

GRASMERE, RYDAL, AMBLESIDE

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Summary Description

2.c.13 THE GRASMERE, RYDAL AND AMBLESIDE VALLEY



“The bosom of the mountains, spreading here into a broad basin, discover in the midst Grasmere water... Not a single red tile, no gentleman’s flaring house, breaks in upon the repose of this little unsuspected paradise...”

Thomas Gray ‘Journal’ (1769)

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT



FIGURE 2.c.13.1 An aerial view of the village of Grasmere with the pass of Dunmail Raise and Thirlmere in the distance

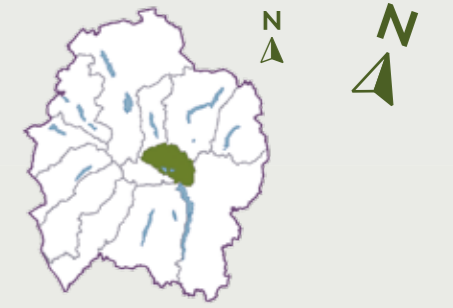
The Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley is a classic U-shaped, glaciated, upland valley located at the centre of the Lake District. It runs generally north to south from the watershed at the pass of Dunmail Raise, which separates north and south Lakeland. Near Ambleside it meets the Langdale Valley from the west and they join the Windermere Valley which continues south to the Levens Estuary and Morecambe Bay. Ambleside is the main town with the village of Grasmere and the hamlets of Town End and Rydal as the only other nucleated settlements.

Perhaps more than any other, this valley illustrates the diversity of landscape which characterises the Lake District.

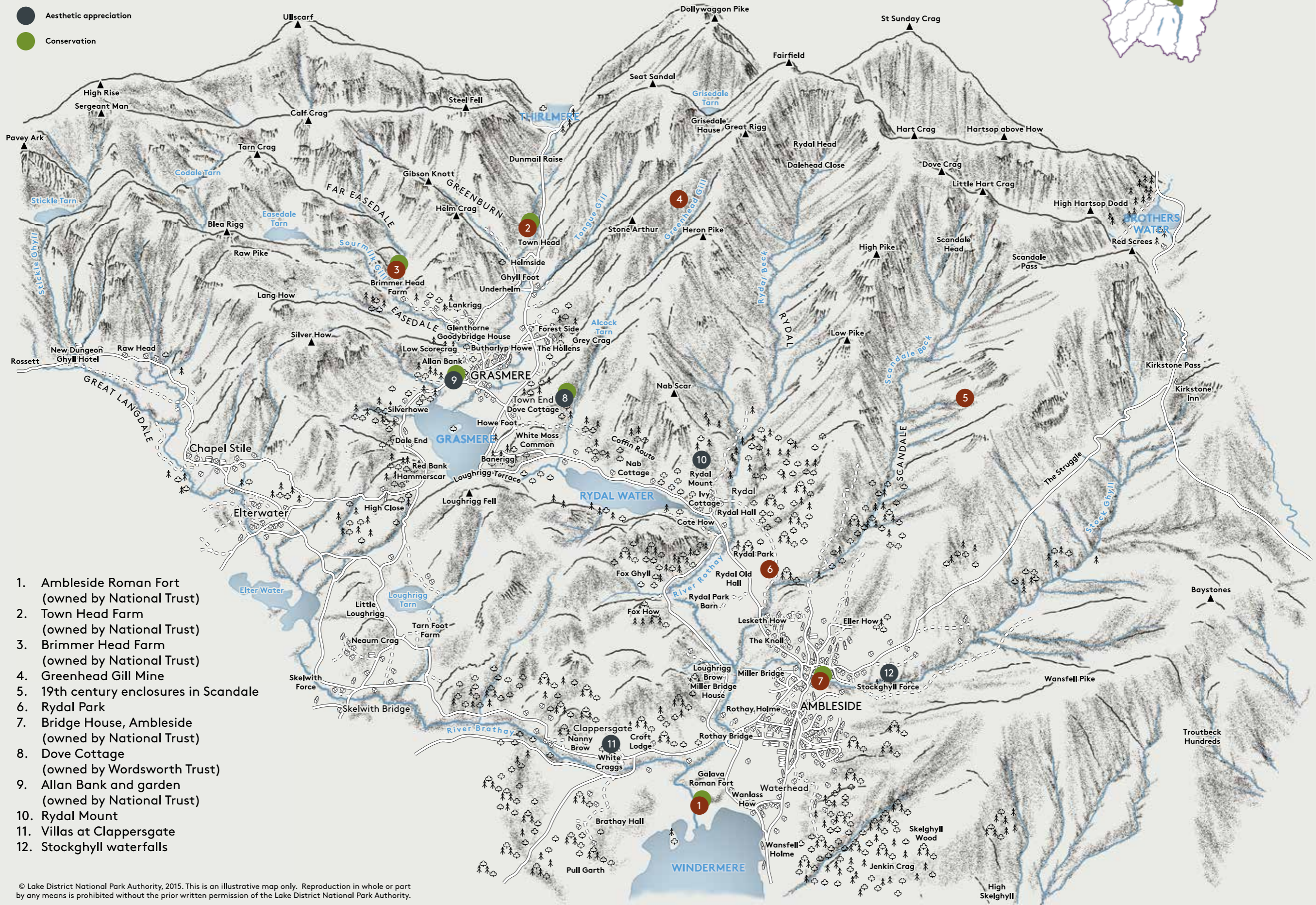
The rugged drama of the imposing high fells contrasts with and complements the

richly-patterned and managed appearance of the pastoral landscape blended with the parkland and designed landscape of the Victorian period, which are so well represented in this valley. Large-scale, unenclosed fell is juxtaposed with intimate field systems and parkland; ancient semi-natural woodlands punctuated with exotic species of conifers; simple vernacular farmhouses rub shoulders with ‘high Victorian’ design. All these combine to produce a unique landscape highly-valued for its scenic qualities and sense of history.

Figure 2.c.13.2 Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley Illustrative Map



- Agro-pastoral landscape
- Aesthetic appreciation
- Conservation



1. Ambleside Roman Fort (owned by National Trust)
2. Town Head Farm (owned by National Trust)
3. Brimmer Head Farm (owned by National Trust)
4. Greenhead Gill Mine
5. 19th century enclosures in Scandale
6. Rydal Park
7. Bridge House, Ambleside (owned by National Trust)
8. Dove Cottage (owned by Wordsworth Trust)
9. Allan Bank and garden (owned by National Trust)
10. Rydal Mount
11. Villas at Clappersgate
12. Stockghyll waterfalls

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NO. 1 FIGURE 2.c.13.3 Ambleside Roman Fort (owned by National Trust)



NO. 2 FIGURE 2.c.13.4 Town Head Farm (owned by National Trust)



NO. 3 FIGURE 2.c.13.5 Brimmer Head Farm (owned by National Trust)



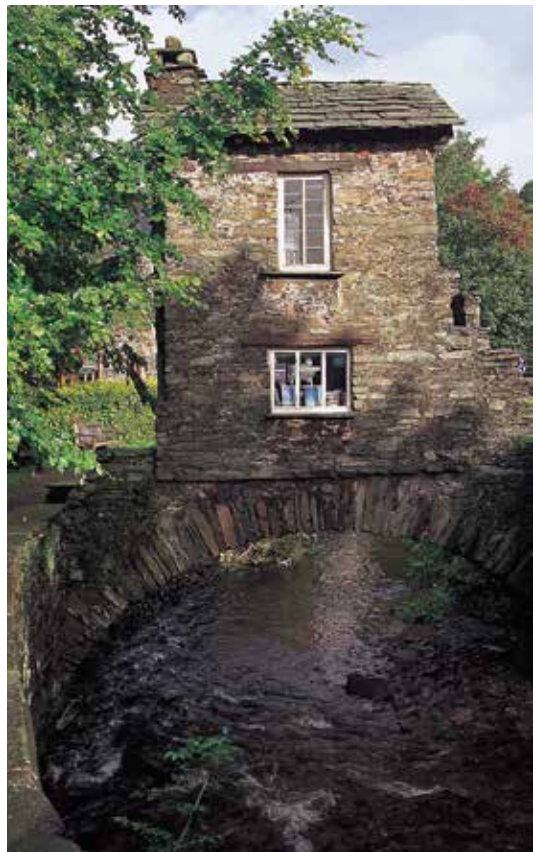
NO. 4 FIGURE 2.c.13.6 Greenhead Gill Mine (owned by National Trust)



NO. 5 FIGURE 2.c.13.7 19th century enclosures in Scandale



NO. 6 FIGURE 2.c.13.8 Rydal Park



NO. 7 FIGURE 2.c.13.9 Bridge House, Ambleside (owned by National Trust)



NO. 8 FIGURE 2.c.13.10 Dove Cottage (owned by Wordsworth Trust)



NO. 9 FIGURE 2.c.13.11 Allan Bank (owned by Wordsworth Trust)



NO. 10 FIGURE 2.c.13.12 Rydal Mount



NO. 11 FIGURE 2.c.13.13 Villas at Clappergate



NO. 12 FIGURE 2.c.13.14 Stockghyll waterfalls

The valley has been shaped by humanity over the millennia, with traces of human activity going back to the Neolithic and Bronze Age (c. 4000-800 BC). At Ambleside there are the remains of the Roman fort of Galava, protecting a route through the Lake District to the Cumbrian coast.

The settlement pattern essentially originates between the 10th and 13th centuries AD. Permanent settlements and arable agriculture were established in the valley bottoms, with grazing on the surrounding valley sides and upland fells. The existing settlements of Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside all existed by the late 13th or early 14th centuries. Traces of various past industries include mining and quarrying, charcoal production and manufacturing of woollen and linen cloth, using water powered mills. The remains of a lead mine dating from the Elizabethan period survive in Greenhead Gill and a short-lived boom in the value of iron ore led to the opening of mines at the northern end of Grasmere at Tongue Gill in the 1870s. Disused quarries for roofing slate are located on the northern slopes of Loughrigg Fell and at Banneriggs between Grasmere Lake and Rydal Water.



FIGURE 2.c.13.15 Large straight-walled intakes of the 18th and 19th centuries at Scandale, above Rydal

The inherited landscape today contains elements of medieval and later usage. On the higher slopes and side valleys – away from the nucleated settlement centres – fields are laid out around farmsteads located over earlier, seasonal shieling sites with medieval or earlier origins. On the valley floors closest to the roads and the early villages the surviving fields represent enclosed strips carved from the medieval open fields and possibly the lords' own tenements, and it is possible to identify a small number of these early boundaries on the ground. Records indicate that in the late 17th century cattle were driven from neighbouring parts of the Lake District in the summer to graze on the demesne pastures at Rydal.

Irregular stone-walled fields still survive from the 16th and 17th centuries with planned enclosure of the mid-19th century on the higher slopes above the valley floors. Stone farm buildings survive from the 16th century onwards, replacements of earlier wooden structures. Other continuing elements of the farming landscape include pollard ash trees of which there are good examples growing alongside the walls of the inbye land in the fields by Ghyll Foot, under Helm Crag, and on the north side of Rydal Water. The traditions and practices of traditional Lake District farming continue strongly in the valley.



FIGURE 2.c.13.16 Rydal Hall and gardens



FIGURE 2.c.13.17 White Craggs, an Arts and Crafts style villa at Clappersgate at the head of Windermere

As early as the mid-17th century, the estate of Rydal Hall was transformed to create a picturesque landscape. From the late 18th century, the Valley was a focus for the Romantic Movement, exemplified particularly by the work of William Wordsworth. It became a focus for early tourists and for people of means who wished to live in the area and improve its scenic qualities through the construction of villas and ornamental landscapes. Large numbers of these villas survive.

The Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley was the scene in the 19th century of successful campaigns to prevent the construction through much of it of a railway. It has subsequently been the

location of many purchases by, and gifts to the National Trust to conserve the landscape in perpetuity resulting in the National Trust owning 789 hectares of land in the valley, of which 715 hectares is inalienable.

QUALITIES

The attributes demonstrating the contribution of this valley to the potential Outstanding Universal Value of the English Lake District as a whole are listed in Figure 2.c.13.22. There is clear surviving evidence of the continuing traditional agro-pastoral system, including field walls, the evidence of successive phases of enclosure, and many surviving farmhouses from the 16th century onwards. The farms today continue to practice agro-pastoral farming with five registered Herdwick flocks, one registered Swaledale flock, and continuing use of fell pastures and common land (Figure 2.c.13.23).

There is good evidence of past phases of use, going back to the prehistoric period, within this continuing tradition. The ancient semi-natural coppice woodlands on the valley slopes around Grasmere and Rydal Water provided timber for charcoal production and the local bobbin industry and their present-day character reflects this past use. Relict elements also include evidence of industry based on stone quarrying and water power. The market town of Ambleside and other settlements established in the medieval period survive and still serve their surrounding communities as well as adapting to new functions such as tourism.



FIGURE 2.c.13.18 'The Old Mill, Ambleside' by J. M. W. Turner (1798). Turner's view shows Braithwaite's corn mill on the left and the old Bark Mill on the opposite bank of Stock Ghyll Beck.



FIGURE 2.c.13.19 Dove Cottage, Grasmere, was the home of William Wordsworth from 1799 to 1808

This Valley has extensive evidence of the discovery and appreciation of the Lake District as a rich cultural landscape. Examples such as Rydal Hall and its landscape demonstrate the adaptation of the landscape to meet picturesque sensibilities. The numerous villas exemplify the attraction of this part of the Lake District to those with an interest in the Lake District's romantic qualities. Prime among these are the successive homes of William Wordsworth and his writings on his response to this landscape.

The Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley also has strong evidence of the development of the conservation movement in the Lake District. The absence of any railway from Windermere to Grasmere demonstrates the success of the opposition to its construction in

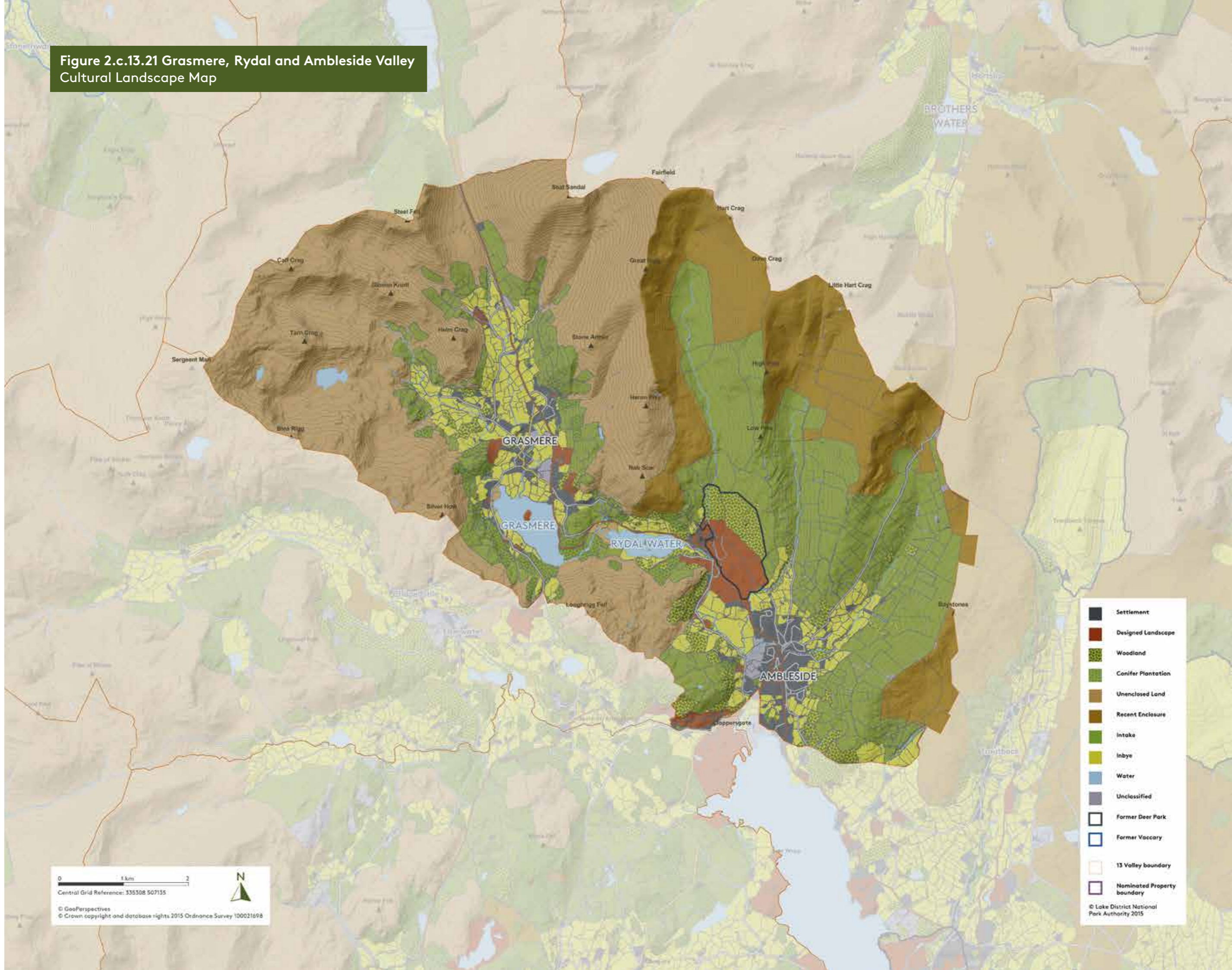
1846 and again in 1876, 1886 and 1899. These campaigns involved both Wordsworth and John Ruskin. The National Trust, a key component of the Lake District model for protecting cultural landscape, has acquired considerable property to preserve it in perpetuity.

The Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley functions as an authentic agro-pastoral landscape intertwined with surviving villas and designed landscapes, substantial artistic activity and on-going management by the conservation bodies including the National Trust and National Park Authority. It contains many examples of all the attributes that have been identified for the English Lake District relating to traditional agriculture and industry, settlement, artistic inspiration, villas and designed landscape and the success of the early conservation movement.



FIGURE 2.c.13.20 The medieval church of St Oswald, Grasmere. Burial place of William Wordsworth and his family

Figure 2.c.13.21 Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside 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

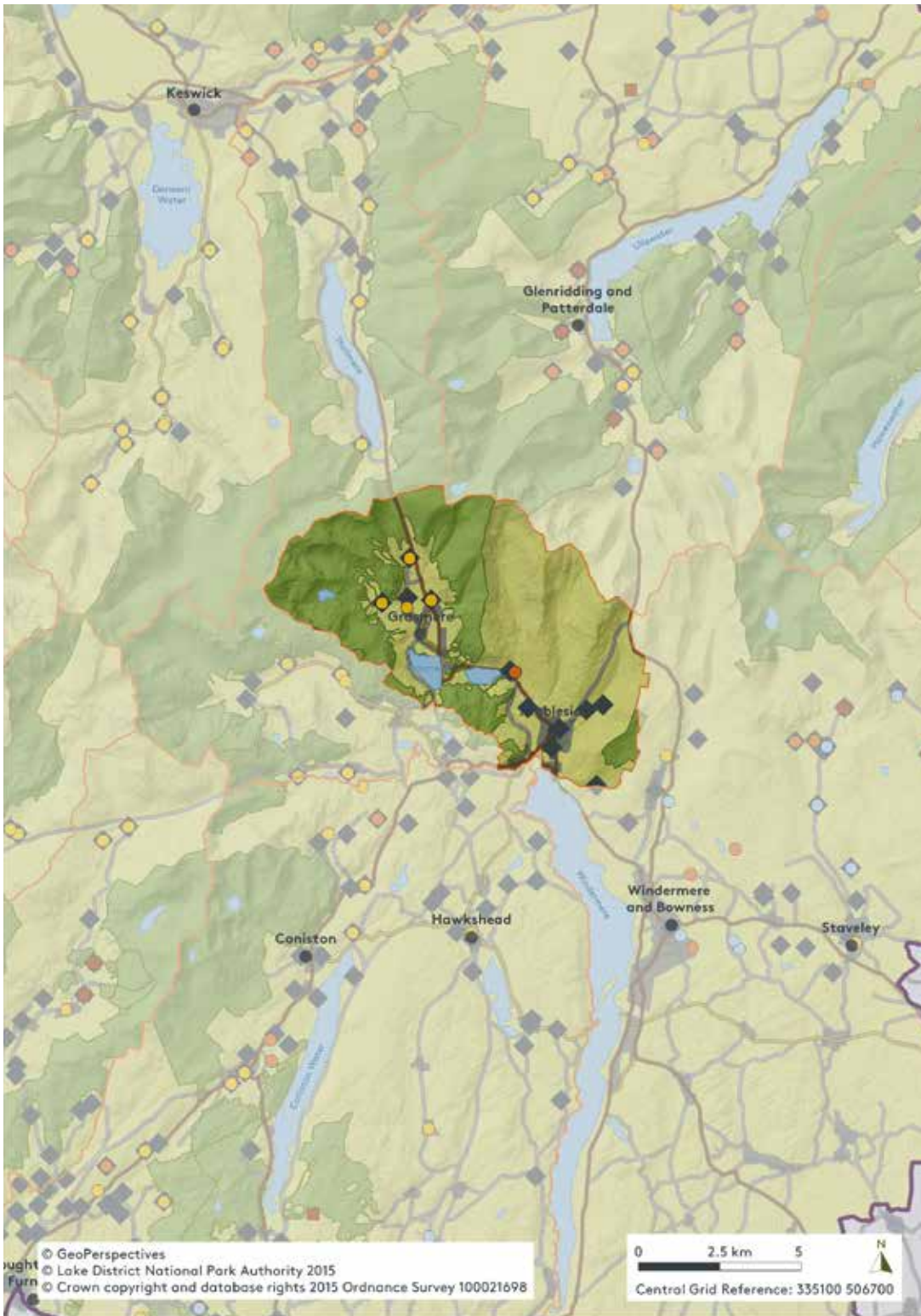
0 1 km 2
 Central Grid Reference: 335508 507135
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FIGURE 2.c.13.22 The contribution of the Grasmere, Rydal and Ambleside Valley to the cultural landscape themes identified

GRASMERE, RYDAL, AMBLESIDE		
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)	
	16th/17th century farmhouses	
	Herdwick flocks	
	Rough Fell flocks	None
	Swaledale flocks	
	Common land	
	Shepherds' meets/shows and traditional sports	
	Woodland industries	
	Mining/Quarrying	
	Water-powered industry	
	Market towns	
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	
	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	NTC
	Other Protective Trusts and ownership including National Park Authority	

FIGURE 2.c.13.23 Shepherds' flocks and native sheep breeds in the Grasmere, Rydal, and Ambleside 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.13.24 Boathouse on Rydal Water