pasture in small to medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows and trees
- Narrow winding, often sunken lanes
- Scattered farms and loose clusters of dwellings

Geology, landform and soils

This is an undulating landscape with steeply sloping land underlain by gritstone and incised cloughs which cut into the softer shales below. The undulating landform is shaped by the dipping beds of the Millstone Grit. The lower ground is underlain by shale with some limestone interbedded and there are also some outcrops of Coal Measures.

This landscape is characterised by heavy soils which can be poorly draining. On steeper slopes there are more freely draining, acid soils.

Species and habitats

The oak woodland on the slopes has both sessile and pedunculate oak, mixed with downy and silver birch, holly, rowan and hazel. The acid soil supports bracken, wavy hair-grass and locally bilberry as well as an abundance of ferns. There are patches of alder dominated wet woodland along streams and in wet hollows. On flushed slopes the wet ground often has a layer of mosses, sedges, horsetails and ferns. There is unimproved grassland which can provide for a range of herbs; in

places the grassland is wet, containing soft rush. There are relic patches of dry heath which support heather, bilberry and gorse with some bracken on the steeper slopes.

Tree cover

This landscape has a strongly wooded character which creates filtered views through the landscape. There are woodland blocks along cloughs and slopes, which combine with scattered trees along field boundaries and watercourses and with tree groups around settlements. A lot of the woodlands have presumably existed for many hundreds of years and may have been managed by coppicing to provide wood and charcoal. Woodland blocks, belts and specimens are a notable feature of parkland landscapes such as at Lyme Park. There are large 20th century plantation woodlands, including extensive areas of coniferous woodland at Macclesfield Forest.

Land use

Part of this landscape type falls within the medieval Royal Forest of Macclesfield which still has an influence on the modern landscape. This is a pastoral landscape dominated by stock rearing for sheep and cattle. Due to the often steep topography, the land is difficult to reseed so is usually managed as permanent pasture. On higher ground and on the steepest slopes there are areas of rough grazing. There is ornamental parkland in this landscape at Lyme Park and Swythamley Hall. Important and extensive coal mining and quarrying are found at Kerridge to the south east of Bollington. Traces of late 19th and early 20th-century quarrying is found at Tegg's Nose and Billinge. Some valleys contain evidence for past water-powered industries, for example along the River Dane.

Enclosure

There is limited map evidence showing that parts of this landscape were enclosed in the 17th century. Enclosure was probably relatively common by this date but for most places early maps do not exist to provide evidence of this.

Evidence of tithe maps and Parliamentary Enclosure Award maps show that much of the landscape was already enclosed by the mid 19th century, with many of these areas taken in from open common in the 17th to earlier 19th centuries, while remaining areas of common were enclosed during the 19th century. Fields are generally enclosed by drystone walls, with some mixed hedgerows containing holly and hazel. Hedgerows are more common on lower slopes.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

Occasional barrows occupy higher ground around Bollington and Kettleshulme and a possible hillfort lies to the east of Rainowlow. A scheduled deer pound on the summit of Toot Hill relates to the former Royal Forest. Settlement is very dispersed in this landscape consisting of farmsteads and occasional large houses. In places there are loose clusters of farms and cottages, sometimes more nucleated around a road junction. While some of these places have origins in the medieval period if not earlier, today's buildings mostly date from between the 17th to 19th centuries, are generally constructed of local gritstone and roofed with stone slates or Staffordshire blue clay tiles.

Transport, access and recreation

This is a generally peaceful landscape with small winding lanes which are often sunken on slopes. The lanes are supplemented by a network of footpaths that link dispersed farmsteads.

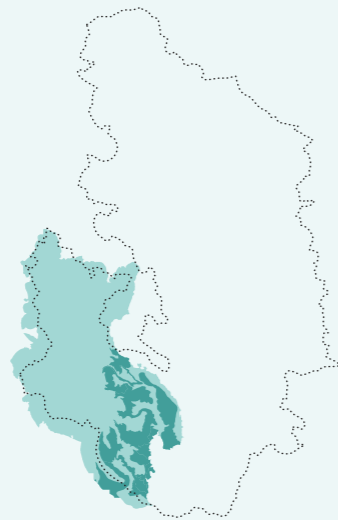
Upland pastures LCT



Looking towards Sheen Hill © Peak District National Park Authority

This is an upland pastoral landscape with a traditional dispersed pattern of gritstone farmsteads of probable ancient origins. There are also localised village settlements. Permanent pasture is enclosed by drystone walls and some hedgerows. Trees are scattered along incised cloughs and around dispersed gritstone farmsteads. This is a very peaceful rural landscape with open views to surrounding higher ground.

This landscape character type occurs on the higher ground towards the southern part of the South West Peak, around Mixon, Warslow, Butterton, Longnor, Hollinsclough and Grindon.



Key characteristics

- Undulating slopes with gentler summits and incised cloughs.
- Dispersed gritstone farmsteads and loose clusters of dwellings, with stone slates or clay tile roofs
- Permanent pasture enclosed by gritstone walls and some thorn hedgerows
- Scattered trees along cloughs and around farmsteads
- Fields of rushy pasture and occasional patches of bracken, bilberry and heather
- Narrow winding lanes which are sunken on slopes
- Various shaped small to medium fields of various dates
- Bronze Age barrows on hills and ridges

Geology, landform and soils

This undulating upland landscape is underlain by a complex mix of interbedded gritstones and shales. There are also areas where thin limestone beds are interbedded with the gritstones and shales. The higher land is defined by thicker beds of gritstone, while the valleys cut through into the softer shale-dominated rocks.

The soils in this landscape are heavy and prone to seasonal waterlogging.

Species and habitats

In places soils are particularly impoverished or peaty which gives rise to remnant patches of wet heath and / or bog. Occasional species-rich pastures and meadows occur. The surviving hay meadows have a range of grasses mixed with oxeye daisy, knapweed, self-heal and ribwort plantain. Wet or marshy grasslands are often characterised by the

grass, Yorkshire fog and have patches of soft rush. There are also occasional fields of acid grassland and localised patches of bracken. Heather and bilberry are found in patches of rough land, particularly in road verges.

Tree cover

Due to historic and continuing grazing pressures tree cover is fairly limited in this landscape. Trees are grouped around settlements for shelter. There are also scattered trees along some field boundaries and watercourses which filter views in places.

Land use

This is a pastoral farming landscape with stock rearing of sheep and cattle and some dairying. Many fields have been highly improved and are cut for silage. Some fields are still cut for hay while other poorer quality pasture has patches of rushes. Parts of the High Priority Lead Mining Landscape of Ecton Mine reaches into this landscape type at Dale Mine in the Manifold Valley.

Enclosure

This is an enclosed landscape with irregular and sub-rectangular shaped fields enclosed by gritstone walls and some hedgerows. Map evidence shows that much of the landscape was already enclosed by the mid 19th century at latest and it is likely that a significant proportion of the enclosures are considerably older than this. However, there are no early maps to demonstrate this. In the areas less favourable for farming, which were often poorly drained, it is possible that many similar enclosures continued to be

created by individual farmers well into post-medieval times as population and farming expanded into former open and wooded areas. Much of the northern half of the Upland Pastures area, on the ridges flanking the upper valleys of the Dove and Manifold, was part of the forest of Malbanc Frith and forest laws may have inhibited settlement until later medieval times. Today, there are also a few areas of narrow strip fields, always near the villages, for example near Longnor and Butterton. These preserve the pattern of medieval open field farming.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

There are numerous Bronze Age barrows on hilltop and hillside locations, with concentrations north of Hulme End, and south of Grindon. This is a settled landscape with dispersed farmsteads, sometimes in loose clusters, and a few villages. Three of the villages flank the limestone plateau and are an extension of the nucleated settlement pattern here. Further north, Longnor is probably a medieval imposition on the dispersed settlement landscape, created to provide a local market place and service centre for the farming community.

Sheen is very small today and is perhaps little different from the hamlet clusters found throughout much of the South West Peak. Settlement on these uplands is often associated with springs. While some places have medieval or earlier origins, today's buildings mostly date from between the 17th to 19th centuries and are constructed of local gritstone with clay tile roofs. There is also some limestone used for the construction of buildings in the areas adjacent to White Peak landscapes.

Transport, access and recreation

This landscape is crossed by narrow sinuous lanes with narrow verges. The lanes are enclosed by drystone walls with occasional hedgerows. Farmsteads are often set back from main through routes on tracks. Roads and tracks can be sunken where they have cut into sloping land. There is a dense network of public footpaths, providing routes through the landscape and linking farmsteads.

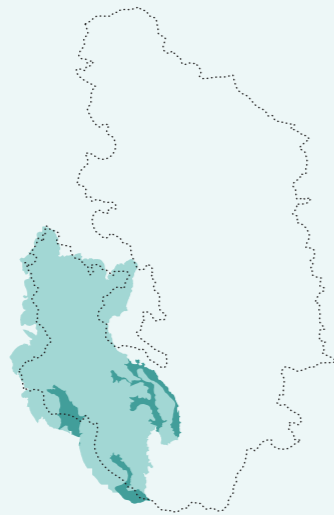
Upper valley pastures LCT



Underhill nr Glutton Bridge © Peak District National Park Authority

This is a settled pastoral valley landscape with scattered trees along hedgerows, around settlements and following streams. Fields of permanent pasture are divided by hedgerows and occasional drystone walls. This is a settled landscape with dispersed gritstone farmsteads with stone or clay tile roofs. Views along the valley and to surrounding hills are filtered through scattered trees.

This landscape is found as discrete valley units in the foothills of the South West Peak. It includes the upper valleys of the River Dove and Manifold, and valleys near Kettlethulme and Combs.



Key characteristics

- Undulating lower valley slopes with incised stream valleys
- Scattered trees along hedgerows, around settlements and alders along incised streams
- A settled landscape with dispersed gritstone farmsteads and loose clusters of dwellings with stone slate or clay tile roofs
- Permanent pasture enclosed by a mixture of drystone walls and hedgerows and patches of rushy pasture
- Narrow winding lanes

Geology, landform and soils

This is a low lying landscape of valley slopes that is framed by surrounding higher ground. The landscape is underlain by soft shale rocks and occasional pockets of sands and gravels. Incised stream valleys create local variation in the landform and in places are fringed by deposits of alluvium.

The soils in this landscape are heavy and prone to seasonal waterlogging.

Species and habitats

There is only limited semi-natural habitat in this farmed landscape. The surviving hay meadows have a range of grasses mixed with oxeye daisy, knapweed, self-heal and ribwort plantain. Wet or marshy grasslands are often characterised by the grass, Yorkshire fog and have patches of soft rush. Alder is found fringing the watercourses, sometimes forming denser wooded belts.

Tree cover

Although there is limited woodland in this landscape, there is often a well-wooded feel due to the many scattered trees along field boundaries, watercourses and around settlement.

Land use

This is a pastoral farming landscape with stock rearing of sheep and cattle and some dairying. Many fields have been highly improved and are cut for silage. There are damp hollows in some fields which have patches of rushes. To the southeast of Hollinsclough and also north of Winkhill are the well-preserved remains of post-medieval water meadows. A group of fields around Beresford Hall may be the remains of a designed parkland.

Enclosure

This is an enclosed landscape with irregular shaped fields enclosed by a mixture of hedgerows and gritstone walls. Hedgerows are mostly dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn but some are more mixed and include holly and hazel. Map evidence shows that much of the landscape was already enclosed by the mid 19th century at latest and it is likely that a significant proportion of the enclosures are considerably older than this. However, there are no early maps to demonstrate this. In the areas less favourable for farming, which were often poorly drained, it would not be surprising if many similar enclosures continued to be created by individual farmers well into post-medieval times as population and farming expanded into former open and wooded areas.

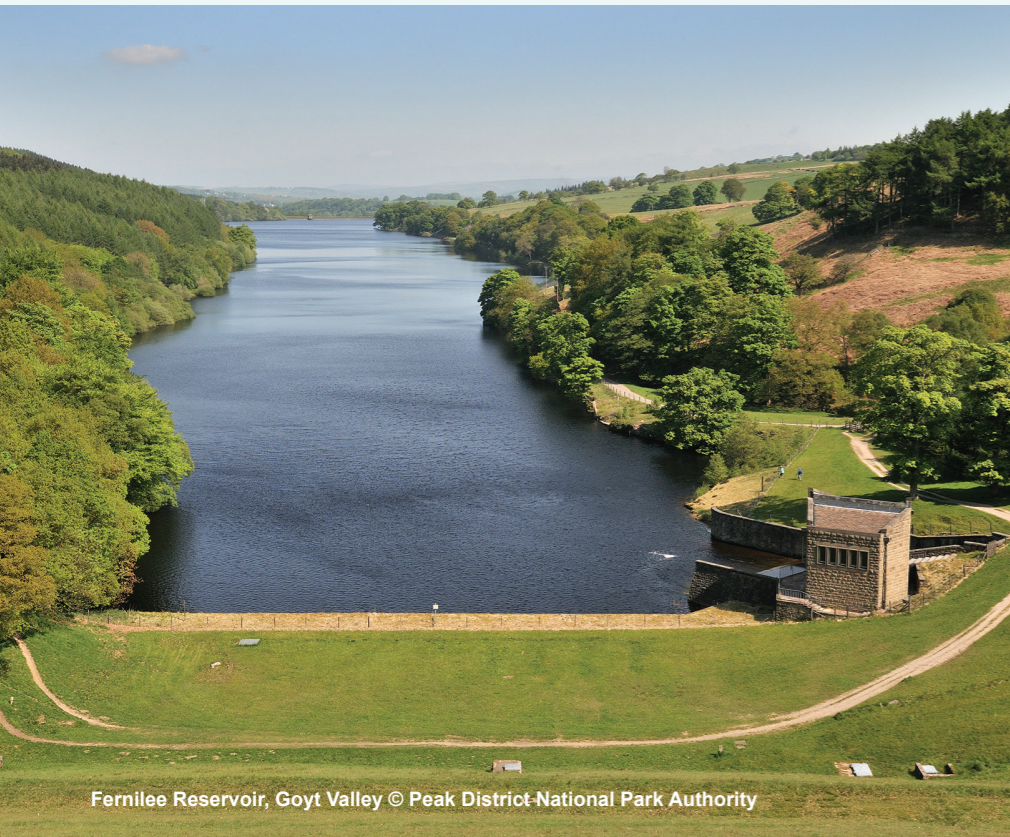
Settlement, buildings and monuments

The motte and bailey castle at Pilsbury holds a commanding valleyside location in the Dove Valley, and other fortified or moated sites further downstream towards Hartington indicate the importance of this valley as a through route and territorial boundary. Settlement is dispersed through the landscape with farmsteads built of local gritstone and often with stone slate roofs. There are also small clusters of farms and cottages, often found at crossing points of the many streams and rivers. Although some places have medieval if not earlier origins, the present buildings date from the 17th to 19th century. Some limestone is found in buildings and walls near to the adjacent White Peak landscapes. Those parts of the valleys of the Dove and Manifold in this character type were part of the forest of Malbanc Frith and forest laws may have inhibited settlement until later medieval times.

Transport, access and recreation

This landscape is crossed by narrow sinuous lanes with narrow verges. The lanes are enclosed by hedgerows or drystone walls. There are public footpaths running along the valleys and connecting outlying farmsteads. The Waterhouses branch of the North Staffordshire Railway runs through the southern part of this landscape.

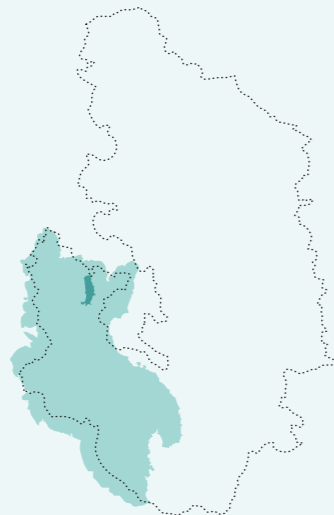
Reservoir valleys with woodland LCT



Fernilee Reservoir, Goyt Valley © Peak District National Park Authority

Steep sided valleys dominated by large reservoirs. Some of the steep valley slopes have been planted with interlocking blocks of coniferous and mixed plantation woodland while others support acid grassland and clough woodlands. Views along the valleys are framed by woodland and the slopes rising to moorland.

This landscape character type occurs in the Goyt Valley.



Key characteristics

- Interlocking coniferous and mixed plantation woodland with some limited semi-natural woodland
- Large reservoirs providing water supplies to adjoining urban areas
- Steep valley slopes, dissected by cloughs
- Land was largely cleared of settlement during reservoir construction leaving occasional isolated gritstone farmsteads
- Pastoral fields bounded by gritstone walls with many relict boundaries

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape with a prominent, sloping topography cutting into the gritstone moorland. The underlying geology is mainly hard interbedded gritstones with, in places, softer shales which give rise to a fairly unified, steeply sloping landform with narrow valley bottoms. In places the slopes are dissected by deep cloughs. Coal Measures also outcrop in the Goyt Valley including interbedded mudstones, shales and sandstones and some coals seams.

The soils tend to be shallow and free draining over gritstone bedrock. Surface water drainage is often impeded by the formation of a thin ironpan and in less steeply sloping areas the soils frequently have a wet peaty surface horizon.

Soils and vegetation

Owing to the poor quality of the soils, this was a landscape with widespread patches of semi-natural vegetation, much of which has now been planted with conifer woodlands. In places patches of ancient semi-natural woodland exist, supporting a range of ground flora species including

bilberry and dog's mercury. There is bracken associated with acid grassland on the sloping land in these landscapes.

Tree cover

This landscape is extensively wooded, mostly recent conifer plantations of pine, spruce and larch, planted on land that was previously open heath, or grassland. Some of the plantations were planted on the site of ancient woodlands that were cleared of native trees. Patches of ancient semi-natural woodland are now linked by the areas of plantation woodland to create a heavily wooded landscape.

Land use

Although there is some low intensity pastoral farming, water supply with forestry and recreation around the reservoirs are the dominant land uses in this landscape. The Goyt Valley was acquired by the Stockport Corporation Waterworks in the early 20th century to construct reservoirs for drinking water. Farmsteads and cottages were cleared and demolished to protect the water catchment area. Historically, coal mining was carried out in the Goyt Valley and remains include shaft mounds, gin circles and causeways between many of the shafts to allow access across wet ground. The extensive ruins of Errwood Hall lie to the southwest of the reservoir. Around it are the remnants of its former parkland and designed landscape, with a variety of woodland types, and a dramatic moorland backdrop.

Enclosure

This is an enclosed landscape with irregular shaped fields enclosed mostly by gritstone walls. Map evidence shows that much of the landscape was already enclosed by the mid 19th century at latest and it is likely that a significant proportion of the enclosures are considerably older than this. The enclosure pattern was rationalised with the establishment of the reservoirs.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

This is not a significantly settled landscape with just occasional isolated gritstone farmsteads. This landscape was formerly more densely settled but was deliberately de-populated in order to establish the reservoirs.

Transport, access and recreation

Several historic routes and tracks lead out from the southern end of the valley, up and over the moorland. The route of the Cromford and High Peak Railway passes through the valley. The road pattern was affected by the establishment of the reservoirs and modern lanes tend to run alongside the reservoirs. There are popular recreational routes around the reservoirs and through the woodland plantations.

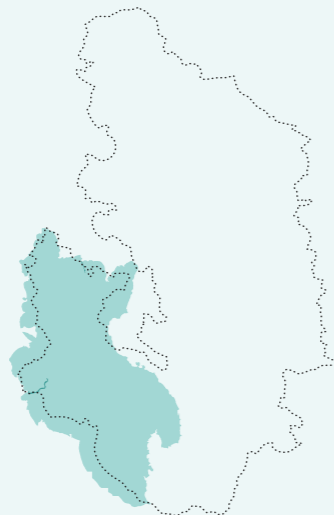
Riverside meadows LCT



River Goyt near Taxal © Peak District National Park Authority

This is a pastoral landscape characterised by a meandering river channel in a flat alluvial floodplain. Views are often tightly framed by lines of riverside trees and adjacent wooded slopes. Patches of wetland vegetation are a distinctive feature associated with the river channel.

This landscape character type is very limited in extent, occurring only as narrow bands along the lower reaches of the River Goyt and the River Dane.



Key characteristics

- A flat alluvial river corridor with a meandering river channel with shingle beds and marginal vegetation
- Seasonally waterlogged alluvial soils
- Grazing meadows, often with patches of wet grassland
- Dense waterside and scattered hedgerow trees

Geology, landform and soils

This is a low lying valley floor landscape with localised hummocks and hollows. Incised, meandering streams with a rocky bed flow through the landscape. Beside the river channel the floodplain is underlain by alluvial mud lying over gravels. There are hollows in the floodplain reflecting the past course of the river.

The floodplain is characterised by gleyed soils that are either continuously or seasonally waterlogged.

Species and habitats

The waterlogged floodplain gives rise to wet pastures which support soft rush, Yorkshire fog grass and some sedges. This is a well wooded landscape with dense streamside trees and small patches of wet woodland which are dominated by alder with some willow.

Tree cover

River banks are densely lined with alder, together with some oak and sycamore. This creates an intimate, well-treed landscape where views are filtered by watercourse trees and framed by the adjacent wooded slopes.

Land use

This is a pastoral landscape with improved permanent pasture dominating. There is some semi-improved grassland. There is evidence for historic use of water-power relating to a former colour works at Danebridge.

Enclosure

Thorn hedgerows and occasional gritstone walls run along the outer edge of the valley floor and divide the meadows beside the watercourses into irregular strips. Early maps show parts of the landscape were enclosed by the early 17th century while later maps shows that much of the rest of the landscape was enclosed by the mid 19th century at latest.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

This is an unsettled landscape because of the wet nature of the soils and the risk of flooding.

Transport, access and recreation

Roads often run along the edge of the valley floor on higher ground and cross the meadows at historic crossing points such as at Danebridge.