

BUTTERMERE

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Summary Description

2.c.8 THE BUTTERMERE VALLEY



“Here the rocky scenes and mountain landscapes are diversified and contrasted with all that aggrandizes the object in most sublime style, and constitutes a picture the most enchanting of any in these parts.”

Thomas West, ‘Guide to the Lakes’ (1778)

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT

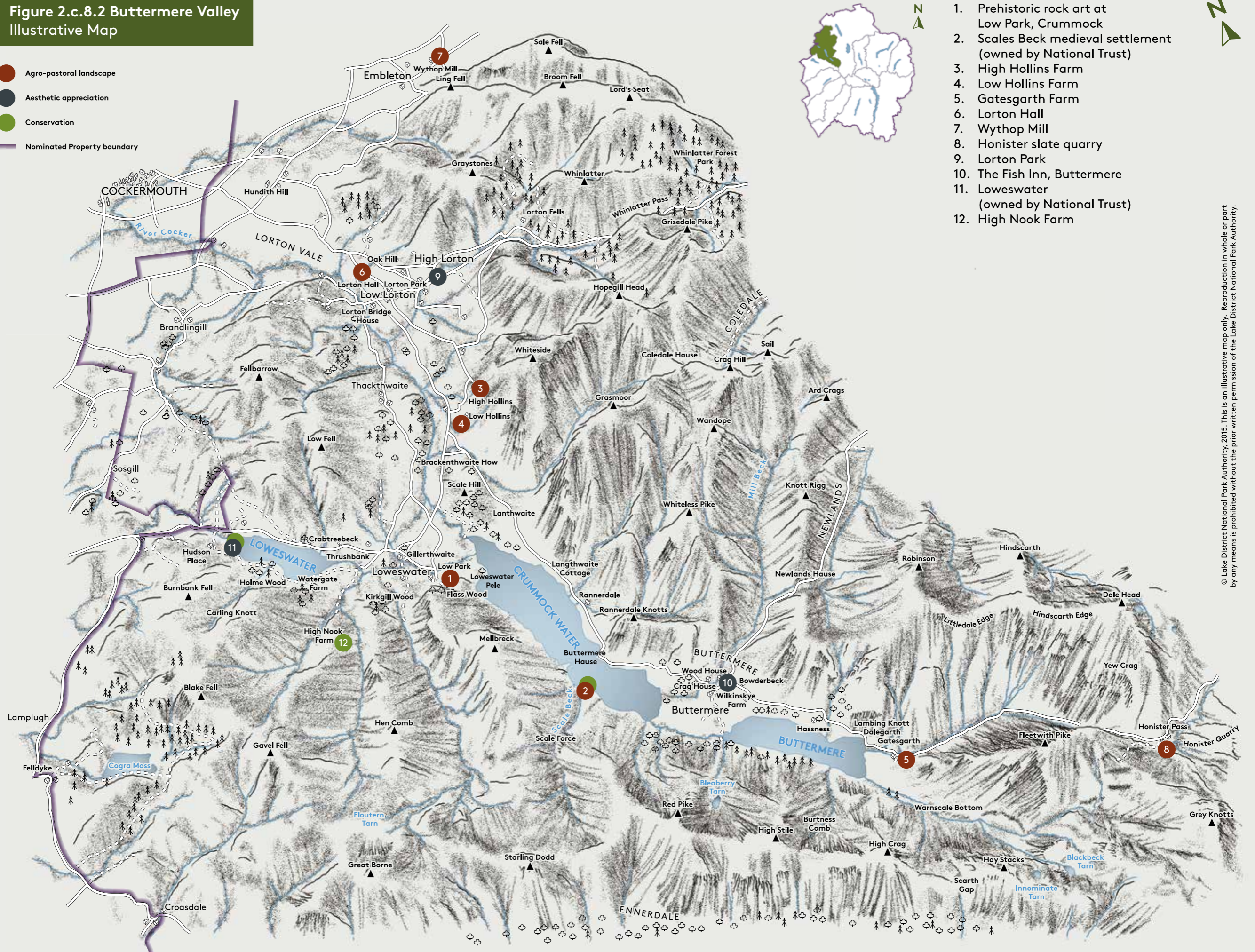
Located in the north-west of the Lake District, Buttermere is a classic U-shaped glacial valley containing the lakes of Buttermere and Crummock Water and running roughly south-east to north-west from the central fells to the West Cumbria coastal plain. The River Cocker, draining from the north end of Crummock Water, flows into the Derwent at Cockermouth.



FIGURE 2.c.8.1 Crummock Water in the foreground and Buttermere in the distance

Figure 2.c.8.2 Buttermere Valley Illustrative Map

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



1. Prehistoric rock art at Low Park, Crummock
2. Scales Beck medieval settlement (owned by National Trust)
3. High Hollins Farm
4. Low Hollins Farm
5. Gatesgarth Farm
6. Lorton Hall
7. Wythop Mill
8. Honister slate quarry
9. Lorton Park
10. The Fish Inn, Buttermere
11. Loweswater (owned by National Trust)
12. High Nook Farm

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



NO. 1 FIGURE 2.c.8.3 Prehistoric rock art at Low Park, Crummock



NO. 2 FIGURE 2.c.8.4 Scales Beck medieval settlement (during bracken clearance)



NO. 3 FIGURE 2.c.8.5 High Hollins Farm



NO. 4 FIGURE 2.c.8.6 Low Hollins Farm



NO. 5 FIGURE 2.c.8.7 Gatesgarth Farm



NO. 6 FIGURE 2.c.8.8 Lorton Hall



NO. 7 FIGURE 2.c.8.9 Wythop Mill



NO. 8 FIGURE 2.c.8.10 Honister Slate Quarry



NO. 9 FIGURE 2.c.8.11 Lorton Park



NO. 10 FIGURE 2.c.8.12 The Fish Inn, Buttermere



NO. 11 FIGURE 2.c.8.13 Loweswater



NO. 12 FIGURE 2.c.8.14 High Nook Farm

At the head of the valley, steep, craggy and scree-covered fells tower above the valley floor and provide a strong sense of enclosure. Below these steep, imposing fells, the flat valley floor, the large lakes and the softening influences of the bright green inbye field pattern, woodlands, hedgerows and in-field trees together with attractive vernacular buildings results in stunning scenery with a managed and gentle appearance.

This contrasts sharply with the rough textured greys and browns of the fells, while the working mines and quarries at Honister Hause with their legacy of spoil tips and fans cascading down the steep fellsides are a dramatic reminder of the scale of past industries in the fells.



FIGURE 2.c.8.15 Honister Slate Mine and Fleetwith Pike

Despite modern developments, the pastoral character of the Buttermere Valley remains intact, with sheep farming still the principal occupation. Around 16 per cent of the total area is Registered Common Land, a lower proportion than many other Lake District valleys. However, it is home to 31 fell-going flocks including Gatesgarth Farm which is one of the most important Herdwick farms in the Lake District with a long

history of agricultural improvements and Herdwick breeding. Local farming families and visitors are served by two agricultural shows; the Buttermere Shepherds' Meet and Show and the Loweswater Show. The farm buildings in this valley include many 17th to 18th century farmhouses and associated agricultural buildings and these contribute towards the 84 nationally-important listed buildings in the valley. But there are very few villas or designed landscapes here. The Gothic Hassness villa was built shortly before 1800 and occupied a prominent site affording views down the length of Buttermere, but it was demolished after the First World War and replaced by an Art Deco villa of some architectural quality. Lorton Park, a classic early 19th century villa with a parkland setting, summer house and rare smokehouse for fish and hams does survive.

Although the settlement pattern in the valley is based predominantly on single farms, there is a small village with medieval origins at Buttermere. Other small settlements are Loweswater, Embleton, Wythop Mill, High and Low Lorton, Thackthwaite, Brackenthwaite and part of Lamplugh. Lorton Hall includes the most significant remains of a medieval building in the valley. Evidence for early land use is demonstrated by the distribution of prehistoric rock art and enclosed settlements and early medieval shielings in the Valley. The earliest evidence of farmsteads is probably Romano-British in date and tends to cluster in the limited areas of fertile ground. Early medieval evidence of settlement is based on place name evidence which owes much to the Old Norse language, but can in fact represent a later use of earlier linguistic terms. There is more direct evidence in the form of early medieval settlement remains at Rannerdale and Scale Beck, on opposite sides of Crummock Water.

The pattern of the agricultural landscape from Buttermere to Loweswater is varied and reflects hundreds of years of development. There is documentary evidence for a vaccary (dairy and stock farm) at Gatesgarth, at the head of the valley, in the mid-13th century

and recent archaeological excavation discovered the remains of a longhouse of this period adjacent to the modern farm. Large stone walled intakes on either side of the head of the valley are also likely to date from this period.

On the flat delta between the lakes of Buttermere and Crummock Water, the existing field system represents the remains of a medieval open field which was sub-divided with stone walls in later periods.



FIGURE 2.c.8.16 An aerial view of the fields on the flat delta between Buttermere and Crummock Water

Small irregular fields and individual groups of farm buildings at Buttermere and Rannerdale are a typical English Lake District pattern of single, ancient farms and there are much more extensive areas of this in the wider part of the valley around Loweswater and into Lorton Vale. Extensive areas of fell land on the west side of Crummock Water were subject to Parliamentary enclosure, but the stone-walled parcels are so large that the feel of open fell is retained. The fell on the east side of the valley is largely unenclosed.

The traces of past industries are not so apparent here as in other valleys, although the woodland on the west side of Buttermere contains evidence for charcoal burning and there are traces of medieval iron production. There is evidence of water-powered mills and of extractive industries, of which the most extensive is the Honister slate mine. The first recorded lease at the mine was of 21 years to John Walker in 1728. It went through a series of expansions and technological improvements in the 18th and 19th centuries, some of which brought the mine into conflict with growing conservation interests in the valley. These were perhaps triggered by 18th century guidebooks including that of Thomas West, who was most taken with Buttermere and especially the view above Gatesgarth: "Here the rocky scenes and mountain landscapes are



FIGURE 2.c.8.17 Trees on the shore of Buttermere

diversified and contrasted with all that aggrandizes the object in most sublime style, and constitutes a picture the most enchanting of any in these parts". Thomas West 'Guide to the Lakes' (1778).

Peter Crosthwaite's 1794 map of the Buttermere valley included West's three viewing stations and marked a further three suggested stations, extending further south on Crummock Water and Buttermere. During Wordsworth's and

Coleridge's walking tour of 1799, they marvelled at the size and complexity of the yew tree on the bank of Whit Beck and Wordsworth went on to celebrate it in his poem 'Yew Trees'. Not long after the poem was written, the tree, which had a 27 foot girth, was reduced to a mere 13 feet by a storm. The tree survives today.

On the same journey, Coleridge gave a vivid description of Grasmoor and a more dramatic account of Scale Force, south of Crummock Water:

"the chasm thro' which it flows, is stupendous – so wildly wooded that the mosses & wet weeds & perilous Tree increase the Horror of the rocks which ledge only enough to interrupt not stop your fall – & the Tree – O God! to think of a poor Wretch hanging with one arm from it".

Joseph Mallord William Turner, at the outset of his career, came to the Buttermere Valley in 1797 as part of his eight-week northern tour. During this tour he made the transition from being a painter of architecture to a painter of rugged landscapes and their elements. From this trip Turner produced the spectacular oil painting for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1798, entitled 'Buttermere Lake, with Part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower.' The picture's rainbow is a Turner addition; the field sketch had only a lightened sky.

John Marshall bought land in Buttermere from 1814 under the guidance of Wordsworth to protect its views and scenery. The landscape today, and the woodland in particular reflects his approach to woodland management including the planting of native species and the use of irregular fence lines to reflect the pattern of ancient enclosure. In addition to woodland investment, Marshall repaired and restored the existing farm infrastructure. All of these actions preserved the landscape and farming culture valued by Wordsworth. This is an early example of a privately-funded model of cultural landscape protection, which brought large areas of the Lake District into benign private ownership and eased future transfer to like-minded wealthy individuals and conservation organisations after 1934 when the Marshall estate came up for sale. Most of the land was purchased by the National Trust, with the remainder purchased by Balliol College (Oxford), G. M. Trevelyan and a number of other private individuals who then entered into restrictive covenants with the National Trust in order to control future land use. The National Trust now owns 3,170 hectares of land and has covenants on a further 2,441 hectares of



FIGURE 2.c.8.18 'Buttermere Lake, with Part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower' by J. M. W. Turner (1798)

land in the Buttermere valley area. The Lake District Special Planning Board purchased Hassness and Dalegarth in 1954 with the original aim of improving an important area of broadleaved woodland. The property covered an area of 9.9 hectares and included two houses – Hassness and Dalegarth surrounded by a semi-natural woodland of mixed species. The wood is a prominent landscape feature on the lakeshore and the Buttermere Valley.

Hassness Country House has provided guided walking holidays by Ramblers Countrywide Holidays since 1955. Similarly the youth hostel at Buttermere village is a former Victorian Hotel and the youth hostel at Honister Hause is former quarry workers' housing.

QUALITIES

The landscape character of the Buttermere Valley reflects the primary importance of agro-pastoral agriculture and there are many attributes which demonstrate this, including clear and extensive patterns of inbye and intake field, numerous early farm buildings and key Herdwick farms. The field system of Gatesgarth at the head of Buttermere still displays its origin as a medieval vaccary and it has one of the largest and most important Herdwick flocks in the Lake District. The name 'Buttermere' reflects this past land use, translating from Old English as the 'lake surrounded by good grazing land'.

Due to its close proximity to Borrowdale, Buttermere attracted the attention of early visitors in search of Picturesque beauty in the English Lake District. The guidebook writer Thomas West identified a number of viewing stations around Loweswater and the Valley also attracted artists including J. M. W. Turner, who painted a magnificent scene of a storm

over Crummock Water. Buttermere was visited by Wordsworth and Coleridge on their walking tour of 1799 and the Valley features in some of Wordsworth's poems, including the 'Yew Tree'. Unlike other valleys in the central Lake District, Buttermere saw relatively little villa development around the lakes, possibly due to relatively difficult access in the 18th century.

Early conservation interest in the valley included the purchase by John Marshall of extensive landholdings around the lakes of Buttermere, Crummock Water and Loweswater, with the encouragement and involvement of William Wordsworth, and with the primary aim of conserving the landscape beauty of the area. Large parts of the Valley have subsequently been purchased by the National Trust and the whole of the valley head of Buttermere is covered by a restrictive covenant agreed with G. M. Trevelyan in 1937. This has assisted greatly in maintaining the beauty of this predominantly agro-pastoral valley.

The key attributes of Outstanding Universal Value which are evident in Buttermere are demonstrative of the first theme of agro-pastoral farming, but somewhat less evidence for aesthetic inspiration than some other valleys. There are extensive attributes relating to the early conservation movement.

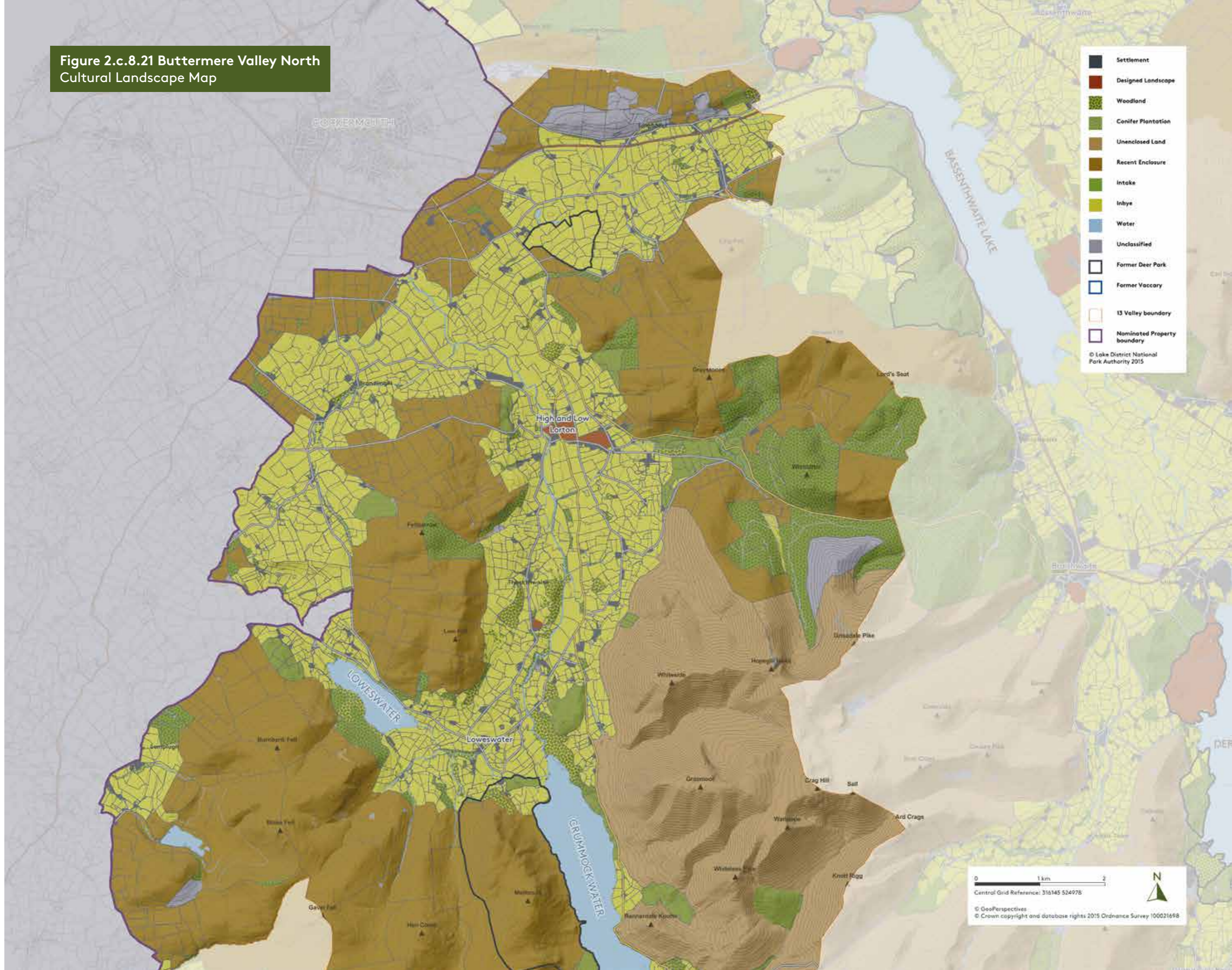


FIGURE 2.c.8.19 The scenic beauty of winter in the Buttermere Valley, from Melbreak

FIGURE 2.c.8.20 The contribution of the Buttermere Valley to the cultural landscape themes identified

BUTTERMERE		
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	
	Swaledale flocks	
	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	
	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	None

Figure 2.c.8.21 Buttermere Valley North 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
- © Lake District National Park Authority 2015

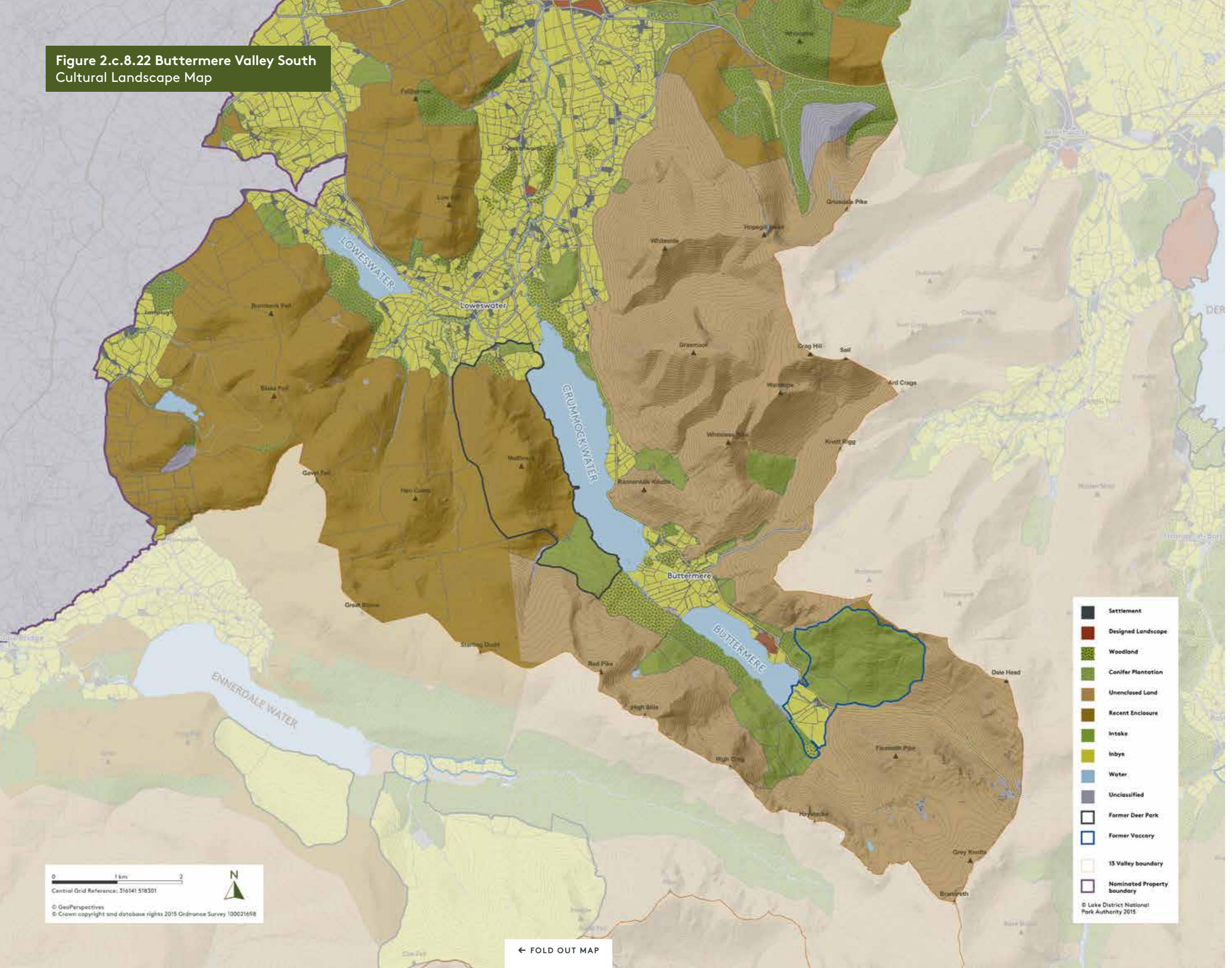
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Figure 2.c.8.22 Buttermere Valley South Cultural Landscape Map

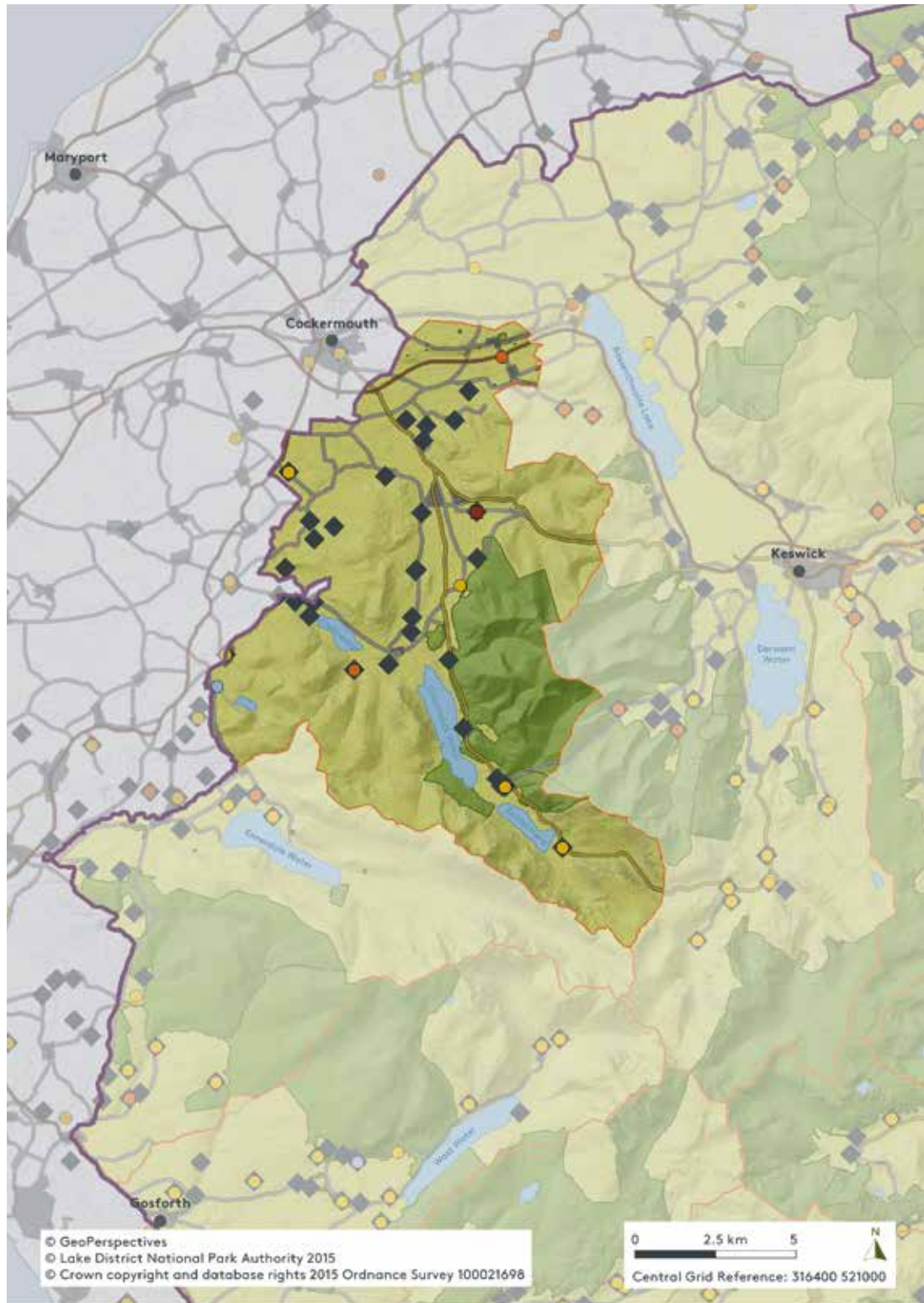


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- Settlement
 - Designed Landscape
 - Woodland
 - Conifer Plantation
 - Unenclosed Land
 - Recent Enclosure
 - Intake
 - Inbye
 - Water
 - Unclassified
 - Former Deer Park
 - Former Voccary
 - 13 Valley boundary
 - Nominated Property boundary
- © Lake District National Park Authority 2015

← FOLD OUT MAP

FIGURE 2.c.8.23 Shepherds' flocks and native sheep breeds in the Buttermere 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.