



# ENNERDALE

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Summary Description

## 2.c.7 THE ENNERDALE VALLEY



“Next comes in view Ennerdale, with its lake of bold and somewhat savage shores”.

W. Wordsworth, ‘Guide to the Lakes’ (1835)

### DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Ennerdale is the most westerly of all the Lake District valleys orientated east-west from the high central fells to the rolling hills and moorland plateaux of West Cumbria and the coastal plain leading to the Irish Sea. Though much modified by human activity in the form of forestry, water extraction and farming, it is the large-scale natural features of the valley that impose themselves and create an overriding sense of isolation, wildness and tranquillity.



FIGURE 2.c.7.1 The wild and tranquil Ennerdale valley, with the River Liza flowing along the valley bottom

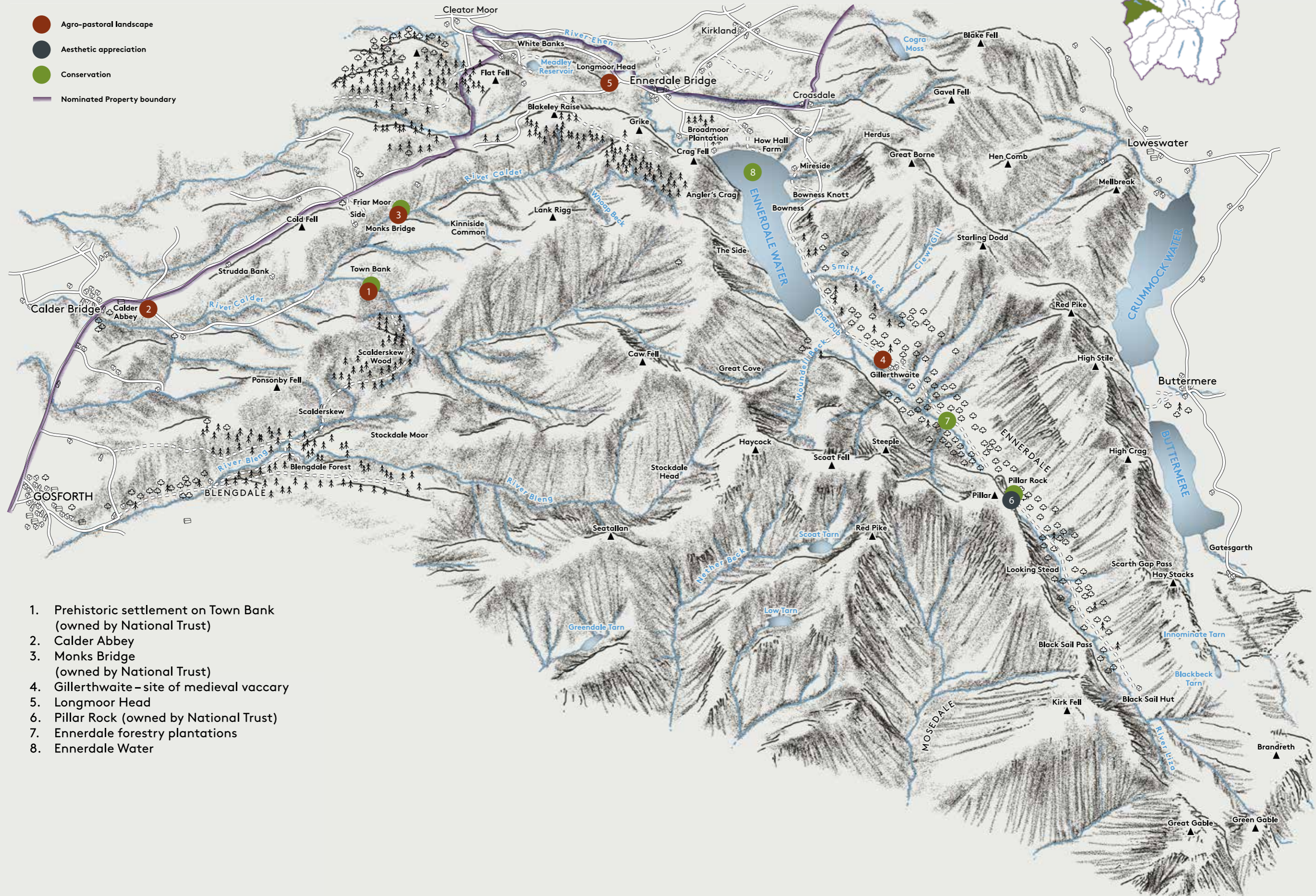
The head of the valley is framed by some of the English Lake District’s highest summits and presents a rocky, craggy face to the valley with a strong sense of enclosure. On the lower slopes, large-scale, mature conifer forests dominate the landscape. Felling, re-planting and natural regeneration together with the strong visual presence of the mobile, high-energy River Liza evoke a perpetual sense of change in the valley. The valley is unusual in that for the most part land is owned by only three landowners, the Forestry Commission, National Trust and United Utilities.

The agricultural field pattern of the valley is a typical Lake District one with inbye, intake and open fell grazing patterns but now obscured largely by conifers. The inbye areas in the valley bottom by Gillerthwaite are still intact.

**Figure 2.c.7.2 Ennerdale Valley Illustrative Map**



- Agro-pastoral landscape
- Aesthetic appreciation
- Conservation
- Nominated Property boundary



1. Prehistoric settlement on Town Bank (owned by National Trust)
2. Calder Abbey
3. Monks Bridge (owned by National Trust)
4. Gillerthwaite – site of medieval vaccary
5. Longmoor Head
6. Pillar Rock (owned by National Trust)
7. Ennerdale forestry plantations
8. Ennerdale Water

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



NO. 1 FIGURE 2.c.7.3 Prehistoric settlement on Town Bank (owned by National Trust)



NO. 2 FIGURE 2.c.7.4 Calder Abbey



NO. 3 FIGURE 2.c.7.5 Monks Bridge (owned by National Trust)



NO. 5 FIGURE 2.c.7.7 Longmoor Head



NO. 4 FIGURE 2.c.7.6 Gillerthwaite – site of medieval vaccary



NO. 6 FIGURE 2.c.7.8 Pillar Rock (owned by National Trust)



NO. 7 FIGURE 2.c.7.9 Ennerdale forestry plantations



NO. 8 FIGURE 2.c.7.10 Ennerdale Water



**FIGURE 2.c.7.11** Aerial view of Ennerdale

Until the sale of the valley to the Forestry Commission, Ennerdale had an important place in the tradition of Herdwick livestock in the Lake District. Two thousand Herdwick sheep had to be removed from Gillerthwaite and Ennerdale Dale when the valley was forested. Despite this, there are still 16 farms with fell-going flocks in the Ennerdale valley area and a few farms which still contain 16th-17th century fabric including Bowness and Longmoor Head. The valley has relatively little settlement; Ennerdale Bridge is the only village. About 31 per cent of the valley is Registered Common Land, mostly on the south side of the valley. The annual Ennerdale Show is a traditional Lakeland agricultural show running since 1895; Beatrix Potter was President of the Show in 1934.

Industry has left little impact in this valley, although it has been used to supply water since 1864. This has had an impact on the landscape and brought the water authorities into conflict with conservation groups in the past. The lack of railway access to the valley today is a result of opposition to such a scheme in 1883. This proposal along with others in the Lake District, convinced Canon Rawnsley to form the Lake District Defence Society, which ultimately became the Friends of the Lake District.

The greatest impact on the valley is the afforestation from the 1920s and its subsequent use as evidence to argue the case against further large-scale afforestation in Eskdale and the Duddon Valley because of the impact here on landscape, access, farming and the local economy. Ultimately, the planting here and elsewhere in the English Lake District led to the 1936 agreement between the Forestry Commission, the newly formed Friends of the Lake District and the Council for the Protection of Rural England to limit the cover of the forestry and the transfer of some land to the National Trust who now have extensive estates in Ennerdale. The three major landowners in the valley – the Forestry Commission, National Trust and United Utilities PLC – supported by Natural England, have combined to form the 'Wild Ennerdale Project'. This seeks to manage the Ennerdale Valley as a unique place, allowing natural forces to become more dominant in the shaping of the landscape and the ecology and therefore providing an inspirational visitor experience and special conservation habitats.

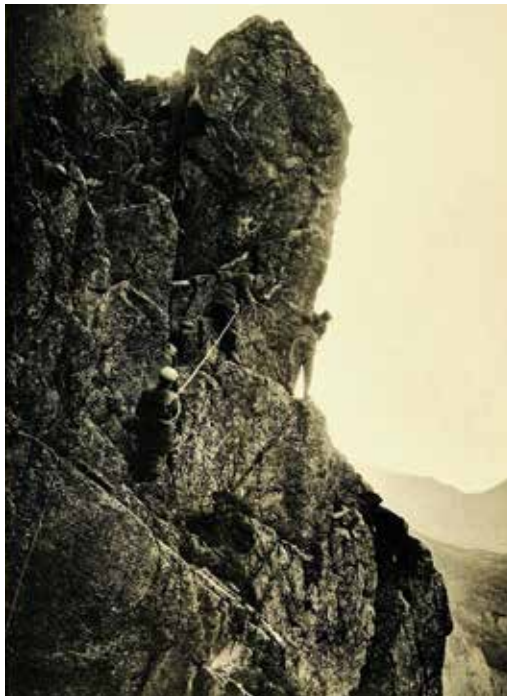


FIGURE 2.c.7.12 Ennerdale Water and the Irish Sea in the distance

Archaeological evidence survives despite the forestry. The greatest archaeological importance of the valley is its collective resource, which reveals the complex mechanisms of the valley's development. Ennerdale has no extensive ring garth and has been subject to only limited enclosure in the valley bottom; the archaeological resource has therefore not been adversely affected by the intensive land improvement found in other Lake District valleys. Consequently, Ennerdale contains a remarkable survival of settlement and industrial remains extending back to at least the Bronze Age. There are remains from later periods through to the present, albeit with some breaks (2,000 - 800 BC), indicated by discontinuities of settlement. Its medieval remains in particular are very well-preserved. Some site groups, such as the Smithy Beck mining remains and the Gillerthwaite medieval settlements, are of national importance.

The upper reaches of Ennerdale, beyond Ennerdale Water, appear to have remained relatively unenclosed throughout the medieval period, except for The Side, on the southern slopes of the valley. This large stone walled enclosure functioned as a deer park. In contrast, the pattern of small, irregular fields on the northern side of the head of the lake are typical of the single, ancient farms more characteristic of the Lakeland valleys. It was not until the 1870s that Ennerdale was enclosed, with the pattern of large, ruler-straight enclosures, bounded with iron posts and wire, which are typical of that late period. This was one of the last major acts of enclosure to take place in England. Following economic depression over the next 50 years, the land in Ennerdale was bought by the Forestry Commission for commercial conifer plantation.

Long before this last phase of enclosure and before the blanket coverage of the valley by forestry, Ennerdale was visited by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1799. The rocky island in Ennerdale left an impression on both poets and it featured in Wordsworth's 'Guide to the Lakes'. Wordsworth recognised the time depth of the pastoral system in the valley which



**FIGURE 2.c.7.13** Pillar Rock, also called The Pillar or Pillar Stone, an attraction for early rock-climbing

he reflected in his poem 'The Brothers' written in 1800. Wordsworth used the local Bowman family from Mireside Farm in Ennerdale as his inspiration for the Ewebank family and their tales to describe the hardships endured by these ancient farming families in contrast to the indulgent life of the Picturesque-obsessed tourists.

There is also, in this poem, a distinctive reference to 'The Pillar' where, as part of the narrative, a young shepherd died while sleepwalking. It was on The Pillar that true rock-climbing began. Jonathan Otley's 1823 Guide described the Pillar Stone as 'un-climbable'. This was of course a challenge, and so a local shepherd, John Atkinson, responded by climbing it in 1824. From then on, an increasing number of visitors climbed

the rock. In 1850 the Swiss C. A. Baumgartner established the 'Old Wall Route' and the tricky 'North Climb' was achieved by W. Haskett-Smith in 1890.

Despite these strong associations with Wordsworth, Coleridge and early rock climbing, there are no buildings, villas or ornamental landscapes associated with the Picturesque or growing tourism movement in Ennerdale. Instead the landscape was characterised by a long farming tradition and Herdwick farming in particular. Throughout the 19th century, an annual sheep fair was held at Ennerdale Bridge on the second Tuesday in September. In addition, Gillerthwaite farm held its own annual sale of 'draft sheep from the coves' which it held by the side of Ennerdale Water, at Bowness. The depression in the 1920s and 1930s resulted in many farms being let and stimulated a large amount of movement of families between farms hoping to better themselves. Of the 130 farms in the inaugural flock book of 1920 (for the whole English Lake District) only six families are still breeding Herdwicks on the same farms.

It was against this harsh economic climate that the Forestry Commission acquired 2,023 hectares (5,000 acres) in the Ennerdale valley in 1925, including Dale Head from Lord Lonsdale. Towards the end of the 20th century the Forestry Commission, nationally, shifted its focus of forest management from timber production (linked to falling market prices and competition from Europe) towards rural development, economic regeneration, recreation, access, tourism, conservation and the environment, leading ultimately to the 'Wild Ennerdale Project'.

The 20th century also saw the expansion of the provision of water from the valley for the urban areas of Manchester, but this is now also in the process of retreat. The future of the valley is therefore based on an ever-increasing sense of wilderness and the local youth hostels at Gillerthwaite and Black Sail are now famous for being remote 'wilderness' hostels. Indeed Black Sail is only accessible on foot or bike. Haystacks, between Ennerdale

and Buttermere, is also well known as Alfred Wainwright's favourite fell and where his ashes were scattered near the shores of Innominate Tarn.

## QUALITIES

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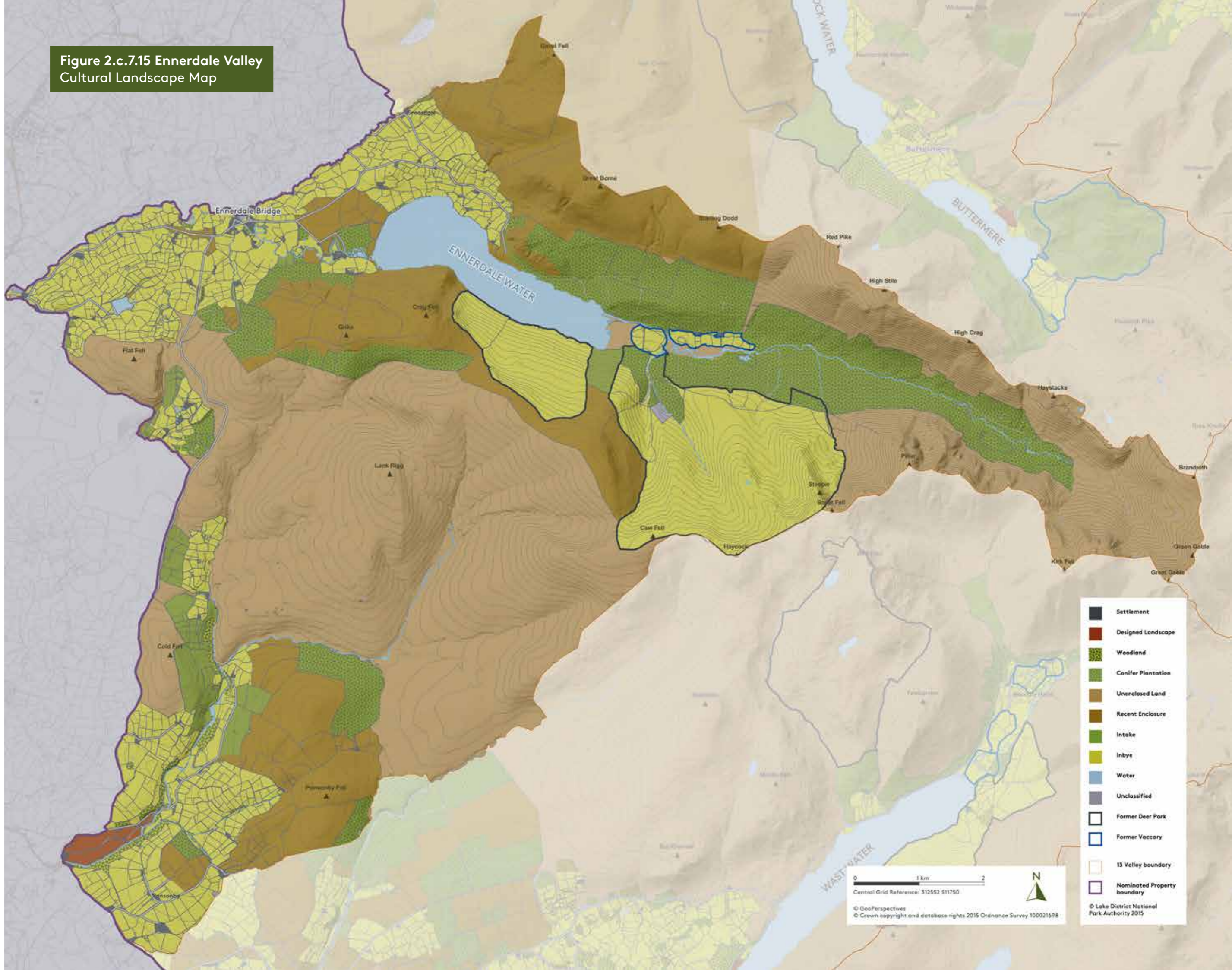
The area of the Ennerdale Valley within the nominated Property is predominantly rural, with no major settlements despite its proximity to the busier west coast of Cumbria. The tradition of agro-pastoral agricultural in the Ennerdale Valley is strong and there are good examples of early farm buildings dating from the 17th century. A large part of the valley comprises upland grazing for the 16 farms with fell-going flocks. There are seven Herdwick flocks and two Swaledale flocks registered with the relevant Sheep Breeders' Associations. The western end of the valley displays a pattern of piecemeal enclosure from former common fields while the valley of the River Liza still retains the valley bottom inbye land which, before afforestation, was surrounded by stone-walled intakes on the valley slopes. There are also areas of fell that were enclosed by Act of Parliament in the late 19th century. The annual Ennerdale show is one of the important events of the year for Herdwick breeders.

Ennerdale is very rich in evidence for land use from prehistory until the post-medieval period. The land to the south of Ennerdale Water contains some of the best preserved and extensive remains of Bronze and Iron Age settlements and field systems in the Lake District, and there are also many examples of early and later medieval shielings.



**FIGURE 2.c.7.14** The late 18th (1780) century mansion at Calder Abbey, built on the remains of a monastery which had been established in 1142 AD

Figure 2.c.7.15 Ennerdale 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: S12552 S11750  
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FIGURE 2.c.7.16 The contribution of the Ennerdale Valley to the cultural landscape themes identified



















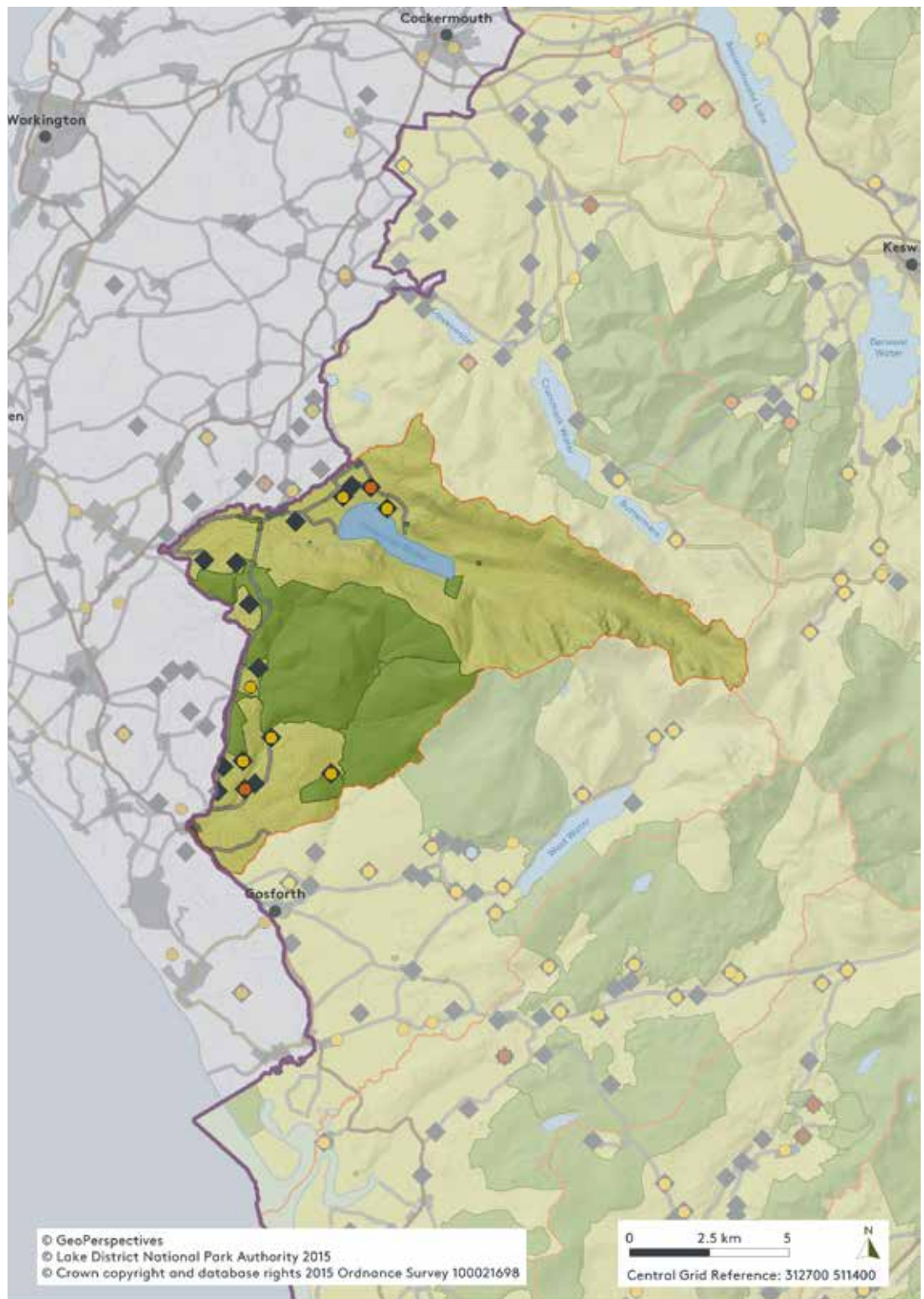
ENNERDALE		
THEME	COMPONENTS OF ATTRIBUTES	SIGNIFICANCE
Continuity of traditional agro-pastoralism and local industry in a spectacular mountain landscape	Extraordinary beauty and harmony	
	Evidence of pre-medieval settlement and agriculture	
	Distinctive early field system	
	Medieval buildings (e.g. churches, pele towers and early farmhouses)	
	16th/17th century farmhouses	None
	Herdwick flocks	
	Rough Fell flocks	None
	Swaledale flocks	
	Common land	
	Shepherds' meets/shows and traditional sports	
	Woodland industries	
	Mining/Quarrying	
	Water-powered industry	None
	Market towns	None
Discovery and appreciation of a rich cultural landscape	Viewing stations	None
	Villas	None
	Designed landscape	
	Early tourist infrastructure	None
	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	None

FIGURE 2.c.7.17 Shepherds' flocks and native sheep breeds in the Ennerdale 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.

The location of the medieval vaccary at Gillerthwaite can be detected in the survival of enclosures and buildings foundations adjacent to the more recent farm buildings and substantial remains of Calder Abbey survive, partly beneath a later 18th century mansion. The valley was also the location for iron mining and smelting in the medieval and early post-medieval periods, and the remains of bloomeries and huts which are likely to have been used by miners survive around Ennerdale Water.

Although it has a lake with a spectacular mountain backdrop, Ennerdale was not included in the usual itinerary of Picturesque sights in the Lake District in the 18th century. Difficult access to the Valley, which is the furthest west in the Lake District, was most likely a disincentive to early visitors and no villas were built here to take advantage of the lakeside locations. However, Ennerdale was visited by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge and provided inspiration for Wordsworth's poem *The Brothers*, whose subject matter included the long continuity of agro-pastoral farming in the area.

Ennerdale played an important role in the development of the early conservation movement in the Lake District. Protests in 1883 against the construction of a railway alongside the River Liza led Canon Rawnsley to found the Lake District Defence Society in 1883. In the early 20th century the afforestation by the Forestry Commission of the fell slopes surrounding the River Liza, and the loss of significant Herdwick hefts belonging to the farms at Gillerthwaite, led directly to the successful campaign by the newly-formed Friends of the Lake District to prevent further afforestation in the central Lake District. A large part of the valley area is now owned and managed by the National Trust (the National Trust owns 4,162 hectares of land of which 4,160 hectares is inalienable). Ennerdale continues to play an important part in the development of conservation practice in the Lake District through the Wild Ennerdale project.

Of the three themes of Outstanding Universal Value, Ennerdale therefore has strong evidence of attributes for agro-pastoral agriculture and the early conservation movement, but less than other valleys in the English Lake District for aesthetic inspiration.