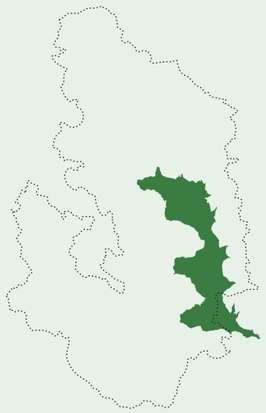
The Derwent Valley

The Derwent Valley © Peak District National Park Authority

Introduction

One of the more conspicuous features of the Peak District is the lower lying landscapes associated with the valley of the River Derwent and its tributaries the Wye and Noe. The Derwent Valley character area separates the limestones of the White Peak from the prominent gritstone edges of the Eastern Moors to the east and high moorland of the Dark Peak to the north. These areas include the broad Hope Valley with the River Noe before flowing southward to pick up the Wye Valley on its route through to Matlock. The Derwent Valley character area also includes the discrete areas of low gritstone uplands and ridges that lie between the Derwent and Wye rivers between Stanton and Hassop. It also includes a much higher and larger gritstone influenced area centred on Abney which is very similar in character to the Eastern Moors.



Physical influences

The physical character of the Derwent Valley is strongly influenced by areas to either side of the river: the Millstone Grit and the underlying shale-dominated beds. The sediments that formed the Millstone Grit were laid down in the Middle Carboniferous period by a series of rivers flowing from the north creating large river deltas. These rivers deposited a cyclic succession of shales, siltstones, and cross-bedded sandstone. The upstanding, higher ground is formed from gritstone, while the valleys and other lower lying areas are cut into softer shales. The higher ground to the eastern side of the Derwent Valley includes the lower gritstone edges such as Curbar and Froggatt Edges. There is also a series of outlying smaller gritstone hills, ridges and shelves to the west. These include Eyam and Abney area, Offerton, Calton Pastures, Stanton Moor and Harthill Moor. The remainder of the area has a lower lying, undulating topography within which lie the alluvial floodplains of the River Derwent and its tributary streams. Evidence of a much earlier course of the River Derwent can be seen in the arc of old river terraces that lie between Pilsley, Bakewell and Rowsley. These are thought to have been formed before the last ice age.

Below Matlock, where the river cuts through the eastern edge of the White Peak limestone, the Derwent Valley narrows and the geology changes to a steep sided limestone gorge.

Ecological influences

The soils in the Derwent Valley character area are variable, reflecting differences in the underlying bedrock and in parts the presence of the glacial and alluvial drift deposits laid down in more recent times. On the gritstone summits of Offerton and Abney, Eyam, Stanton and Hartill Moors, rising above the western side of the valley, shallow mineral soils are often impoverished and have either peaty or sandy topsoils. This has given rise to heather and bilberry heathland on Stanton, Eyam and Offerton Moors, with associated areas of bracken and birch scrub. On Abney Moor the heathland has given way to acid grassland and bracken as a result of prolonged grazing. Gritstone tors are a feature of the southern summits around Stanton, Birchover and Robin Hood's Stride, and in places support a lichen and moss flora of local importance.

Shallow mineral soils are also found on the upper slopes descending from the western gritstone summits, and occur much more extensively as a continuous band along the steep upper eastern slopes of the Derwent Valley, where they often descend from massive gritstone edges dropping from the moorland above. These soils tend to produce agriculturally poor land dominated by woodland and rough or permanent pasture. Steep pastures supporting species-rich acid fescue-bent grassland, bracken, and hawthorn and gorse scrub are typical of Eyam, Hucklow, Bretton and Bradwell Edges, and also occur on the upper slopes on the eastern side of the Derwent valley where they are accompanied by extensive areas of semi-natural upland oak and birch woodland below the gritstone edges. Conifer and mixed plantations occur in places.

Shale-grit tributary valleys on lower lying land around the western gritstone summits, as at Bretton and Abney Cloughs, support a mosaic of habitats including acid and neutral grassland rich in plants and fungi, semi-natural oak-birch woodland, wet alder woodland and wetlands associated with springs, flushes and landslips.

Seasonally waterlogged, gleyed soils are found over the mudstone beds on lower lying land and are utilised as permanent pasture and mowing land. Occasional deposits of fine loamy soils, from till deposited during the last ice age, produce some higher quality pasture. While much of this land in the valley bottoms and gentle lower valley slopes has been heavily improved, particularly in the Hope Valley, remnants of unimproved species-rich neutral pastures and hay meadows survive in places. Species such as yellow rattle, knapweed and oxeye daisy are typical, with sedges, rushes, meadowsweet and marsh marigold in wetter areas. The parklands in the central reaches of the valley are of importance for their mature and veteran trees and associated fungi, lichens and insect life, while ornamental lakes support more typically lowland wildlife. Localised deposits of glacial boulder clay occur between Longstone and Harthill, providing further variation to the floral composition of unimproved grasslands.

Deep, loamy soils have developed over the alluvial deposits on the valley floors. This land is mainly used for permanent pasture, with seasonal flooding allowing the survival of species-rich marshes in places. The main rivers of the Derwent and the lower reaches of the Noe and Wye support birds such as goosander, and an important fish fauna including brown trout, grayling, bullhead and more localised brook lamprey. Alder-lined banks, deeper slower-flowing reaches and shingle beaches all add to the diversity.

Human influences

The open moors of the Derwent Valley character area contain examples of important later prehistoric archaeological remains. These include field boundaries and clearance cairns around farmstead sites; and monuments such as stone circles, barrows, ring cairns and standing stones. Eyam, Offerton and Abney Moors contain typical evidence of these features. Stanton Moor is unusual in having many small funerary cairns as well as a small number of larger monuments, including stone circles, such as the Nine Ladies stone circle, and barrows. These features have survived relatively undisturbed on the moors because there has been upland grazing throughout history, unlike much of the surrounding lower levels where the ground has been disturbed by cultivation. On the lower valley slopes only larger historic features have survived, including Navio ('place by the river'), a Roman fort at Brough and the medieval fortified town of Castleton.

There is no consistent settlement pattern within the Derwent Valley character area. It is as diverse as the soils and geology on which it is founded. Late Saxon royal manors, including Hope, formed the core of extensive areas of royal forest. Most of the current basic pattern of villages and smaller settlement was established by the time of the Norman Conquest. While the moorlands have not been settled since prehistory, and there are some isolated farms in more upland landscapes, these areas all lie within traditional townships which have villages on better land below, and the farmsteads are therefore not truly dispersed but part of a mixed settlement pattern. The density of settlement increases as the agricultural viability of land improves and in the valleys there is a mixture of villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads in a complex interspersed pattern. Late 16th- and early 17th-century gentry houses are a notable feature of this area.

This is an ancient farmed landscape. Some of the dispersed farms on lower land have enclosed fields with medieval origins, while many villages had open fields which were gradually enclosed from later medieval times onwards. Many parts of the farmland continued to evolve through the post-medieval period with field patterns regularly modified by individual farmers and estates in response to changing farming needs. There are a number of planned estate farms associated with the large estate houses. There is a mixed field pattern of small to medium sized fields. Fields on the lower slopes are often enclosed by a mixture of thorn hedges and walls, while on the higher land local gritstone is used in drystone walls. The gritstone moors and parts of the slopes and valleys form large, unenclosed landscapes supporting rough grazing and patches of secondary woodland.

On the upper valley slopes, some areas were taken in from common, but often these were long established woodlands which have survived because the land is steep and boulder strewn, and because woodland has always been an important resource. Historically, woodland was important to communities for grazing and firewood, while later woodlands provided a long-term cash crop for estates. In the 16th to 18th centuries many woodlands were maintained as coppices to provide white coal (kiln dried wood) for the lead smelting industry. The Derwent Valley has long supported a range of industrial activities including quarrying, lead mining and smelting along with harnessing water to power mills.

The gritstone scarps at the top of the Derwent Valley slopes were of particular importance for millstone making from at least the 13th century through to the 20th century. Domed millstones, for grinding wheat, were made along most of the main edges of the Derwent Valley. In the 19th and 20th centuries production changed and stones of different form were produced for milling animal feed, as pulpstones for paper manufacture and as grindstones. Broken and unfinished millstones, pulpstones, troughs and gateposts are still visible in quarries and at the scattered boulders below many of the escarpments. From the 18th century to the present, gritstone quarries around Stanton, Birchover and Stoke Hall have produced high quality building stone, including dressed ashlar, sills and lintels, quoins, troughs and gateposts.

The gritstone scarps were not only used for quarrying gritstone: the high gritstone scarp slope of Hucklow Edge and Eyam Edge contained some of the richest lead mines in the orefield. These were developed from the early 18th century onwards, as one of the major vein complexes was followed eastwards at depth beneath the shale and gritstone. The large waste heaps were extensively reworked for fluorspar in the 20th century. Underground fluorspar mining took place at Glebe Mine, Eyam, Ladywash Mine on the enclosed upland above and at Milldam Mine, Great Hucklow. Further south, Millclose Mine, north-west of Darley Bridge, was one of the richest mines in the world in the first half of the 20th century.

Water was used as a form of power for hundreds of years in the Derwent Valley; Domesday Book records flour mills at Bakewell and Ashford. During the 18th century demand for water power increased and several large mills were constructed on the rivers Wye and Derwent. These mills included those at Hathersage and Calver, and Arkwright's mill at Bakewell.

In contrast to this industrial working landscape the Derwent Valley also contains most of the few parkland landscapes that are found within the Peak District. The designed parkland at Chatsworth makes an impact at a landscape scale, transforming this part of the Derwent Valley, while much smaller examples are found at Haddon, Hassop, Thornbridge, Ashford and Stanton. These parks are associated with halls and grand houses dating from the medieval period to the 19th century. Haddon Hall and Chatsworth House are particularly important for their historical and architectural interest, and their surrounding gardens; both are major tourist attractions. Both Chatsworth and Haddon had large medieval deer parks which were removed in the 18th century. At Chatsworth, the medieval deer park to the east of the house was replaced from 1759 by a landscape park in the valley to the west, designed by Capability Brown. This park was created from agricultural land and contains extensive earthworks, making it one of the most important archaeological landscapes in Britain. At Haddon the small park around the hall was not redeveloped until the later 19th century with tree screens added in the 20th century. Hassop and Thornbridge parks were created in the 19th century as much more private places than 18th century Chatsworth, reflecting changing aesthetic fashions.

Braided hollow-ways, often deeply eroded into the land, are visible running up the scarp slopes and across the moorlands, especially across Eyam Moor. While a few of these gave local access to commons, quarries and mines, the majority were through routes of medieval to late 18th century date from the Peak District, across the Eastern Moors, to the lowlands to the east. There were many such routes, for exporting products including lead, millstones and cheese, and for cross-Pennine trade of salt, ceramics and products of the iron and steel centres around Sheffield and Chester field. These traditional routes, many with their distinctive early 18th century waymarkers, were replaced in the 18th and 19th century by the turnpike road network, the basis of the main modern routes in the Derwent Valley character area. Hedges are common alongside some roads, often because these were created as early 19th century turnpikes and hedging was the trust's favoured way of bounding their roads.

Sense of place

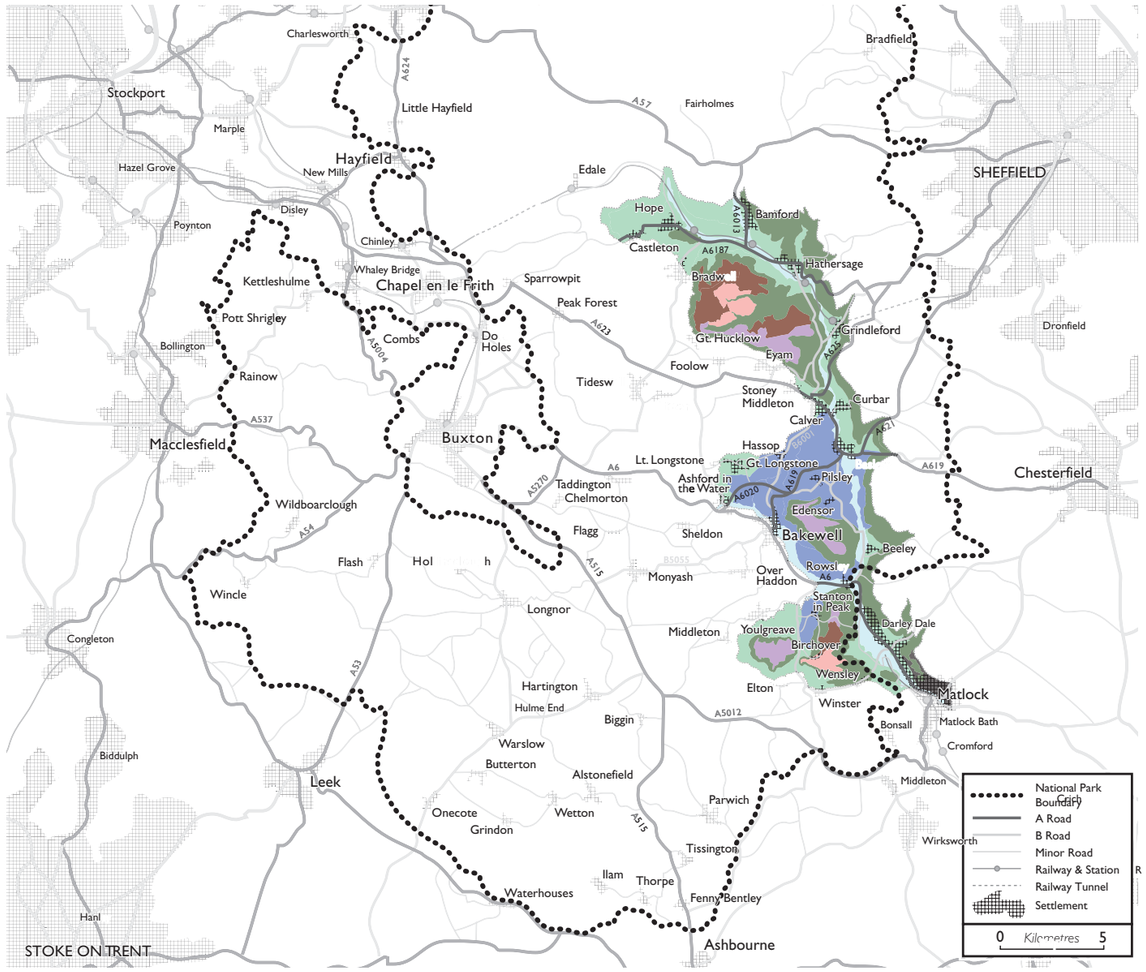
This is a varied landscape of broad meandering rivers with riverside trees and woodlands, wet meadows, hedges and drystone walls, which contrast with the high open rolling moorland of gritstone hills where open views predominate. Plantations, historic halls, manor houses and parkland are all hidden amongst the main valleys and lowlands of undulating uplands and ridges. The rolling open summits are predominantly divided into regular fields by gritstone walls, the exception being Birchill which has hedges. Dense ancient woodlands and plantation woodlands carpet the steep slopes from the Dark Peak plateau, Eastern Moors and hills down to the small pastoral fields with filtered views between scattered hedgerow trees.

The landscapes of historical wealth and power are seen in the open parks and gardens, and well managed estates which dominate the central area of the valley. The largest number of halls and houses including Chatsworth and Haddon can be found in the valley, controlling and defining the landscape.

The one consistent landscape feature running throughout the Derwent Valley character area is its rivers. These include the broad main rivers of the Derwent, Noe, Wye and Lathkill, as well as the smaller streams, which have helped create and define the landscape that we see today. They provide refuges for wildlife, contain historic features and are a major tourist attraction. The rivers provide constant movement and change: one day being sleepy and slow the next raging torrents, bursting their banks. No other character area within the Peak District is as heavily influenced by water.

Seven distinct landscape character types have been identified in the Derwent Valley character area. They have been defined by their broadly repeating patterns of natural elements and cultural factors:

- Open Moors
- Enclosed Gritstone Uplands
- Slopes and Valleys with Woodland
- Gritstone Village Farmlands
- Valley Farmlands With Villages
- Estatelands
- Riverside Meadows



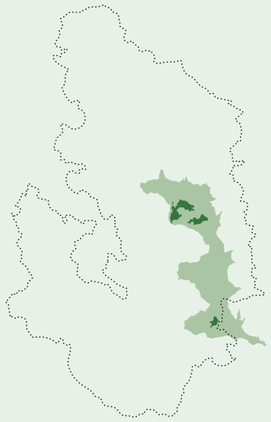

Castleton Valley © Peak District National Park Authority

Open moors LCT

Eyam Moor © Peak District National Park Authority

An open rolling moor and heathland landscape associated with gritstone summits. This is an unsettled landscape with wide views and a sense of remoteness and space.

The open moors are to be found on the highest land within the Derwent Valley character area. They are found at the tops of three gritstone hills: two in the north at Abney and Offerton and Eyam while the third is found near Birchover.



Key characteristics

- Rolling gritstone summits with scattered rock outcrops and tors
- Unenclosed heather moor extensively grazed by sheep with patches of secondary birch woodland and bracken
- Wide views to distant hilltops
- Extensive archaeological evidence of prehistoric and later activity

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape with a high, flat topped topography, associated with gritstone summits. In the Derwent Valley character area these occur as western outliers of the more extensive Eastern Moors. The elevation of these uplands allows for wide open views to distant hills. The underlying bedrock of predominantly Millstone Grit is exposed in places, creating occasional gritstone tors and scarps, especially around the edges of this landscape, where the land often drops away steeply revealing prominent rocky edges.

Impoverished, shallow soils over gritstone bedrock predominate, sometimes with a peaty surface layer.

Species and habitats

There are extensive areas of dry moorland or heath habitat with heather as the dominant species; rocks and boulders are a feature locally. Where areas of the moor have been grazed, grazing tolerant shrubs such as bilberry, crowberry and grasses are more dominant. In places, on the steeper slopes around the edges of the moors, some bracken is found, elsewhere, for example on Stanton Moor, birch woodland has developed.

Tree cover

On Abney, Eyam and Offerton Moors this is generally an open landscape with limited areas of tree cover and expansive views; historical grazing pressures have inhibited tree regeneration. By contrast, on Stanton Moor, there are extensive areas of mature and secondary birch woodland interspersed with oaks.

Land use

Due to poor soils, the land has low agricultural value and rough grazing predominates with extensive grazing by sheep. Small scale stone extraction has taken place on Eyam Moor. In addition on Stanton Moor there are several extensive relict gritstone quarries dating from the 18th to 20th centuries; some are still operating.

Enclosure

This is a largely unenclosed landscape. Where gritstone dry stone walls do occur they have divided the moorland into large moors defined by ownership boundaries.

Settlement, buildings and monuments
Although now an unsettled landscape, there is much evidence of later prehistoric settlement and monuments, particularly on Offerton Moor, Highlow Bank and Eyam Moor. One of the largest and most significant prehistoric landscapes is found on Stanton Moor. These are features which are more commonly found on the Eastern Moors. These include field boundaries and clearance cairns around farmstead sites, and monuments such as stone circles, barrows, ring cairns and standing stones. At Burr Tor there is a prehistoric stock enclosure.

Transport, access and recreation

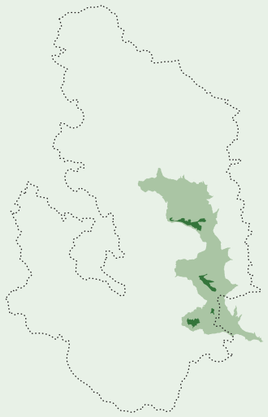
Transport is a limited feature of this landscape character type. This enhances the sense of remoteness because of the absence of roads running through the landscape and the need to access the area on foot. Braided hollow-ways, often deeply eroded into the land, can be seen running across the moorlands, especially across Eyam Moor. These gave local access to commons, quarries and mines and linked settlements to the main packhorse routes to Sheffield and Chester field. Large parts of the open moorland are open access land.

Enclosed gritstone upland LCT

Drystone walls near Abney © Peak District National Park Authority

An enclosed upland landscape associated with high ridges, shelves and former moor tops. This is a landscape of isolated stone farmsteads with regular and irregular fields enclosed by drystone walls with patches of acid grassland. There are scattered mature boundary trees and groups of trees.

Enclosed gritstone uplands can be found in four discrete blocks on hilltops and are, but not exclusively, associated with areas of open moors. They can be found above Stanton, Harthill Moor, around Bretton and on Calton Pastures.



Key characteristics

- Rolling uplands with a pattern of small to medium sized fields of regular and irregular shapes enclosed by gritstone walls
- Scattered mature trees in field boundaries and some tree groups. Remnant patches of rough land with bracken
- Straight roads with wide verges
- Isolated gritstone farmsteads with stone slate roofs with tree groups for shelter
- Important lead mining sites and prehistoric monuments

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape with a high, rolling topography associated with gritstone ridges, shelves and former moor tops. The underlying bedrock of Millstone Grit and some shales is exposed in places to give occasional gritstone tors. The high topography allows wide views to surrounding hills.

Shallow, in places impoverished, loamy soils over gritstone bedrock.

Species and habitats

Land use is mainly permanent pasture with a few isolated fields of ley grassland. There is a mixture of trees including oak, ash and sycamore with thorn scrub. There are isolated patches of acid grassland on the steeper areas and heather is found in old quarries, while bracken is found within roadside verges.

Tree cover

Extensive sheep grazing has restricted tree cover and regeneration in this landscape. However, there are occasional tree groups, generally adjacent to farmsteads and planted to create shelter around properties using broadleaved species such as ash and sycamore. There are thinly scattered mature trees and scrub within some field boundaries. At Calton there are large blocks of woodland within and around the edge of the area, primarily coniferous, while around old quarries on Harthill Moor secondary birch woodland is developing.

Land use

This is a landscape of mainly permanent pasture grazed by sheep. Although sometimes of a similar elevation to the open moors, these former moorlands have mostly been enclosed and farmed from the 18th or 19th centuries, while small areas around Bretton for example have medieval origins. The remains of the 18th century lead mining industry can be seen at numerous locations on the ridge above Eyam; these include Ladywash Mine, New Engine Mine and Broadlow Mine. The local gritstone is prized as a building material and quarrying has taken place from the 18th century to the present day.

Enclosure

For the most part the landscape is enclosed into a pattern of small to medium sized regular and irregular fields divided by gritstone walls of varying ages. For example, many of those close to Bretton and on Shatton Moor are the result of 19th century Parliamentary Enclosure. However, Calton Pastures was landscaped in the 1760s to create an open outer park contemporary with the main park in the valley below, both designed by Capability Brown for the Duke of Devonshire. This involved the removal of original field boundaries on Calton Pastures.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

Settlement is confined to a few scattered isolated farmsteads. While Bretton has existed since the medieval period the buildings have been rebuilt in stone in post-medieval times; other farmsteads are likely to be post-medieval in date. Buildings are gritstone with stone slate roofs.

There are significant clusters of prehistoric monuments on these small enclosed gritstone upland areas. These include a number of barrows and an Iron Age promontory fort on the ridge above Calton Pastures, and a stone circle, rock art, barrows and defended prehistoric enclosures near the distinctive rocky outcrop of Robin Hood's Stride. The gritstone tors were important landscape foci during the prehistoric period.

Transport, access and recreation

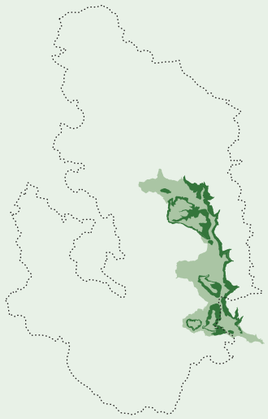
There are a few minor roads that run through several of these areas. The Sir William Hill road is part of an important 1758 turnpike road that followed an earlier hollow-way route. The new road was superseded by more convenient turnpike roads in the valley below in the early 19th century. There are numerous public footpaths and bridleways linking farmsteads, and historic trackways giving access to local quarries and fields.

Slopes & valleys with woodland LCT

Near Birchover © Peak District National Park Authority

A pastoral landscape with interlocking blocks of ancient and secondary woodland. On the tops of steeper slopes gritstone edges with boulder slopes below are a prominent feature and there are patches of semi-improved and acid grasslands with bracken on steeper slopes.

Wooded slopes and side valleys can be found on most of the steep gritstone slopes throughout the Derwent Valley character area. They are most common on the west facing slopes that form the eastern edge of the Derwent Valley and run in a continuous strip from the Derwent reservoirs to Matlock. They are also found below Stanton, Eyam and Abney Moors. In the latter area they include Abney and Bretton Clough.



Key characteristics

- A steeply sloping landform with gritstone edges characterising the tops of steeper slopes
- Patches and extensive areas of semi-improved and acid grasslands with patches of bracken and gorse. Irregular blocks of ancient and secondary woodland. Permanent pasture in small fields enclosed by hedges and gritstone walls
- Narrow winding, often sunken lanes
- Scattered gritstone farmsteads and loose clusters of dwellings

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape with a prominent, sloping topography on the edge of the Eastern Moors and around the series of outlying gritstone uplands and ridges within the Derwent Valley character area. The underlying geology is a mixture of shales and interbedded gritstone, this gives a mixture of dissected, undulating landforms with, in places, long continuous sweeps of landform. Sometimes, along the upper edge of the valley side, gritstone outcrops form a series of vertical cliff-like faces, known as edges. Some of these edges have been modified by quarrying; this occurs particularly between Chatsworth and Hathersage. Locally the failure of the interbedded shales has given rise to characteristic landslip landscapes, for example in Bretton Clough. On Eyam and Bradwell Edge the shales overlie limestone that contain a series of mineral veins.

Soils are varied within this character type, reflecting the mix of underlying rock types. They comprise both slowly permeable, gleyed soils containing localised rocky patches over shale and shallower, free- draining soils, including patches of impoverished land, over gritstone. Small streams and wet flushes often occur at the junction of shales and gritstone. Boulder strewn areas are features of the upper slopes.

Species and habitats

Main tree species are ash and oak with a few blocks of coniferous woodland planted on estate land. There is often good woodland ground flora reflecting continuous woodland cover for hundreds of years. There are frequent fields of semi-improved and acid grasslands, with bracken and gorse on steeper slopes. Fields of improved grassland are found on the easily accessible areas.

Tree cover

Large interlocking, in places extensive, blocks of woodland and mature boundary trees are a continuous feature throughout this landscape type. Woodland is predominantly secondary and ancient with some blocks of coniferous plantation. There is evidence that these woodlands were important for high quality timber and as coppiced woodland for white coal (kiln dried wood), used for lead smelting from the 16th to 18th centuries. The influence of the estates on the wooded slopes is extensive; much is still owned by Chatsworth, Haddon and Stanton estates. Interlocking blocks combine with the sloping landform to frame views within this landscape character type.

Land use

The combination of steep, often boulder strewn, slopes and poor soils mean that much of this land has never been suitable for arable or intensive pastoral farming: woodland and rough grazing has dominated the landscape for centuries. Historically, woodland was important for grazing and fuel; in the 16th to 19th centuries many woodlands were maintained as coppices for the production of white coal for the lead smelting industry. Occasionally, due to land ownership and better ground conditions, there are a few improved fields where the intensity of use increases. Many of the edges, in particular Gardom's, Curbar and Froggatt Edges, have relict gritstone quarries that produced millstones and other items from the medieval period to the 19th and 20th centuries. Above Grindleford, a former millstone quarry at Bole Hill was extended greatly to produce stone for the construction of the Derwent and Howden reservoirs at the beginning of the 20th century. Lead mining sites are located on the slopes above Eyam, Winster and Wensley; these lie along the junction of the limestone and sandstone geologies.

Enclosure

There is a mixture of small to medium sized regular and irregular shaped fields in small areas between woodlands. In places, particularly above Bamford, Hathersage, Baslow and Beeley Hilltop, larger areas of fields can be found. Many of these fields are essentially unimproved, potentially of medieval or early post-medieval date.

On steeper slopes some of the irregular enclosures may be ancient, associated with scattered individual medieval farmsteads rather than the villages with a more communal form of agriculture. Fields are enclosed by a mixture of thorn hedges and gritstone walls.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

Settlement generally consists of scattered or isolated gritstone farms and dwellings with stone slate roofs. Some of the farmsteads have medieval origins, while others were built later; all have been rebuilt in stone from the 17th century onwards. To the south, around Upper Hackney, Darley Hillside and Northwood, there is a more dense and clustered pattern of hamlets on the slopes with wayside dwellings and scattered farms, together with 20th century housing. At Birchover, the rocky tor of Rowtor Rocks was modified, probably in the 19th century, to create a curious pleasure garden of rock-cut steps, caves and seats. The prominent site is likely to have been visited since prehistoric times.

Transport, access and recreation

There is a network of narrow winding lanes, often sunken, linking the isolated farmsteads and dwellings. Some of these roads, in particular on the western edge of the Eastern Moors, were important former packhorse and cart routes to Sheffield, Chesterfield and beyond.

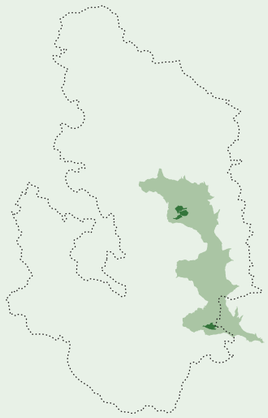
Several main roads cut up the slopes of the Derwent Valley going eastwards. These were first built as turnpike roads in the 18th and early 19th centuries although some have earlier origins as hollow-way routes. In places the only means of access is on foot via the extensive network of footpaths. There are small areas of access land, including land below Bamford and Froggatt Edges.

Gritstone village farmlands LCT

Looking towards Bretton © Peak District National Park Authority

A small-scale, settled pastoral landscape associated with gently rolling gritstone uplands. The landscape is enclosed by a pattern of small to medium sized fields bounded by gritstone walls. Views are open and wide, framed by surrounding higher land.

The gritstone village farmlands are long established agricultural landscapes, each associated with a central village. They are found in two locations around the villages of Abney and Birchover.



Key characteristics

- Rolling gritstone upland
- Small to medium-sized pastoral fields enclosed by drystone walls
- Gritstone villages with outlying farms and dwellings
- Wide views to surrounding high hills

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape with a high, rolling topography associated with broad gritstone uplands. The high topography enables wide views to distant surrounding hills. There are well drained fine loamy soils over gritstone bedrock that are shallow in places.

Species and habitats

There is little ecological interest over most of the area because pasture predominates. Around Birchover there are localised semi-improved meadows. Bracken is occasionally found in verges.

Tree cover

Due to historic and ongoing management practices this is a relatively open landscape with trees confined to small groups around settlements and as mature trees within boundaries. Sycamore, ash and oak are the predominant species. Grazing pressure has limited natural regeneration.

Land use

The land here mainly consists of permanent pasture of moderate to high intensity, grazed by sheep and cattle. At Birchover, the southerly fields contain shafts and remnants of stone-paved paths relating to the intensive lead mining activity that surrounded Winster.

Enclosure

There is a mixed pattern of small fields bounded by somewhat sinuous gritstone drystone walls. To the north of Abney, some walls have fossilised a medieval open field system creating distinctive small and narrow fields; the remainder are irregular enclosures of unknown date. Around Birchover similar fossilisation took place but this has become less obvious in the 20th century because of field boundary removals.

Settlement, buildings and monuments
Evidence for prehistoric activity around Abney has largely been removed by later agriculture; a single cairn survives on Abney Low and flint tools have been found in ploughsoils. There are many significant prehistoric monuments on the unimproved higher ground nearby.

The nucleated villages of Abney and Birchover lie at the cores of the two small areas of this landscape type, and the medieval foci of these settlements lie at Abney Grange and Uppertown. There are several isolated outlying farmsteads within the two traditional townships. Buildings are simple and robust in design; predominantly gritstone with traditional stone slate roofs and some later blue slate roofs. Birchover was associated with the nearby gritstone quarries and benefited from good building stone.

Transport, access and recreation

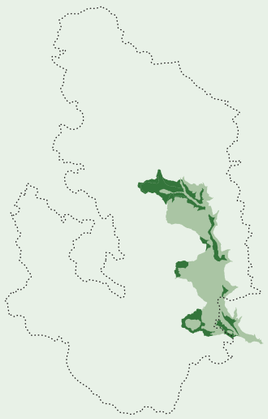
Access within this landscape is limited to narrow winding roads linking the villages to adjacent settlements. There is a well-established network of footpaths and historic tracks which connects the villages to outlying farmsteads, fields and moors beyond.

Valley farmlands with villages LCT

Valley farmlands near Hope © Peak District National Park Authority

A settled pastoral landscape, often with a low lying topography associated with a network of streams and damp hollows. This is an enclosed landscape, with views filtered through scattered hedgerow and streamline trees. Villages with outlying farms and dwellings are set within small to medium fields that are often bound by hedgerows.

Valley farmlands with villages can be found throughout the Derwent Valley character area, the largest area being centred on Hope and Castleton. Other areas where this type occurs are Calver, Froggatt to Baslow, Over End, Great Longstone, Beeley, Two Dales and Harthill.



Key characteristics

- A low lying, gently undulating topography
- Network of streams and localised damp hollows
- Small to medium sized pastoral fields enclosed by hedgerows and some drystone walls
- Dense streamline and scattered hedgerow trees
- Predominantly gritstone villages and outlying farms with associated dwellings and field barns

Geology, landform and soils

This is largely a low lying landscape with a rolling, in places undulating, topography, associated with the lower lying ground of the Derwent Valley and its tributary watercourses. These rivers have eroded through the Millstone Grit, exposing the softer underlying shales to create a suite of broader valleys. In the Hope Valley and near Youlgrave, this landscape type sits on the boundary of sandstones/shales and limestones.

This is a landscape that has been improved and farmed for many hundreds of years. The soils are mostly slowly permeable or clay soils over shales, with occasional patches of shallower soils over localised outcrops of gritstone. Heavy gleyed soils over shales are often seasonally waterlogged in hollows and depressions.

Species and habitats

Largely improved reseeded grassland with isolated patches of semi-improved grassland and occasional hay meadows. Seasonal waterlogging and wet flushes mean that soft rush can be found in places. Mixed hedges include hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and holly as the main species. Ash and oak are the principle tree species, giving way to willow and alder in the wetter areas While on drier ground, bracken and birch can be found. Secondary planting of ancient woodland sites with broadleaved trees or conifers is common but the original ground flora of wood anemone and bluebells is still evident in places.

Tree cover

The density of trees varies throughout this landscape. There is a mixture of mature hedgerow trees, mainly ash, oak and sycamore, as well as small blocks of woodland, both broadleaved and coniferous, which are prominent in many views. There are occasional isolated, discrete blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland.

Land use

Land use is determined by the heavy soils and permanent pasture dominates the landscape. There is a mixture of improved fields with a moderate to high intensity of usage for dairying and silage.

Numerous mineral veins outcrop on the limestone near Castleton, and there is a long history of mining in the area. Lead has probably been worked since prehistoric times. The decorative Blue John fluorspar has been worked since the 18th century and the resulting caverns are now an important tourist attraction.

The modern manufacturing and ancillary buildings associated with cement works is a prominent atypical feature within the Hope Valley.

Enclosure

Fields are enclosed by a mixture of hedges and gritstone drystone walls. Hedgerows beside roads are often mixed species, while internal boundaries tend to be thorn hedgerows. This is a landscape that has been farmed for hundreds of years and the enclosure pattern has developed and been modified to meet changing farming needs over a long period. There are some large areas of fossilised medieval open fields, with particularly broad extents in the Hope Valley and around Great and Little Longstone. Ridge and furrow and lynchets are present in some of these fields. The majority of enclosure away from these specific areas is of unknown date: some parts are dominated by irregular fields that are likely to be early, while other areas have a mixture of sinuous and straight boundaries. This indicates gradual changes on a field by field basis rather than the sweeping changes to whole areas after Parliamentary or Private Enclosure agreements.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

This is a landscape that has been settled and worked for millennia but has only limited evidence of prehistoric activity due to intensive historical land use. The density of settlement varies over the landscape, but is predominantly a mixture of villages, hamlets and scattered farmsteads, many of which have medieval origins. Villages, including Castleton, Hope, Hathersage, Calver, Baslow and Beeley, are scattered through the valley. Castleton was an early planned 12th-century settlement, and archaeological excavations suggest it may have Anglo-Saxon origins. The imposing medieval Peveril Castle stands sentinel on the limestone ridge above the village, and dominates the landscape.

The predominant building material is gritstone with stone or blue slate roofs. The exception to this is Great Longstone and Castleton, where buildings are predominantly limestone with gritstone detailing, reflecting the use of the nearest available good building stone; the limestone in Castleton is particularly fossil-rich. With the exception of some medieval churches, buildings are normally of 17th century and more commonly later date. Occasional simple stone field barns with stone slate roofs are found in field corners.

Transport, access and recreation

There is a comprehensive network of major and minor roads as well as public footpaths and bridleways linking the settlements together. The Roman fort at Brough sits at a strategic junction between the Hope and Edale valleys, and Bradwell Dale. A Roman road links Brough to Melandra near Glossop, and an ancient route known as the Portway also runs through Brough.

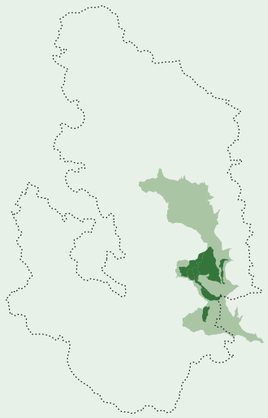
An unusual feature of some of the paths around Winster, linking to Birchover, is that they are paved with gritstone flags. Additionally, the main railway line between Sheffield and Manchester runs through the Hope Valley.

Estatelands LCT

Chatsworth Park © Peak District National Park Authority

An enclosed, estate landscape where views of agricultural land are framed by discrete blocks of woodland and scattered field boundary trees set within a varied, undulating topography. This is a landscape of villages, with historic halls and houses surrounded by parkland.

This landscape is found in three blocks, the largest centred on Pilsley, Haddon and Hassop. The remaining two areas include Chatsworth House and gardens east of the Derwent and Stanton Hall in the south.



Key characteristics

- A varied undulating topography with steep slopes in places
- Large historic halls and houses set in designed parkland
- Villages and outlying estate farmsteads and field barns
- Regular pattern of medium large sized fields
- Large blocks of plantation woodland
- Patches of acid grassland and bracken on steep slopes

Geology, landform and soils

This is a landscape where the underlying geology, mainly a mixture of shales and interbedded gritstone, gives rise to a dissected, undulating and, in places sloping, landform with low ridges. A small isolated limestone ridge at Cracknowl Pasture, to the north of Bakewell, forms part of this character type.

The pattern of soils is varied, reflecting the mix of rock types that define the character of the landscape in this area. Soils comprise a mixture of slowly permeable, gleyed soils overlying the shales and shallower, free-draining soils over gritstone.

Species and habitats

This is an area of improved permanent pasture with mature hedgerow trees, drystone walls and hedges. In places, on the poorer soils, there are remnants of acid grassland with patches of bracken; in particular this can be found on northern slopes around Pilsley. Elsewhere there are isolated patches of semi-improved grassland alongside tracks and edges of fields. Woodland is a mixture of conifers and broadleaved species.

Tree cover

Views are filtered by the extensive tree cover throughout the area. This is found as a mixture of large plantation coniferous woodlands, discrete linear shelter belts, tree screens and scattered mature boundary trees. There are many scattered mature parkland trees, with some veterans, which are very important for the character of this landscape. Ash is the dominant native tree along with oak, sycamore, beech and hawthorn. Spruce, pine and larch are to be found in the plantations.

Land use

This is a landscape of intensively managed permanent pasture in a regular pattern of fields with extensive coniferous woodlands and parkland. Stock rearing for beef and, in particular, dairying is an important land use. Much of this landscape is still owned and managed by the estates. Parkland is one of the key features of the estatelands, with important designed landscapes at Chatsworth, Haddon, Hassop and Thornbridge. The parkland at Chatsworth contains a wealth of well-preserved earthworks and buried features including tracks, ridge and furrow and waterlogged earlier riverside garden layouts.

Enclosure

This is a landscape of medium to large sized fields enclosed and frequently modified at a variety of dates from at least the 17th century including the former medieval deer park around Haddon Hall. This has formed a complex mosaic of features.

Often changes were somewhat greater than in other landscapes because estates had the wealth to make 'improvements' in line with contemporary thinking on good agricultural practice. Perhaps the most changed landscape is at Birchill where fields have come and gone on a regular basis, with the current large-scale open landscape created in the 19th century. Boundaries are variable throughout this landscape being a mixture of limestone or gritstone walls and thorn hedges.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

There is a strongly nucleated pattern of discrete villages, large halls and outlying farms. The villages and several of the smaller settlements and halls have medieval origins, although the majority of today's buildings date from the 17th century onwards. Most vernacular buildings are constructed of sandstone or gritstone except where relatively close to the limestone outcrop. There are large numbers of estate buildings, both in the villages and in the countryside, which have architectural details beyond the local vernacular styles, including houses, lodges and outbuildings. Edensor was extensively remodelled in the 1830s-40s to create an architect-designed model village. Impressive estate-designed buildings are also found at Hassop and Pilsley.

The large halls and houses in the area were built using the materials available locally and in styles popular at the time. Construction of Haddon Hall started in the late 12th century and was added to at various dates; Chatsworth House has impressive fronts dating from the late 17th to 19th centuries but the 16th-century core of the house survives; Hassop Hall was rebuilt in the 19th century.

These were all constructed using locally quarried and dressed sandstone. However, Thornbridge Hall, extensively modified in the 19th century, was constructed using limestone, reflecting the easy access to nearby limestone quarries.

Transport, access and recreation

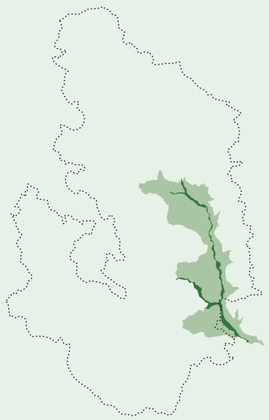
There is a network of narrow winding lanes and footpaths linking settlements. Major routes also cross the valley in places and were often first created as turnpike roads, linking the Eastern Moors landscapes in the east with the White Peak landscapes to the west. The former railway line between Buxton and Matlock has been converted into the Monsal Trail, an important recreational route. The line was set in a tunnel to avoid disturbing the parkland around Haddon Hall.

Riverside meadows LCT

Riverside Meadows Haddon © Peak District National Park Authority

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

The riverside meadows form a narrow continuous strip of floodplain, one to two fields wide, adjacent to the rivers. This landscape stretches from just below the Ladybower reservoir on the River Derwent in the north, includes Hope on the River Noe and Bakewell on the River Wye to the west, down to Matlock in the south.



Key characteristics

- A flat alluvial river corridor with seasonally waterlogged alluvial soils
- Meandering river channel with shingle beds and marginal vegetation
- Grazing meadows, often with patches of wet grassland, marsh and fen
- Dense waterside and scattered hedgerow trees
- Regular pattern of small to medium sized pastoral fields divided by hedges
- Mills with mill races, weirs and ponds

Geology, landform and soils

A key feature of this landscape is the flat alluvial floodplain across which the rivers Derwent and Wye meander as they flow downstream. These rivers have developed mainly on the relatively soft shales but in places flow across harder gritstones. There are hollows within the floodplain which reflect the past courses of the river. The soils are clayey loams, derived from the underlying alluvial deposits. These have built up over many years as the river has flooded and deposited the material it had been carrying.

Species and habitats

Some areas on the floodplain are permanently waterlogged and some wet hollows retain flood water for long periods of time. These have created linked patches of wetland and marshy riverside vegetation associated with the meandering river although much of the land has been improved.

Tree cover

Tree cover is relatively extensive throughout the landscape type and has a high visual impact. It is often confined to river banks which are densely lined with alder and some willow. This almost continuous belt of riverside trees creates an intimate landscape when combined with scattered hedgerow trees of oak and ash across the floodplain. In places there are small copses of willow carr and some poplars.

Land use

Because of heavy soils and seasonal waterlogging land use is permanent pasture, grazed by cattle and sheep. Part of Chatsworth Park with its weir, mature trees and derelict mill sits within the floodplain, and this includes traces of former watermeadows and earlier gardens. A series of historic mills, mill races, ponds and weirs are also found along the rivers, relating to a variety of processes including corn milling, stone working and lead smelting.

Enclosure

The rivers are usually fringed by a regular pattern of small to medium sized fields, often in places only one to two fields wide. Fields are enclosed by mainly straight thorn hedges.

Settlement, buildings and monuments

This is mainly an unsettled landscape with occasional farmsteads and some modern development. Historically, settlement would have been restricted on the floodplain due to seasonal flooding, but a series of local water-powered flour mills were built, in the medieval period as at Bakewell and Ashford. This was supplemented during the Industrial Revolution with large textile mills at Bakewell, Calver and Bamford, although these have now been converted into apartments, modern industry or other uses. Associated features survive, including weirs and leats, in and alongside the rivers. Arkwright's Lumford Mill, built in Bakewell in 1777, was the first he had designed to harness river water power. Significant elements of his water management system survive.

Where there is settlement it is usually farmsteads, and buildings are predominantly gritstone with stone slate roofs. In places there are limestone rubble constructed buildings with blue slate roofs.

Transport, access and recreation

Most historical routes following the valleys avoided the floodplain and the wet boggy treed landscape. However, routes do go across the floodplains; crossing the rivers at traditional bridges, sited where flooding problems were least acute.