

LANGDALE

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Summary Description

2.c.1 THE LANGDALE VALLEY



“The valley rings with mirth and joy; Among the hills the echoes play, A never never ending song, To welcome in the May...”

William Wordsworth, ‘The Idle Shepherd-Boys’ (1800)

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Langdale, ‘Long Valley’ in old Norse, is centrally located in the Lake District (Figure 2.c.1) and runs west to east from the high central fells of Bowfell and Crinkle Crag at its head before meeting with the adjoining Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley and on south into Windermere. It is a classic example of a U-shaped glaciated valley with the typical features of headwalls, combs, glacial tarns, hanging valleys and truncated spurs all well represented. The distinctive skyline of the Langdale Pikes dominates the valley and can be seen for many miles from the south and east. Unusually for a Lake District valley of its size, Langdale does not contain a major lake.

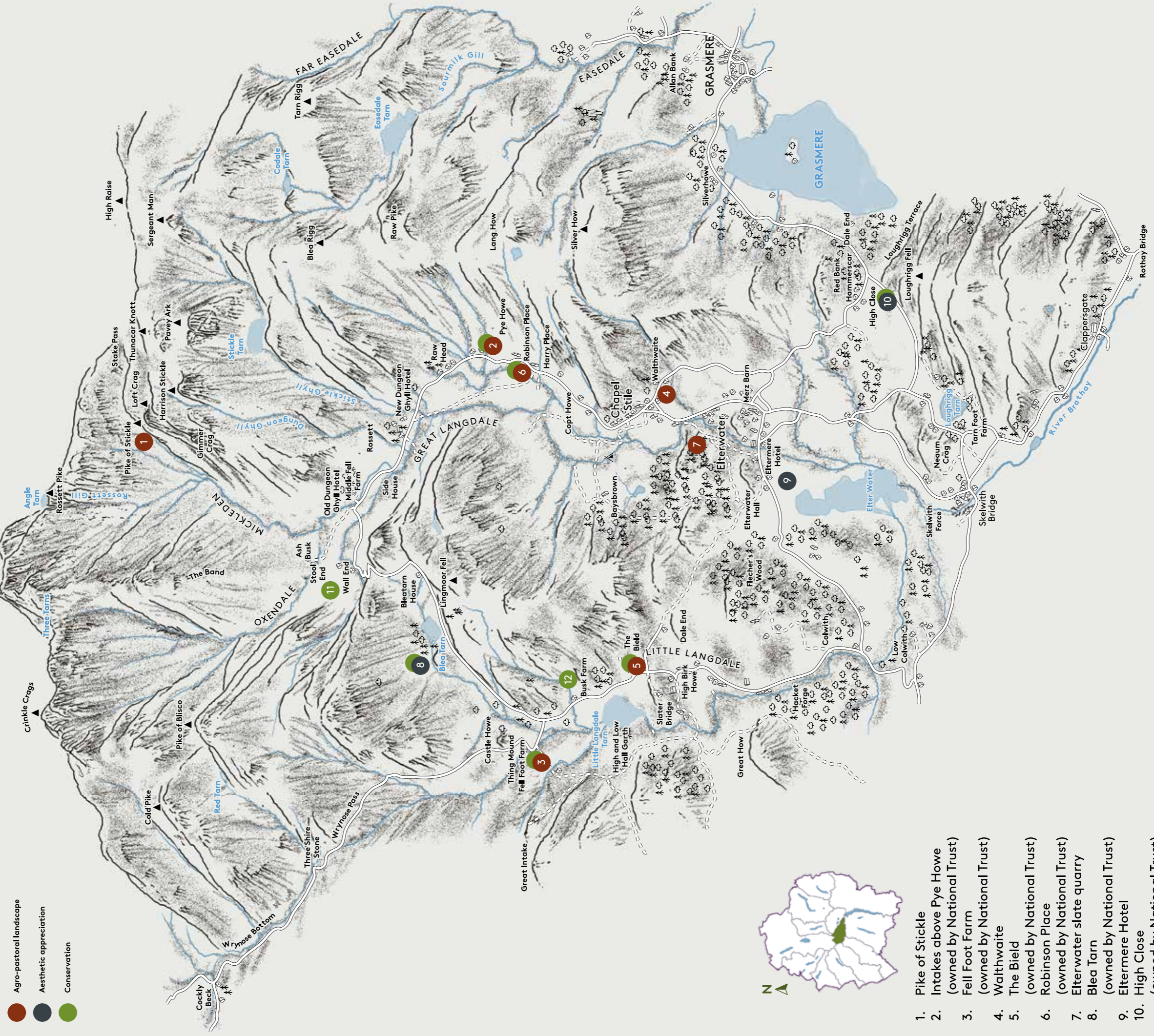
The steep valley sides provide a powerful sense of enclosure. The rough texture of the crags, screes and rock outcrops together with the rough grazing, heather, remnant juniper and extensive bracken beds, provides a strong contrast with the flat, smooth-textured, lush-green and strongly patterned valley floor where traditional hill farming practices and vernacular buildings have produced an iconic English Lake District landscape. Pollard trees are also important landscape features throughout Langdale, especially at the valley head.



FIGURE 2.c.1.1 View of the middle section of the Great Langdale valley, with inbye fields in the valley bottom and intakes on slopes above Harry Place to the left



Figure 2.c.1.2 Langdale Valley Illustrative Map



- Agro-pastoral landscape
- Aesthetic appreciation
- Conservation

1. Pike of Stickle
2. Intakes above Pye Howe (owned by National Trust)
3. Fell Foot Farm (owned by National Trust)
4. Walthwaite (owned by National Trust)
5. The Bield (owned by National Trust)
6. Robinson Place (owned by National Trust)
7. Elterwater slate quarry
8. Blea Tarn (owned by National Trust)
9. Eltermere Hotel (owned by National Trust)
10. High Close (owned by National Trust)
11. Stool End and Wall End (owned by National Trust)
12. Busk Farm (owned by National Trust)

EXAMPLES OF KEY ATTRIBUTES: As shown on the Langdale illustrative map



NO. 1 FIGURE 2.c.1.3 Pike of Stickle (location of Neolithic stone axe factories)



NO. 2 FIGURE 2.c.1.4 Intakes above Pye Howe (owned by National Trust)



NO. 3 FIGURE 2.c.13.5 Fell Foot Farm (owned by National Trust)



NO. 4 FIGURE 2.c.1.6 Walthwaite Farm



NO. 5 FIGURE 2.c.1.7 The Bield (owned by National Trust)



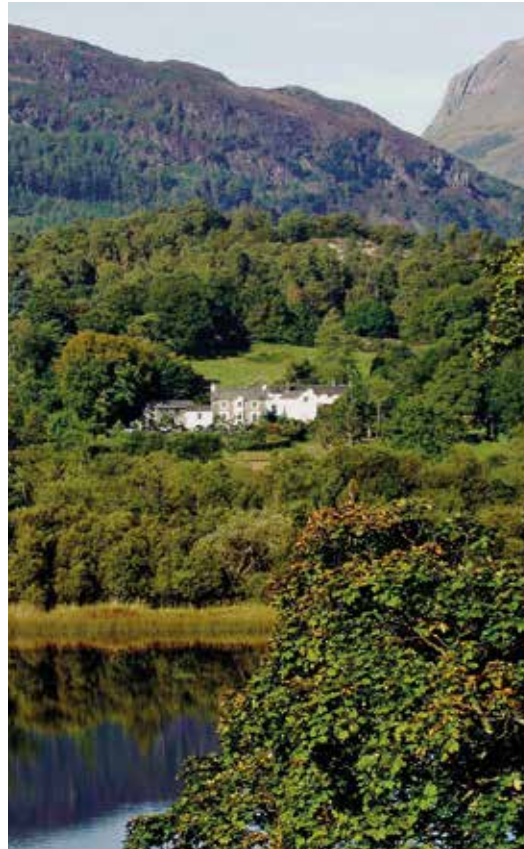
NO. 6 FIGURE 2.c.1.8 Robinson Place (owned by National Trust)



NO. 7 FIGURE 2.C.1.9 Elterwater slate quarry



NO. 8 FIGURE 2.c.1.10 Blea Tarn (owned by National Trust)



NO. 9 FIGURE 2.c.1.11 Eltermere Hotel



NO. 10 FIGURE 2.c.1.12 High Close Youth Hostel (owned by National Trust)



NO. 11 FIGURE 2.c.1.13 Stool End and Wall End farms (owned by National Trust)



NO. 12 FIGURE 2.C.1.14 Busk Farm (owned by National Trust)

This is the only valley in the Lake District where it has been possible to establish the details of the long chronology of the development of the farming landscape, thanks to the survival of early documents and comprehensive historic landscape survey conducted by the National Trust. The ring garth wall existed by 1216 (see Great Langdale Case Study Section 2.b).

The Langdales are one of the key areas in the Lake District for Herdwick sheep farming and many of the historic farms in both Great and Little Langdale have substantial Herdwick flocks. Many of these farms are now owned by the National Trust. The Langdales are particularly rich in vernacular farmhouses rebuilt in the relatively affluent period of the late 16th and 17th centuries. These include Fell Foot in Little Langdale, Blea Tarn farmhouse, and the majority of the farmhouses in Great Langdale.



FIGURE 2.c.1.15 The village of Chapel Stile

The surviving farmsteads overlie earlier farms, but apart from a cruck barn at Wall End and re-used crucks in the roof of Middle Fell farmhouse, there seems to be little incorporation of earlier fabric. Today there are eight farms with fell-going flocks in the Langdale Valley and about 59 per cent of the total area is Registered Common Land. The Borrowdale Shepherds' Meet is on the third Sunday in September at Yew Tree Farm, Rosthwaite.

Settlement in the upper part of the valley is of scattered white-washed vernacular farms nestling at the foot of the south-facing fells. Combined with the characteristic inbye pasture contained within a defined ring garth wall and the prevalence of the distinctive Herdwick sheep this creates a compelling image of Lake District upland farming. Further east, closer to the town of Ambleside, the valley is more densely settled as a result of past industries including gunpowder works at Elterwater and extensive slate quarrying at Chapel Stile. Both villages developed as a result of both industry and tourism. Elterwater's former gunpowder workers' houses, Chapel Stiles' distinctive, green slate quarrying community terraces and church and Little Langdale's housing loosely grouped

around extensive slate quarries convey a strong sense of history. The valley is popular with tourists and has long-held historic and cultural associations with rock climbing.

The industries which have left the greatest mark on the landscape of Langdale are slate quarrying and mining. Some of the largest slate quarries in the Lake District operated in Great Langdale at Elterwater and on either side of the valley at Chapel Stile and on the slopes of Lingmoor Fell. Their roofing slates contribute towards the local distinctiveness of the area. Other industry – copper and iron working, milling, peat cutting, charcoal burning and potash production – in the valley has left more discrete evidence in the landscape. The gunpowder works at Elterwater was a significant industry and the remains are extensive. St Martin's Cottage in Elterwater was the location of Fleming and Ruskin's revival of the linen industry as a means to provide traditional paid work to local women. The Elterwater complex of quarries also provided work from at least the 18th century and continues to do so today.

There is no evidence of Picturesque buildings and landscaping in the Langdale Valley, despite Romantic interest in it. Nor are there villas in the main valleys of Great Langdale and Little Langdale. To the east of the two main valleys, High Close, now a youth hostel, is a sprawling Victorian mansion with garden views towards Windermere and a three tier arboretum.

Langdale's special qualities were well recognised. Enlightened individuals such as G. M. Trevelyan and Beatrix Potter purchased land in order to protect it from inappropriate development. As a result of the Heelis and Trevelyan bequests and other donations and purchases, the National Trust holdings in the Langdale area are very substantial (961 hectares owned in the valley, of which 955 hectares is inalienable) and, with Windermere, form the core of the Trust's Lake District Estate.

Evidence for occupation and land use in the Langdale Valley extends as far back as the Neolithic period (4,000 - 2,000 BC), and woodland was being cleared at the same time as the production of stone axes in Great Langdale. The axes produced here were traded or distributed widely throughout the British Isles. Settlement is likely to have been seasonal based on summer transhumance. Other important prehistoric remains in Great Langdale include two panels of Neolithic rock art at Copt Howe, near Chapel Stile, located on a pair of large boulders standing on the natural route way into the valley.

A Roman fort at Water Head at the top of the lake of Windermere was surrounded by a large civilian settlement and the remains of a Roman road linking this with the fort at Hardknott can be traced through Little Langdale and over Wrynose and Hardknott Passes.

Evidence of Norse settlement in the 10th century can be seen in the local place names and archaeological remains at Fell Foot farm in Little Langdale where a rectilinear, terraced mound may be the remains of a Norse 'thing' mound, used for community meetings. Other place-names derive from a combination of Old Norse and Old English, including Oxendale (valley of the ox). It is not possible to identify any potential pre-Norman settlements.

The first documentary evidence for land use in Great Langdale is from 1216 when William de Lancaster, Baron of Kendal, granted to Conishead Priory the "land of Basebrun", which then became a separate manor from the Manor of Great Langdale. The course of the



FIGURE 2.c.1.16 The Britannia Inn, Elterwater

boundary wall of the new manor can still be identified on the ground today (see Section 2.b, Case study: development of the field system in Great Langdale).

The majority of the surviving field pattern is the 16th-18th century intakes on the lower slopes overlooking former medieval common fields, and the inbye and piecemeal enclosure reorganised during the same period. The 16th to 18th

century enclosures at Robinson Place, and the enclosure of cattle pasture at the western end of Great Langdale, provide an unusually clear sequence which can be demonstrated in features in the modern landscape. A survey of 1573 recorded 10 farms in the valley. By the first half of the 18th century, these tenements had been amalgamated and reorganised as larger units and a number of farms abandoned. The last episodes of enclosure took the last few areas of the common field into enclosure with ruler-straight stone walls in 1836. There are a few examples of these in the valley bottom in Great Langdale.

Langdale's introduction to tourism was relatively late and from the start focussed on the attractions of rock climbing and fell walking. It did not feature in Thomas West's 'Guide to the Lakes' (1778). Farmers' families acted as mountain guides for visitors from the late 18th century or earlier and the old mountain passes started to be used as tourist trails. To meet this growing demand, Old Dungeon Ghyll and New Dungeon Ghyll farmhouses were converted into hotels during the mid-19th century. Similarly, a 17th century farmhouse was converted into The Britannia Inn at Elterwater in the 19th century.

The valley did inspire the poems and writings of a number of Romantic poets. Loughrigg Tarn was a favourite place of Wordsworth's, and Blea Tarn, separating Great and Little Langdales was the setting for Books II and III of Wordsworth's poem 'The Excursion' (1814).

In Great Langdale, Dungeon Ghyll Force was the location for Wordsworth's pastoral poem, 'The Idle-Shepherd Boys'. In his text for the Reverend Joseph Wilkinson's 'Select Views' (1810), Wordsworth identified Great Langdale as a 'must visit' valley:

"Next comes Great Langdale, a Vale which should on no account be missed by him who has a true enjoyment of grand separate Forms composing a sublime Unity, austere but reconciled and rendered attractive to the affections by the deep serenity that is spread over every thing."

William Wordsworth (Prose II)

Dorothy Wordsworth's Narrative Concerning George and Sarah Green is a sensitive but stark revelation of the way in which the poverty of subsistence farmers in the Lake District was masked by their apparent independence as land-owners. Literary and cultural associations continued into the 20th century when the artist Kurt Schwitters, established the Merz Barn in Cylinders Wood, Elterwater. The first poem ever written by W. H. Auden was about Blea Tarn in 1922.



FIGURE 2.c.1.17 The Langdale Pikes in winter

The valley continued to attract people who enjoyed the great outdoors and rock climbers in particular. The Holiday Fellowship established a mountain centre at Wall End Farm, Great Langdale in 1926, while Elterwater Hall first opened as a youth hostel in 1939. The headquarters and the largest climbing hut of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club is at Bishop's Scale, a converted large Bank Barn, near Raw Head Farm in Great Langdale; the club chapel, another barn conversion stands nearby.

QUALITIES

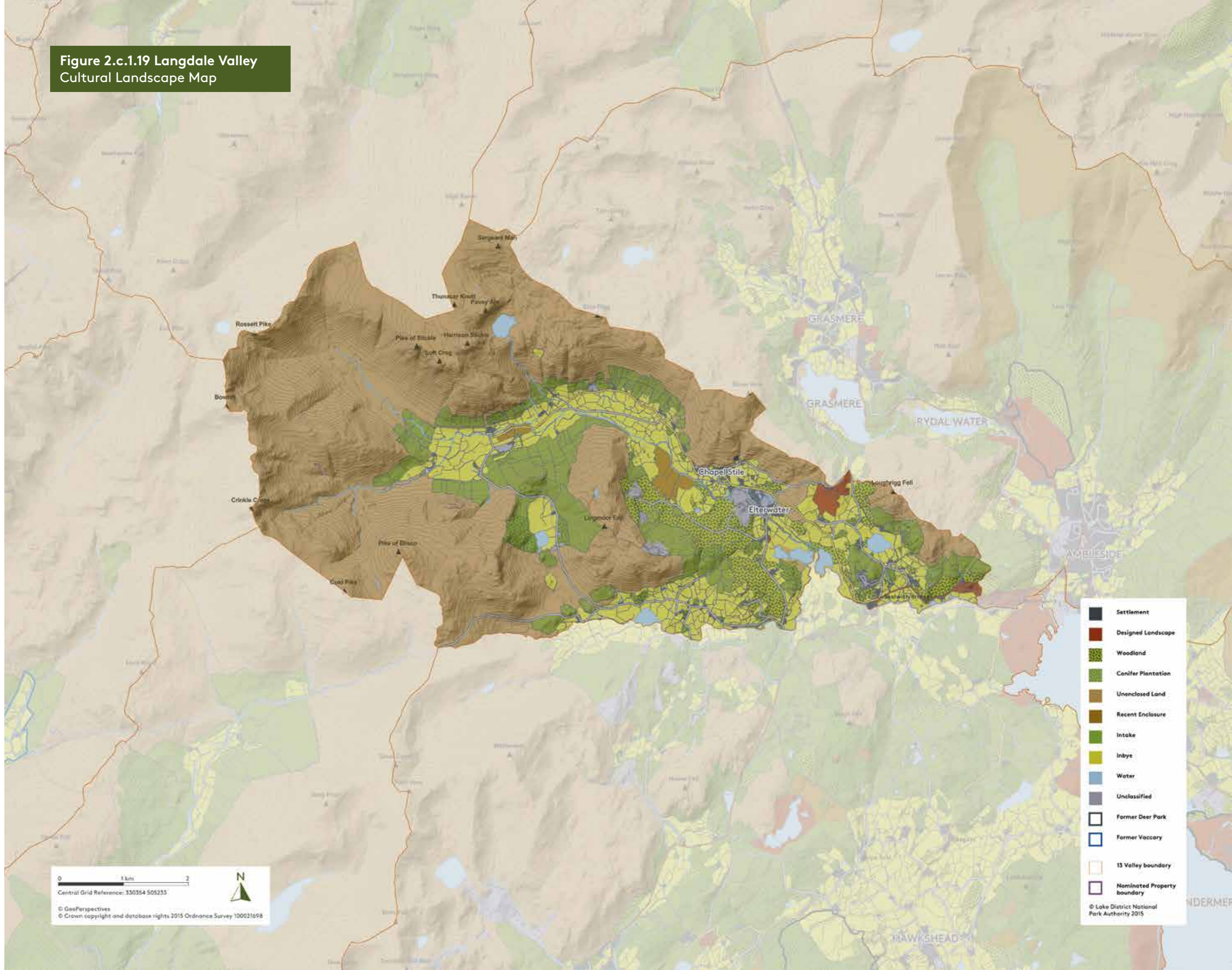
The Langdale Valley lies at the heart of the English Lake District and epitomises many of the qualities and attributes which underpin the case for Outstanding Universal Value.

The distribution of attributes of the first theme, agro-pastoral farming, is highly significant. The narrowness of the valley has resulted in a particularly distinctive pattern of inbye fields in the valley bottom, sub-divided from an original open, medieval field, and surrounded by a ring garth wall dating back to 1216. Small, walled intakes on the steep valley sides developed organically over several centuries. The valley contains a number of early farms, many of whose buildings date from the 17th century. It is an important valley for Herdwick flocks and over half of the area of the valley is high fell grazing which is also Common Land. It also has important evidence of early settlement, including Neolithic axe factories, and of later industrialisation.



FIGURE 2.c.1.18 View across Little Langdale, showing the distribution of farms, inbye and intakes fields

Figure 2.c.1.19 Langdale Valley Cultural Landscape Map



- Settlement
- Designed Landscape
- Woodland
- Conifer Plantation
- Unenclosed Land
- Recent Enclosure
- Intake
- Inbye
- Water
- Unclassified
- Former Deer Park
- Former Vaccary
- 13 Valley boundary
- Nominated Property boundary

0 1 km 2
 Central Grid Reference: 330354 505233
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FIGURE 2.c.1.20 The contribution of the Langdale Valley to the cultural landscape themes identified





















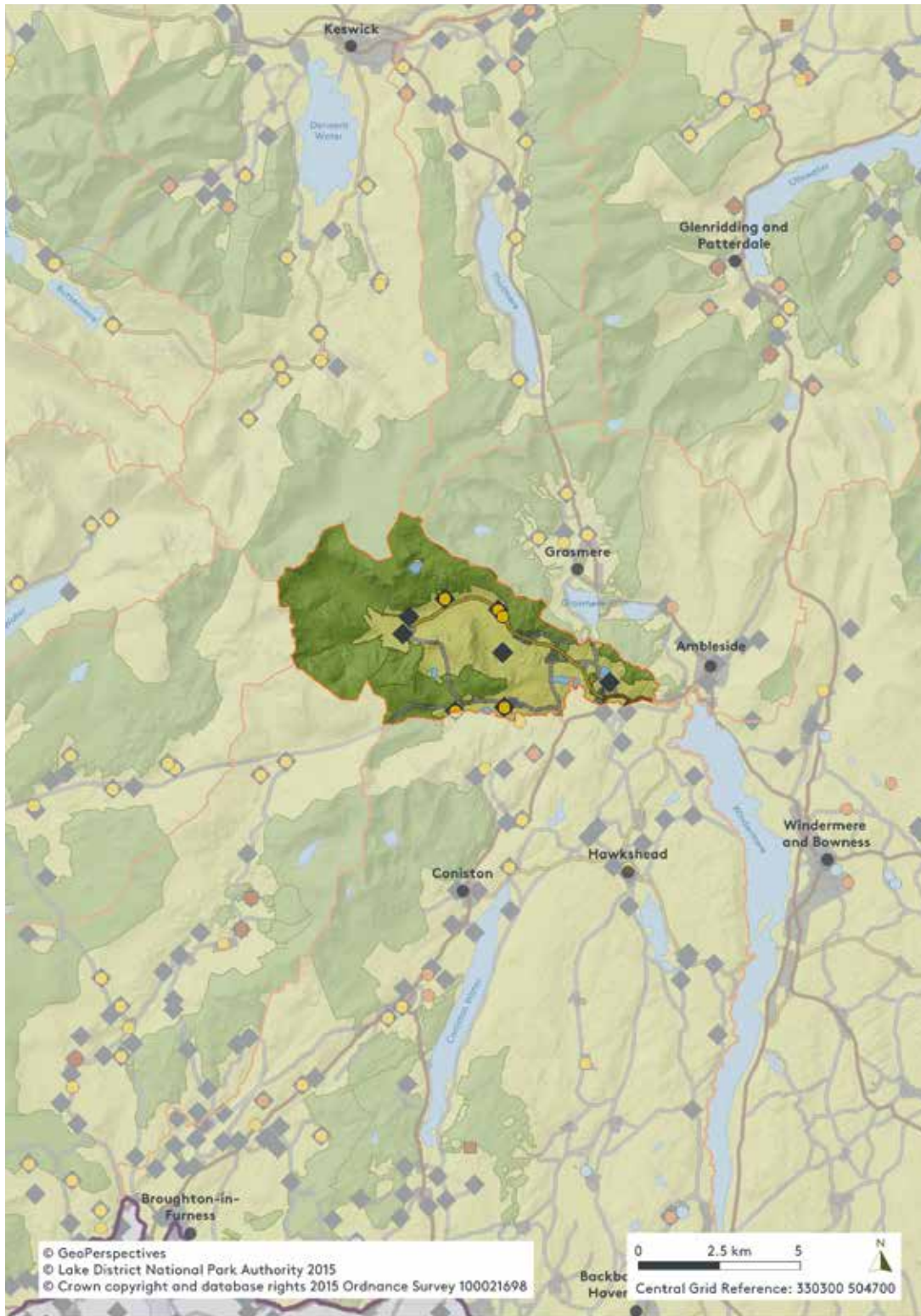
LANGDALE		
THEME	COMPONENTS OF ATTRIBUTES	SIGNIFICANCE
Continuity of traditional agro-pastoralism and local industry in a spectacular mountain landscape	Extraordinary beauty and harmony	
	Evidence of pre-medieval settlement and agriculture	
	Distinctive early field system	
	Medieval buildings (e.g. churches, pele towers and early farmhouses)	None
	16th/17th century farmhouses	
	Herdwick flocks	
	Rough Fell flocks	None
	Swaledale flocks	None
	Common land	
	Shepherds' meets/shows and traditional sports	
	Woodland industries	
	Mining/Quarrying	
	Water-powered industry	
	Market towns	None
Discovery and appreciation of a rich cultural landscape	Viewing stations	None
	Villas	
	Designed landscape	
	Early tourist infrastructure	
	Residences and burial places of significant writers and poets	None
	Key literary associations with landscape	
	Key artistic associations with landscape	
	Key associations with climbing and the outdoor movement	
	Opportunities for quiet enjoyment and spiritual refreshment	
Development of a model for protecting cultural landscape	Conservation movement	
	National Trust ownership (inalienable land)	
	National Trust covenanted land	
	Other Protective Trusts and ownership including National Park Authority	

FIGURE 2.c.1.21 Shepherds' flocks and native sheep breeds in the Langdale Valley



- Nominated Property boundary
 Valley boundary
 Registered Common Land
- Fell-going Flocks
- Flocks registered with Breed Associations:
 - Herdwick
 - Rough Fell
 - Swaledale
 - Multiple Breeds

Registered Common Land © Natural England 2015. Attribute data for Fell-going flocks: Lakeland Shepherds' Guide 2005. Attribute data for flocks: Herdwick Sheep Breeders Association 2014, Rough Fell and Swaledale Sheep Breeders' Associations 2013.



FIGURE 2.c.1.22 A view of Mickleden at the head of Great Langdale. The stone-walled intakes on the lower slopes were enclosed in the Tudor period (16th century).

Although the Langdale Valley lies just to the west of Windermere and Grasmere, its lack of a lake restricted the interest of early visitors seeking Picturesque views. There is consequently very little villa development in the valley. The landscape of the valley did, however, interest writers and artists including William Wordsworth who used the setting of Blea Tarn, between Great and Little Langdale, as the setting for part of 'The Excursion'.

Langdale has played a key role in the development of the conservation movement in the Lake District from the early 20th century. Many of the farms in the valley were purchased by benefactors in order to preserve the traditional agro-pastoral way of life and these were subsequently passed on to the National Trust. The result of these early conservation initiatives has been that the National Trust owns and manages extensive areas of the valley bottom in Langdale and over the years has also had considerable influence on management of the Common Land in the valley.

Agro-pastoral agriculture and the early conservation movement are the strongest themes of Outstanding Universal Value in the Langdale Valley but it has also provided aesthetic inspiration, especially for Romantic writing.