Crummock Water from Lorton

8. BUTTERMERE

—

Description, History and Development

8. THE BUTTERMERE VALLEY

"The vale of Buttermere, with the lake and village of that name, and Crummock-water, beyond, next present themselves. We will follow the main stream, the Coker, through the fertile and beautiful vale of Lorton, until it is lost in the Derwent, below the noble ruins of Cockermouth Castle".

William Wordsworth, 'Guide to the Lakes' (1835)

8.1 DESCRIPTION

8.1.1 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

"Mellbreak and Crummock Water, essential partners in a successful scenery enterprise, depending on each other for effectiveness. Crummock Water's eastern shore, below Grasmoor, is gay with life and colour – trees, pastures, farms, cattle, traffic, tents and people – but it is the view across the lake, where the water laps the sterile base of Mellbreak far beneath the mountain's dark escarpment, where loneliness, solitude and silence prevail' that make the scene unforgettable."

For those who Love the Hills – Quotations from Wainwright's 'Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells' (Dyer 1994)

Located in the north-west of the English Lake District, Buttermere is a classic U-shaped glacial valley containing the lakes of Buttermere and Crummock Water, once one lake. It runs roughly south east to north west from the central fells to the meandering Derwent Valley and on to the West Cumbria coastal plain and the mouth of the Solway Firth. The River Cocker, draining from the north end of Crummock Water, lends its name to the town at the confluence with the Derwent at Cockermouth.

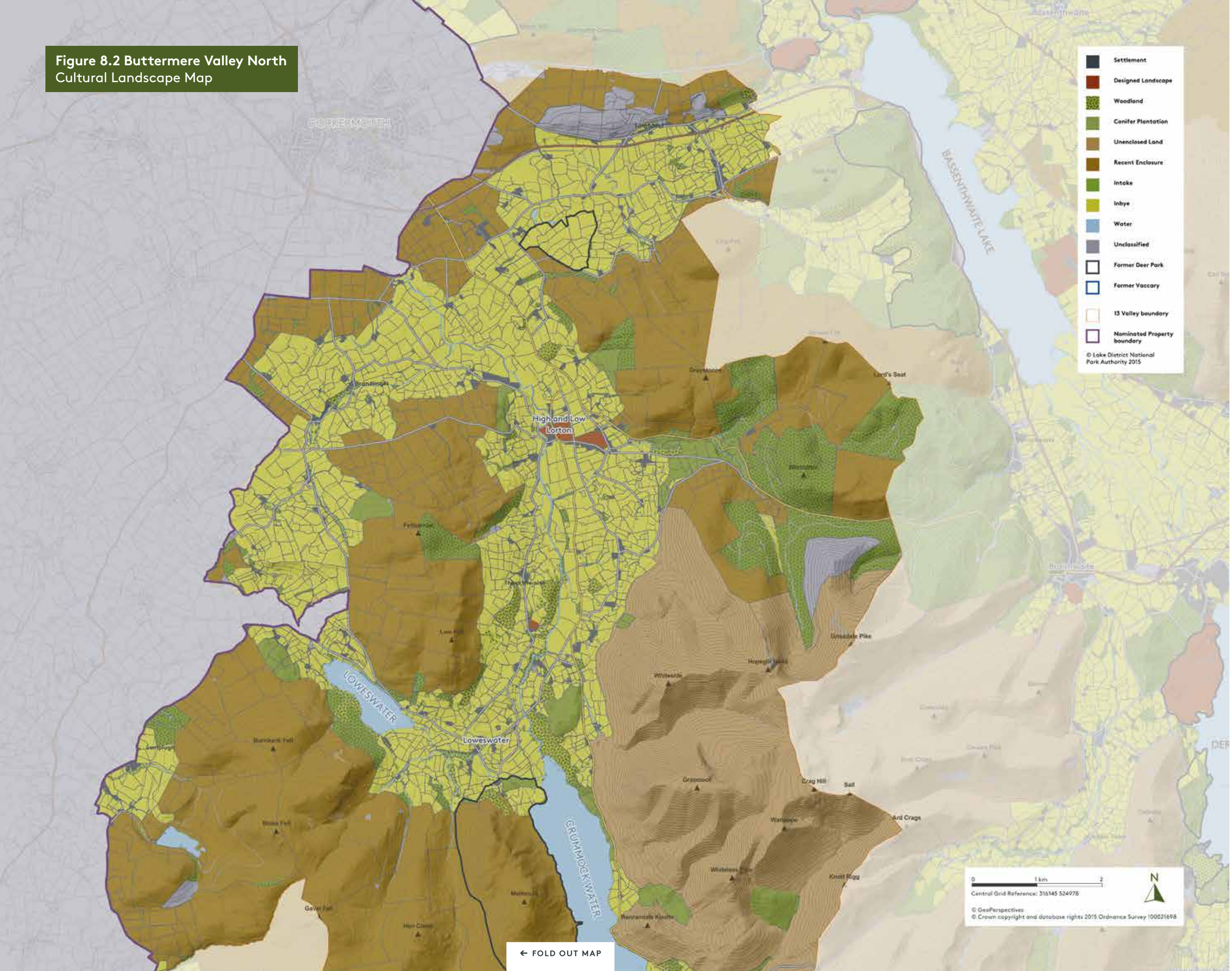
The geology of the Buttermere valley is almost entirely of the Skiddaw Group, with a small area of the Borrowdale Volcanic Group at the southwestern end at Honister Hause and a patch of granite on the west side of Buttermere itself. This is reflected in the smoother character of the high fells formed from the Skiddaw Group rocks

Figure 8.1 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

Figure 8.2 Buttermere Valley North
Cultural Landscape Map



← FOLD OUT MAP

Figure 8.3 Buttermere Valley South
Cultural Landscape Map

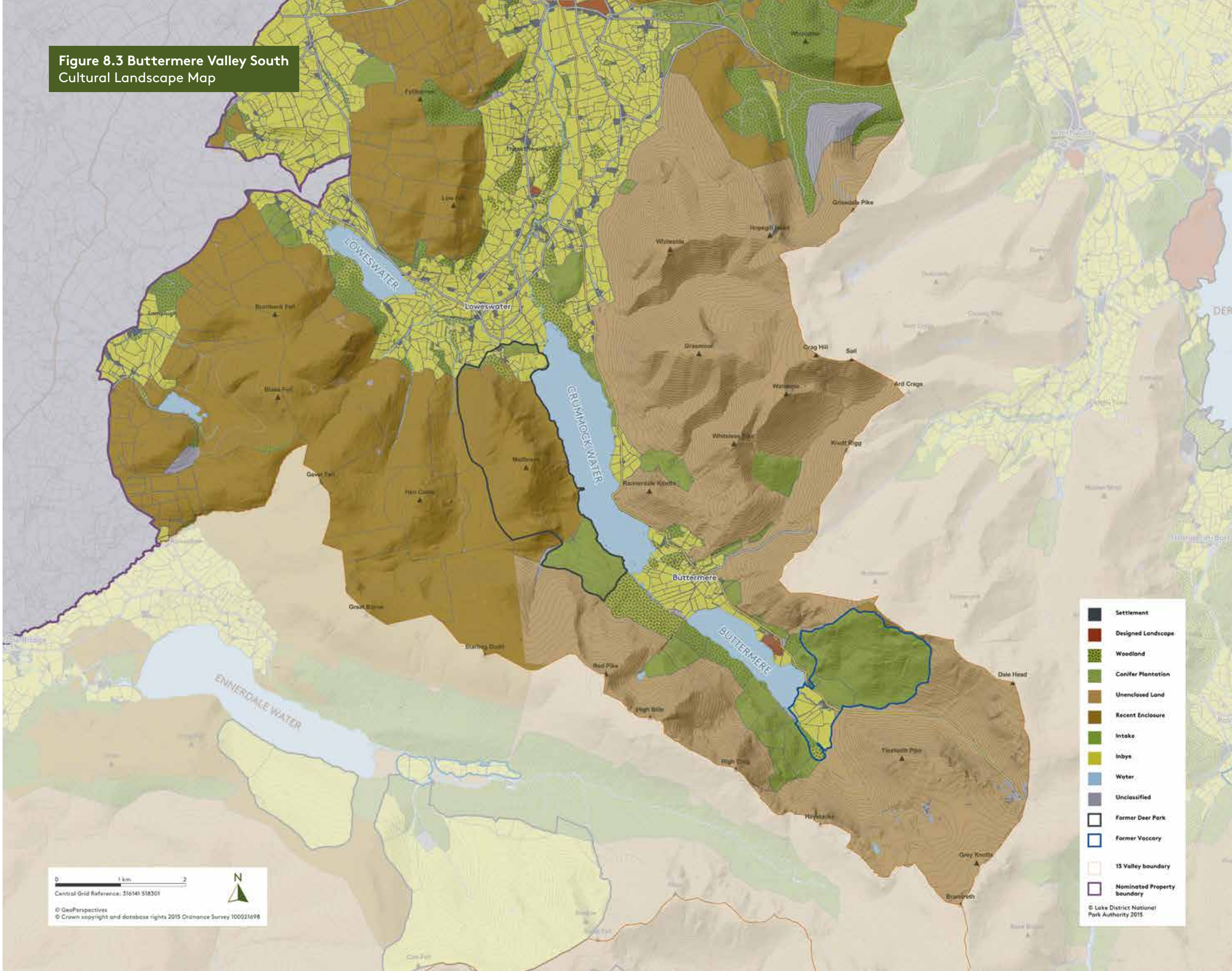


FIGURE 8.4 The contribution of the Buttermere Valley to the cultural landscape themes identified

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	CL CL
	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	NTC NTC NTC
	Other Protective Trusts and ownership including National Park Authority	None

← FOLD OUT MAP

FIGURE 8.5 Aerial view looking north west into the Buttermere valley with Honister Slate mines in the foreground and Buttermere and Crummock Water in the distance

FIGURE 8.6 View south east from Buttermere towards Fleetwith Pike in winter

(Grasmoor for example) which contrast with the more jagged appearance of the fells at the south eastern end of the valley which are formed from Borrowdale Volcanic geology (e.g. Haystacks and Fleetwith Pike). See Figure 8.1 for an illustrative map of the valley. Also see Figures 8.2 and 8.3 for an overview of the cultural landscape of the Buttermere valley.

8.1.2 THE INHERITED LANDSCAPE'S CHARACTER

At the head of the valley, the steep, craggy and scree-covered fells (including Fleetwith Pike, Dale Head, Robinson and Haystacks) tower above the valley floor and provide a strong sense of enclosure. The two lakes occupy the whole width of the valley floor leaving little scope for inbye pasture, apart from a few places – at the south end and east shore of Buttermere, the isthmus between the two lakes, at Rannerdale on the east shore of Crummock Water, and at the north end of Crummock Water around Loweswater village and north into Lorton Vale. Here the gentler, more managed landscape of bright green pastures with their striking pattern of slate field walls and hedges contrast sharply with the rough textured greys and browns of the fell. The stunning scenery of the Buttermere valley is due to the composition of the steep imposing fells, the flat valley floor, the large lakes and the softening influences of the inbye field pattern, woodlands, hedgerow and field trees and attractive vernacular buildings.

The buildings and structures in the valley represent the full range of economic drivers in the Lake District over the centuries. Gatesgarth Farm dominates the inbye at the head of the lake and the rough grazing on the surrounding fells. The three farms in tiny Buttermere village together with two hotels, cafés, a public car park and a campsite in a very small area create a unique community atmosphere. This is enhanced by the sense of containment and remoteness created not only by the enclosing fells but also by the relative difficulty in reaching the upper valley by road. The road network, in part following the east shore of Crummock Water, is narrow and twisting, often enclosed by walls or high hedges. Buttermere village is also accessed by road over two mountain passes, Newlands Hause (from the head of the Newlands valley) and Honister Pass (from the head of the Borrowdale valley). The challenging access provides an insight into life and work in an upland landscape and the contrast with life in the valleys. The working quarries and mines at Honister Hause and the legacy of spoil tips and talus/scree fans cascading down the steep fellsides are a dramatic reminder of the scale of past industries in the fells. Further north in Lorton Vale, the Whinlatter Pass connects the valley to Keswick via the extensive conifer plantations of Whinlatter Forest Park, an area of timber production, tourism and outdoor activities.

North of Crummock Water the gently meandering course of the River Cocker runs through Lorton Vale where the valley broadens; more distant fells still provide a strong sense of containment. The pasture fields, stone walls, hedges, hedgerow trees, networks of small woodlands and minor roads create an intricate pattern to the landscape which has a tranquil atmosphere. West and east of Lorton Vale the fells become lower with the smooth profile of the underlying geology of the softer Skiddaw Slate. The verdant, intricately patterned, side valley containing the small lake of Loweswater, owned by the National Trust, has a tranquil feel not dissimilar to Lorton Vale. But the designed landscape introduced into the village of Lorton, where exotic conifers punctuate the

landscape, provides a very different visual experience. Lorton Vale gradually widens as the enclosing fells diminish in height until the defining characteristic from the flatter, more open farmland becomes the view south back to the dramatic upland edge.

8.1.3 FARMING TODAY – THE AGRO-PASTORAL LANDSCAPE

The agricultural landscape from Buttermere to Loweswater is varied and reflects hundreds of years of evolution. Despite modern development, the pastoral character of the Buttermere Valley remains intact, with sheep farming still the principal occupation. Gatesgarth Farm is one of the most important Herdwick farms in the Lake District with a long history of agricultural improvements and Herdwick breeding. It remains the largest farm and one of the larger tup producing farms (the Richardsons produce 15-20 tups a year), still in private hands, but has covenants with the National Trust for land management.

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 subdivided with stone walls in later periods. Farms on the surrounding fellsides developed from 1215 throughout the 13th and early 14th centuries. The small irregular fields and individual groups of farm buildings at Buttermere and Rannerdale comprise a typical Lake District pattern of single, ancient farms, with more extensive areas in the wider part of the valley around Loweswater and into Lorton Vale.

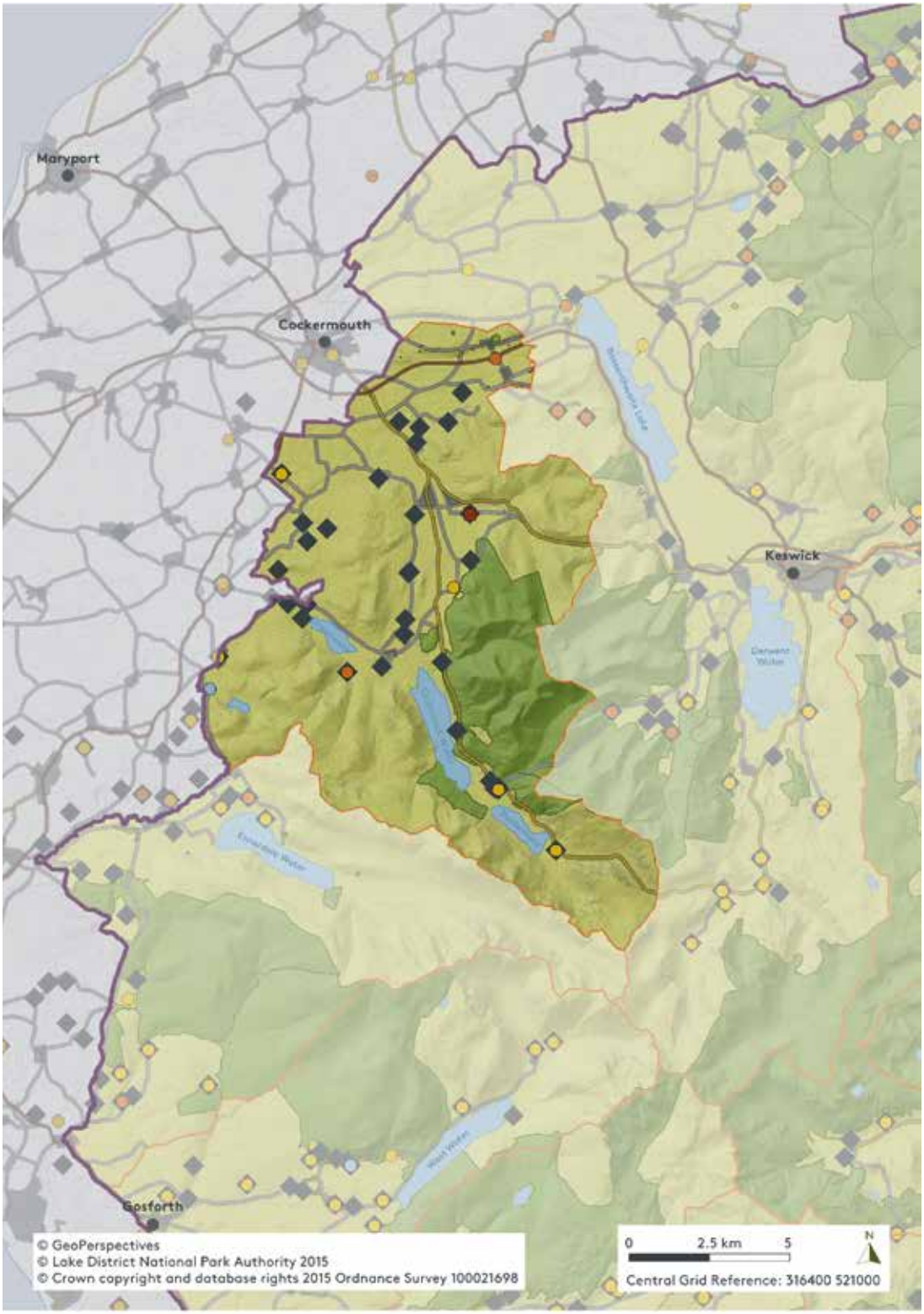
FIGURE 8.7 Aerial view of the field system between Buttermere and Crummock Water which still reflects the medieval pattern

The presence of a ring garth at the southern end of the Buttermere Valley is shown by the place-name Gatesgarth Farm, which is likely to reflect private land use associated with the management of a vaccary. The lines of two former ring garths may also have been preserved within the extent of the post-medieval head-dyke near Bowderbeck and the farms at Wood House, Sorescale Bank, and Spout House. At Rannerdale there is evidence of a small enclosure which may have been used as a stock pound or enclosed hay meadow to protect it from grazing animals.

Evidence apparent today of former medieval open fields can still be seen at High and Low Lorton suggesting that Lorton Hall had its own holding. At Loweswater, there are strips which might represent former arable enclosed as strips.

There are examples of broad ridge and furrow cultivation earthworks distributed throughout the valley, although most of these sites lie to the north of Crummock Water. In several areas within Buttermere field clearance associated with arable agriculture is attested by the presence of clearance cairns, which might be associated with nearby sites of suggested medieval date, although this practice continued into the post-medieval

FIGURE 8.8 Shepherds' flocks and native sheep breeds in the Buttermere Valley



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.

period. Such sites can be found around Highpark, close to areas of broad ridge-and-furrow and within the grounds of documented medieval tenements. There are also clearance cairns adjacent to the deserted medieval settlement north of Dale How and in the environs of a probable medieval farmstead at High Nook Farm.

WORKING FARMS AND FLOCKS

FIGURE 8.9 Farmer with sheepdogs gathering in his fell-going sheep (both Herdwicks and Swaledales)

Today, there are 31 farms with fell-going flocks in the Buttermere Valley. There are six Herdwick flocks, three Swaledale flocks and one Rough Fell flock registered with the relevant Sheep Breeders' Associations. There are three National Trust landlord flocks listed in the 'Lakeland Shepherds' Guide' (2005) for the Buttermere Valley area. There are about 2,300 hectares of Registered Common Land in the Buttermere Valley, around 16 per cent of the total area, which is a lower proportion of land than many other Lake District valleys. The main areas of common land are Brackenthwaite Fell, and Brackenthwaite Common, Buttermere Common, and Hobcarton, on the fells to the east of Crummock Water and Buttermere. The only other significant area is Buttermere Dubs on the western fellside at the south end of Crummock Water, along to the foot of Buttermere, including a large area of Burtness Wood.

CONTINUING FARMING CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

The Buttermere Shepherd Meet and Show has a relatively recent history (the first meet was held in 1976 at Croft Farm) and is organised by and primarily for shepherds, their sheep and dogs, but is also open to the public. It includes events such as a walking stick competition, showing of terriers, foxhounds and children's pets, hound trailing, fell races and Cumberland/Westmorland wrestling. It is held at Lanthwaite Green on the fourth Saturday in October.

The annual Loweswater Show is held on the first Sunday in September. There have been 139 shows up to and including 2015. The format is little altered from the original with livestock, agricultural classes, industrial classes, fell races, poultry, horses, vintage vehicles, Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling, sheep dog trials, hound trails; and children's games.

FARMSTEADS

The farm building stock of this valley includes many 17th to 18th century farmhouses and associated agricultural buildings which contribute towards the valley's 84 nationally important listed buildings. Four farmsteads have been lost at Peel Place, Stockbridge, to the south of Wilkinsyke Farm and at Loweswater Pele, which may have included 17th century architecture. The best examples of 17th and 18th century farmhouses or farmsteads include those listed below.

TABLE 8.1 Key farm buildings in the Buttermere Valley

HUDSON PLACE

Hudson Place: a farmhouse with a 1741 date stone with coat of arms.

DATE 18th century
OWNERSHIP Private
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 311527 522218

CRAG FARM, BUTTERMERE

A relatively unaltered example of a 17th and 18th century farmhouse and farmstead.

DATE 17th – 18th century
OWNERSHIP National Trust
PROTECTION Not listed
GRID REFERENCE 317328 517157

HIGH NOOK, LOWESWATER

17th century farm house core with important, fine 18th century detail. An extremely good example of high quality craftsmanship probably linked with a period of unusual prosperity.

DATE 17th – 20th century
OWNERSHIP National Trust
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 312882 520518

LORTON BRIDGE HOUSE

Farmhouse with a 1722 datestone inscribed over entrance P. & J.T.

DATE 18th century
OWNERSHIP Private
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 315214 525630

WATERGATE FARM, LOWESWATER

An extremely important former farmhouse, with fine late 18th century and early 19th century fittings.

DATE 18th – 19th century
OWNERSHIP National Trust
PROTECTION Not listed
GRID REFERENCE 312693 521112

LOW HOLLINS

Farmhouse dating from the late 17th century with datestone over entrance R. & C.S. 1687 (Robert & Catherine Stubbs). 18th and 20th century alterations and additions. Documents in Cumbria County Record Office, record Robert Stubbs was admitted tenant at a customary rent of 14s. 2d. on the 28 September 1663.

DATE 17th – 20th century
OWNERSHIP Private
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 315852 522624

HIGH HOLLINS

Farmhouse from late 16th or early 17th century, probably for the Fisher family.

DATE 16th – 17th century
OWNERSHIP Private
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 315931 522734

WILKINSYKE FARM

17th century farm possibly divided into two units, perhaps as a result of the sub-division of the whole farm holding between siblings, or parents and children.

DATE 17th century
OWNERSHIP National Trust
PROTECTION Not listed
GRID REFERENCE 317587 516897

LANTHWAITE COTTAGE

A seventeenth century farmhouse.

DATE 17th century
OWNERSHIP National Trust
PROTECTION Not listed
GRID REFERENCE 315866 520615

8.1.4 INDUSTRY

The presence of haematite on the west side of the valley resulted in limited mining and iron production from the medieval period, and there is evidence for charcoal production in the local woods (which were more extensive in former times). The remains of 14 medieval bloomery sites are located around Crummock Water, in the Loweswater area and east of Buttermere, close to becks and the lakes. However, the principal industry, dominating the head of the valley at Honister Hause, was the mining and processing of slate, and the remains of this industry dominate the landscape today.

8.1.5 SETTLEMENTS

Although the settlement pattern in the valley is based predominantly on single farms, a small village with medieval origins developed at Buttermere, where the route to Newlands joins from the north on the fertile flat delta between Buttermere and Crummock Water. The church of St James in Buttermere is one of the smallest in Cumbria and is a prominent local landmark dating from 1840. There has been little modern development, although it is a busy tourist village.

FIGURE 8.10 View of High Lorton village

Other small settlements are Loweswater, Embleton, Wythop Mill, High and Low Lorton, Thackthwaite, Brackenthwaite and part of Lamplugh. Lorton has a good collection of 17th and 18th century houses. It was described by John Wesley in 1752 as "Lorton, a little village lying in a fruitful valley, surrounded by high mountains, the sides of which are covered with grass and woods, and the bottom watered by two rivers". Jennings Brewery, which still produces draught beers at Cockermouth, started at Low Lorton in 1828. A yew tree, just behind the village hall, is over 1000 years old and is noted by Wordsworth in his poem 'Yew Trees' in 1803. Lorton Hall includes the most significant medieval building in the valley, a 15th century pele tower with 17th and 19th century additions. Lorton Park is a fine Regency Villa in a parkland setting, with its unique cylindrical, castellated smoke house near the main street. The village has an old terrace of workers' cottages related to the local mills, notably the flax mill. Lorton village has seen few changes in the 20th century.

8.1.6 PICTURESQUE BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE

In his 'Guide to the Lakes' of 1778, Thomas West identified three viewing stations around Loweswater and Crummock Water and Peter Crosthwaite added a further three stations on his map of 1794 at Buttermere Hause, on the east side of Crummock Water, on the road up to Newlands Hause above Buttermere village and at the southern end of Buttermere near Gatesgarth Farm. These viewing stations still exist and can be visited where there is public access.

8.1.7 VILLAS AND ORNAMENTAL LANDSCAPING

Buttermere has little villa architecture or designed landscape. Buttermere Lake, long celebrated as a sublime and picturesque destination, attracted only a solitary villa of distinction, Hassness. This was built to a Gothic design shortly before 1800 by George Benson, a Cockermouth attorney, and occupied a prominent site affording views down the length of Buttermere. It was demolished after the First World War and replaced by

the present Hassness, now a hotel, which is worthy of interest as a comparatively rare instance of a substantial inter-war villa in an Art Deco style.

Other extant large houses which might be considered as villas with or without designed landscapes include those below.

TABLE 8.2 Key villas in the Buttermere Valley

LORTON PARK

Classic early 19th century villa with a parkland setting, summer house and rare smokehouse for fish and hams. Richard Harbord, the Liverpool shipping magnate, 1803-1878, of Lorton Park is recorded on a memorial in Lorton Church.

DATE 19th century
OWNERSHIP Private
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 315993 525857

OAK HILL

Early 19th century house.

DATE 19th century
OWNERSHIP Private
PROTECTION Listed
GRID REFERENCE 315932 526027

8.2 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

8.2.1 ARCHAEOLOGY AND EARLY SETTLEMENT

Early human activity in Buttermere is evidenced by the presence of panels of rock art of Neolithic or Bronze Age date at Mill Beck, Buttermere and at the northwest end of Crummock Water, and also by a number of prehistoric summit cairns including Carling Knott and Grasmoor. Evidence of early farming, possibly Bronze Age, although in fact difficult to date and potentially much later, can be found at Rannerdale and Lanthwaite Green where clearance cairns mark where the land has been cleared of stones to make the ground suitable for arable farming. There is a possible bivallate hillfort at Loweswater Pele, which may be Iron Age in date.

There is no direct evidence for Roman activity, but some early farming settlements may date to the Romano-British period, for example the two enclosed hut circle settlements at Lanthwaite Green and Lambing Knott, Gatesgarth. Early farming settlements tend to cluster on the same limited fertile ground as the present day farms and so give the impression of continual agricultural production, although there is no direct evidence

that such farming activity was continuous from late prehistory and Roman times to the present day. Possibly green slate from the Honister area was exploited for roofing materials during the Roman period.

8.2.2 THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRENT SETTLEMENT PATTERN

There is some limited evidence of early medieval settlement in the valley. Indirectly, some place-names in the valley are predominantly of Old Norse origin, for example "thwaite" elements as in Lanthwaite, Brackenthwaite, Thackthwaite, Littlethwaite, Thornthwaite, Graythwaite and Gillerthwaite; all refer to the Old Norse term for a clearing. However, the use of this term has a long root origin and was applied to places long after Norse influence in the area.

Place-names which incorporate the element 'scale' are also Old Norse in origin and are indicative of seasonal settlements for putting stock out to summer upland pastures. These could therefore indicate early medieval settlement and include 'Scale Beck,' 'Scale Island' and 'Scale Hill'. The remains of early medieval settlement can be found at Scale Beck, on the west side of Crummock Water and at Rannerdale on the east side.

'Kirk' place-names may also suggest an early medieval origin, as in Kirkgill, Kirkgate, and Kirkhead. Names which cluster west of the church in Loweswater village, as well as 'Kirk Close', east of Buttermere lake. A chapel in Loweswater dates from 1154 and 1181, although this may have replaced an earlier example; subtle earthworks near Kirkhead, Loweswater, have been suggested as representing the remains of an earlier chapel.

8.2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FARMING LANDSCAPE

The pattern of the agricultural landscape from Buttermere to Loweswater is very complex, reflecting many generations of improvements. The more remote regions of the Lake District seem to have been characterised in the medieval period more by transitional and permanent dispersed settlement than by nucleated villages and this is also true of Buttermere. Sheep pastures were maintained on the fells to the east and north, and arable farming was concentrated at Cockermouth. There is documentary evidence for a 'vaccary' (cattle stock farm) which sustained up to 60 cows and their calves at Gatesgarth, at the head of the valley, in the mid-13th century. Recent archaeological excavation discovered the remains of a longhouse adjacent to the modern farm; this may have been one of the vaccary buildings. Large stone walled intakes on either side of the head of the valley are also likely to date from this period. As vaccaries were generally founded on upland waste, it is likely that the area was not settled at this time. It is, however, difficult to establish how much of the valley had been occupied before the Norman Conquest of the region (i.e. before 1092). The meadows at Gatesgarth also provided hay for winter feed for stock. The vaccary included the park or wood of Gaschard, which may relate to the large walled enclosure to the north of Gatesgarth Farm, which includes Kirk Close, Lambing Knott, and Robinson Crag, and corresponds with the Forest of Gatesgarth documented in 1489. The vaccary lands

are also likely to have included the flat meadowland between the lake and Warnscale Bottom and the grazing fells to the north and east of this area.

Following an apparent reduction in the scale of stock rearing throughout the Cockermouth estate in the 1270s, the remaining cattle stocks were divided between the vaccaries at Birkby and Gatesgarth in 1280-1. Records from the 1280s show that the latter vaccary maintained a breeding herd at this time, although the rate of breeding appears to have been slow. Following the death of the estate owner Isabella de Fortibus in 1293, the estate was escheated (reverted/handed over) to the crown (she had taken over responsibility of the estate after the death of her son in 1270 who inherited from her husband William) and demesne farming continued for a short time. By 1310, however, the Gatesgarth pasture had been let and the private management of these lands by the holder of the estate ceased. By the 16th century it had been sub-divided into three holdings, reflecting the continuing trend to create numerous farmsteads from former demesnes.

The lowlands and valleys of upland forests were subject to continued clearance of trees and colonisation during the 12th and 13th centuries. This is evident in Buttermere, where studies of the rate of accumulation and mineral composition of Crummock Water sediments suggest significant increases of local soil erosion between 1150 and 1300. This supports the notion of increased settlement and the intensification of agriculture in Buttermere at this time, and may reflect the introduction of deep ploughing.

Arable production is also attested by historical records of a mill at Buttermere village prior to 1215. It has been suggested that a nucleus of settlement from which Buttermere village developed may have existed on the delta flats between Crummock Water and Buttermere Lake by 1200. Buttermere appears to have grown up where the route to Newlands joins from the north and the arable potential of the flat delta between Buttermere and Crummock Water is greater than in other parts of the valley. A typical Lakeland ring garth may also have been constructed to keep stock away from arable crops.

Loweswater first appears in an 'Inquisition Post Mortem' of 1367. Embleton appears first in 1194 ('Feet of Fines'), and under various names in the 13th to 15th centuries, including in association with St Bees Abbey in 1438. Wythop appears in 1195 in the 'Feet of Fines', but appears to be part of Scotland in 1260. Withop Mill first appears in 1578. Both occupy low lying fertile ground and it is therefore not surprising that there are two separate open fields apparent there today. In Lorton Vale there are vestiges of former strips; this was the location of a small manor given to the church in the reign of Richard I by Ralph de Lyndesey. There is also a small arable area at Mosser with Mosser Mains (the capital messuage) at the north end, perhaps within its own larger separate holding. Mosser does not appear as a place-name until 1575 but it is probably an earlier settlement. The township of Mosergh, Mosier, or Mosser, belonged to the Salkelds, who were lords of the manor.

The remains of six deserted settlements that may feature phases of use dating to the medieval period are known within the valley at Scales, Rannerdale, High Nook Farm, Peel Place, Stockbridge and a site east of Low Hollins. Three of these (High Nook Farm, Stockbridge and Peel Place) were deserted during the post-medieval period.

The medieval settlement at Rannerdale appears to have gone out of use in the late medieval period and Scales and the site near Low Hollins may potentially have been deserted in the 14th century. The possibility remains, however, that previously abandoned medieval sites occupying cultivatable land were reused in later periods and that subsequent buildings may have masked the presence of these sites.

Around St Bartholomew's Church, Loweswater, part of the land was subject to enclosure for the creation of a deer park, which surrounds the current farm of Lowpark. The park was enclosed by Alan de Multon, the Lord of the Manor, between 1230 and 1260. A second park was established by his son, Thomas de Lucy, prior to 1286, although this was removed due to obstructions caused to the passage of the monks of St Bees through the area. The extent of the enclosure in this area is likely to have corresponded with the current enclosed lands to the south of Park Beck and the area to the west of this park, as represented by the post-medieval head dyke, is likely to have been enclosed during the late 13th and early 14th centuries. This would have expanded the areas of lowland enclosure at the northern end of the Buttermere Valley, and hence reduced the limits of the forest of Copeland. By 1300, the extent of enclosure in this area may have corresponded with the line of the post-medieval head dyke. By 1437 the deer park at Loweswater had been sub-divided into tenements, which may be represented by the current hamlets of Highpark and Lowpark.

In the 19th century, Buttermere was a focus for Herdwick breeding. William Green in his The Tourist's New Guide of the Lakes of 1819 listed Gatesgarth with 1,300 sheep that were rented with the land. This large scale enterprise was taken over by 34 year old Edward (Ned) Nelson (senior) in 1850. Together with his son, also Edward (Ned) Nelson (junior), they both had a huge influence on Herdwick breeding from 1850 to 1934. Nelson senior took over a stock of 1,447 sheep and threw himself into improving the stock and the farm. He employed Irish labourers to drain Warnscale Bottom and straighten becks. He cleared 600 acres of bracken on the fellside, planted trees for shelter and built hard roads using gravel from the lake, a large barn, and wool shed. The farm only had 160 acres of inbye land, but it had 3,000 acres (1,214 hectares) of sheep heafs. There were four separate stocks of sheep: Gatesgarth Side; Birkness; Scale Force; and Fleetwith, comprising a combined flock of 2,500 ewes plus followers.

By the mid-1870s it was reported that 150 tups were available annually for hire from Gatesgarth at premium prices. Through this method, Nelson at Gatesgarth and the other large dale-head farms exerted a strong influence on the breed. 'Tup Sundays' were often held in the run-up to the Fell Dales Show at which prospective buyers or hirers could inspect the tups for that winter's breeding. Ned Nelson senior won the sheep championship at the Royal Show when it was held at Newcastle in 1864. Ned Nelson junior took over Gatesgarth in 1887. In the first Flock Book of Herdwick Sheep, published in 1920, Ned Nelson's Gatesgarth flock was recorded as numbering 500 ewes and described as "one of the oldest, largest and best-known throughout the Herdwick country". It was also noted that "it was probably literally true that in every known Herdwick flock there is a strain of Gatesgarth blood". The 1920 Herdwick flock book also records Thomas Rawling at Lanthwaite Green having a flock of 400 ewes.

In addition to farming, the valley was also exploited for its geological resources. There was limited haematite mining on the west side of Crummock Water, and there

is evidence for charcoal production in the local woods. There are many iron processing sites in the form of bloomeries. Bloomeries in the Loweswater area and Cocker valley were recorded as early as 1305 and an example exists at Cinderdale Common, east of Crummock Water.

Whereas many Lake District valleys went through a period of redistribution of monastic lands after the Dissolution, Buttermere was less affected as ownership of the land had largely been secular. Nonetheless the landscape evolved in an idiosyncratic fashion. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the 'open' (communal grazing) and 'closed' (private crop growth) field system met with opposition as individuals attempted to retain enclosed fields during the winter for their private use. Although much of the valley floor between the lakes of Buttermere and Crummock Water remained as an open field called Nether or Lower Field, during the 16th century, with every holding in the village retaining shares, the holdings peripheral to the village consisted of closes with more restricted accessibility. The lakeside enclosure of Hassenesse and Grennesse at the northern shore of Buttermere lake, for example, was held exclusively by Bowderbeck and the tenants at Gatesgarth in 1578.

The enclosure of large areas of fellside by groups of tenants was common and in 1568 part of the fellside to the north east of Buttermere village, known as Blakerigg or Bleak Rigg, was enclosed. The encroachment of individual holdings into the fells and forests was the most common type of enclosure at this time, with the corresponding construction of intake boundaries. The fertile valley bottom, lying between Buttermere Lake and Crummock Water, was enclosed during the 16th century, and was divided into four fields, named Nether or Lower Field, Over Field, Scarr Field, and Drigg Garwick. In addition to the enclosure of land by groups of local people, attempts were also made by the landed gentry to enclose land in attempts to increase their stock-rearing capacities. By the end of the 16th century, in c. 1578, the pattern of much of the enclosed lands in Buttermere had reached the extent that would later be depicted in the tithe maps of 1844 and the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping of 1861-3.

The earliest records state that Honister Quarries were being worked for slate in 1643. This was to be the principal industry of the valley and would dominate the head of the valley at Honister Hause. There are post-medieval trial mines for copper at Burtness Woods and at Honister Pass. One of the trials at Burtness Wood was apparently in use in 1569-70, in the Elizabethan period. The Company of Mines Royal had copper mining interests in Buttermere from at least 1568, but it was only a relatively small interest compared to the rest of its operation.

Extensive areas of fell land on the west side of Crummock Water were subject to parliamentary enclosure as late as 1865. The fell on the east side of the valley remained largely unenclosed. Smaller enclosures on the fringes of the valley area to the north and west were probably enclosed by private agreement as waterlogged mosses were improved and drained.

The tithe maps of Loweswater from 1839, and Buttermere and Brackenthwaite from 1844, show that most of the agricultural fields that bound the uplands had the same boundary limits as those shown on the first edition mapping of 1861–3 and on current mapping. The large geometric enclosures around Melbreak, Loweswater Fell, and Hen

Comb represent the establishment of topographically oblivious land units that were typical of the late 19th century and were not depicted until the production of the second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1900. The establishment of such boundaries often meant the construction of walls on slopes or crags that were difficult to negotiate and some of the enclosures that were established to the west of Crummock Water and Buttermere Lake in 1865 utilised iron fencing, instead of stone walling.

Holme Wood was formerly known as 'the Holme' and had been subject to contested attempts at enclosure during the 16th century. By the time of the production of the first edition Ordnance Survey mapping of 1861–3 the area had been enclosed and was wooded. The discovery of a sheepfold and sheep shelter within the woods during a National Trust survey, however, attests to the former nature of the area as pasture, although the dates of the planting of the woodland are not clear.

It was in this period that industrialisation was to increase in productivity and its impact on the landscape. Iron ore was mined in the 19th century at various sites between Floutern Tarn and Crummock Water including at Scale Force. The remains of lead mining at Whiteoak, Mosedale and Loweswater in the 19th century are still visible. The Whiteoak remains are the most extensive. It operated from 1864 to 1891. The Loweswater mine operated between 1819 and 1841 and the Kirkgill Wood mines were worked in 1839 and the 1860s. However, it was the slate mining at Honister that was to create the biggest impact in the valley. The first recorded lease at the mine was recorded as a 21 year lease granted to John Walker in 1728. Some other smaller sites were operating at this time, but did not have Honister's longevity.

The land on which the mines operated belonged to the Leconfield Estate. From the mid-17th to the mid-18th century the slate was taken out by pack-horse along Moses Trod via the side of Great Gable to Wasdale Head and then to the ports of Ravenglass or Whitehaven, over a 15 mile journey. The increasing rents over the 18th century demonstrate the growing value of the slate industry. The peak production year was in 1851 at 6,316 tons. Up until the late 19th century, men had to hand-sledge slate from the mouths of the levels down the sheer cliff face to the road. The quarrymen lived in little stone huts during the week. Such was the remoteness of Honister that carrier pigeons were used by quarrymen and managers to send messages home and to the company's head office in Keswick. This practice continued up until 1914.

The Buttermere Green Slate Company took over the quarries in 1879. It installed an external incline tramway to improve efficiency and reduce the danger and hard labour of sledging. In the early 1880s the slate company approached the Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith Railway Company with a proposal to build a narrow-gauge branch line from Braithwaite station to Honister. Due to opposition, the proposal was dropped in 1882. Another branch line was proposed in Ennerdale in 1883 and again dropped in the face of objections in 1884. The next proposal was for a tunnel from Yew Crag through to the Newlands Valley, where an aerial ropeway would take it to the road and then by road to Braithwaite Station. This was stopped by Mr Marshall who refused permission for the ropeway to cross his land in the Newlands valley. By 1886 the company were employing 77 men which rose to 100 in 1893.

8.2.4 DISCOVERY AND APPRECIATION OF A RICH CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

EARLY TOURISM

Buttermere attracted the attention of early guidebook authors including Thomas West, who was most taken with Buttermere and especially the view above Gatesgarth:

> "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. 'A Guide to the Lakes' (1778)

West included descriptions of Buttermere and Crummock Water and three specific views around Loweswater and Crummock Water at Highgap Yeat (Thrushbank), at Flass Wood, and at Dob Ley Head (on Brackenthwaite Hows). On Peter Crosthwaite's 1794 map of the Buttermere Valley West's three viewing stations are located at a further three suggested stations, were added, extending further south on Crummock Water and Buttermere, at Buttermere Hause, on the east side of Crummock Water, on the road up to Newlands Hause above Buttermere village and at the southern end of Buttermere near Gatesgarth Farm. Crosthwaite's map also included other information of use and interest to the early tourists including routes and distances into the valley, roads, houses, details of Scale Force and depths and flow direction of lakes.

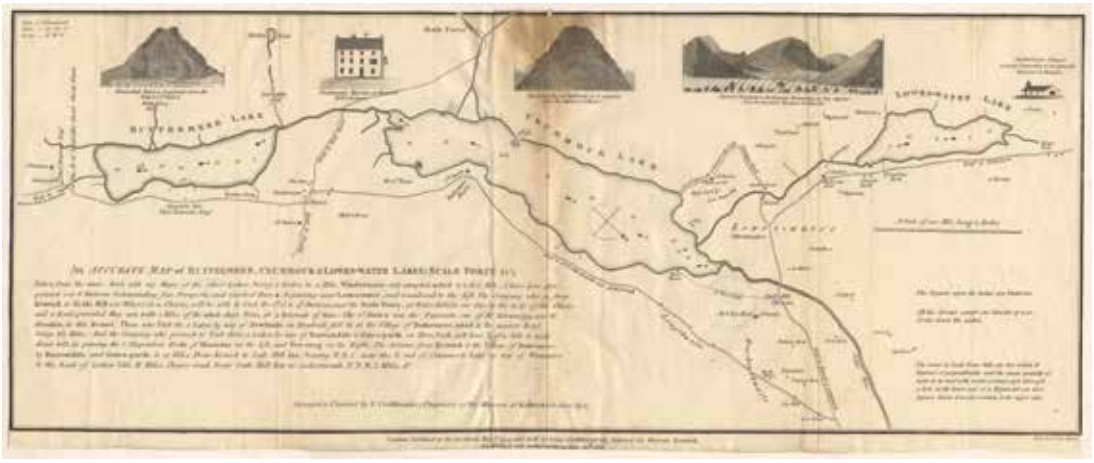


FIGURE 8.11 Crosthwaites map of Buttermere, Crummock Water and Loweswater Lakes (1794, republished 1800)

Captain Joseph Budworth, writing under the pseudonym of 'A Rambler', published the first account of a walking tour in the Lakes in 1792 entitled 'A Fortnight's Ramble to the Lakes in Westmorland, Lancashire and Cumberland'. At the Fish Inn, Buttermere, he wrote about what he saw as the natural beauty and guileless innocence of Mary Robinson, the landlord's teenage daughter, in such a way as to make a visit to the Fish Inn a popular requirement of any Lakes tour from then on. Mary was subsequently seduced in 1802 by a confidence trickster and bigamist named John Hatfield. Hatfield was tried and

hanged at Carlisle but the case attracted the attentions of the Romantic poets de Quincy, Coleridge and Wordsworth. The Fish Inn is still operating as a hostelry in Buttermere and Melvyn Bragg retold the story in his 1987 novel 'The Maid of Buttermere'.

8.2.5 ROMANTIC SITES, BUILDINGS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Wordsworth and Coleridge visited Buttermere and Lorton on their 1799 walking tour. In his 'Notebook' Coleridge described:

> **"a yew prodigious in size & complexity of numberless branches [that] flings itself on one side entirely over the river, the Branches all verging waterward over the field it spreads 17 strides – On its branches names numberless carved".**

This was the same yew tree celebrated in Wordsworth's poem 'Yew Trees'.

> **"There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,**
> **Which to this day stands single in the midst**
> **Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore"**

FIGURE 8.12 The Lorton Yew

Not long after the poem was written, the tree, which had a 27-feet girth and is estimated to be 1000 years old, was reduced to a mere 13 feet by a storm. The tree is, however, still standing on the bank of Whit Beck, behind the Village Hall, and shows little sign of the storm damage to the trunk. The Cockermouth Mayor's Chair is made from the wood of the broken half of the tree. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, preached here under the yew tree, on a number of occasions between 1752 and 1761. George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, also preached here to a large crowd that included soldiers from Cromwell's army.

On the same journey, Coleridge gave a vivid description in his 'Notebook' of Grasmoor,

> **"a most sublime Crag, of a violet colour, patched here & there with islands of Heath plant – & wrinkled & guttered most picturesquely".**

But this is nothing compared with his 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".

FIGURE 8.13 'Buttermere Lake, with Part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower.' 1798, Joseph Mallord William Turner.

Joseph Mallord William Turner, aged 21 and at the outset of his career, came to the Buttermere Valley in 1797 as part of his northern tour covering over a 1000 miles, over an eight week period. In his experience of the Lake District he was transformed from a painter of architecture to a painter of rugged landscapes and their elements. From his trip to Crummock and Buttermere, Turner produced the spectacular oil painting for exhibition at the Royal Academy the following year, 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.

8.2.6 EARLY CONSERVATION – THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL FOR PROTECTING LANDSCAPES

In 1814 John Marshall, the Leeds industrialist, began to purchase properties around Loweswater, Buttermere and Crummock Water. Over the following ten years Marshall became the Lord of the Manor, owner of tenanted estates, owner and occupier of woodland and water and owner of the Scale Hill Inn, which served as accommodation for Marshall and his visitors, Marshall having no residence in the valley. Marshall initially purchased the Loweswater manor and estate in order to help Wordsworth realise his conservation ambitions. Wordsworth would have seen that the former owner, the late Joshua Bragg, had sold areas of oak woodland for felling for timber. In 1815 Marshall bought Gatesgarth, from the Duke of Norfolk. It fitted well with the Loweswater manor and consisted of 473 acres (1,991 hectares) of enclosed land and unenclosed grazing rights on the fellsides. In 1823-4 Marshall purchased a number of farmsteads in Brackenthwaite, Loweswater and Buttermere, giving him control of the land to the east of Buttermere and Crummock Water, much of the delta and woodland between the two lakes and the two lakes themselves.

Marshall's accumulation of his Loweswater, Crummock and Buttermere estate was aimed at controlling the lakes' scenery and, in particular, managing and planting woodland, which was reinforced by the direct involvement of Wordsworth. Marshall's largest plantation was 124 acres (50 hectares) of the Holme. He planted native deciduous trees alongside the lakeshore of Loweswater and larch higher up the fell. Marshall also carried out planting around the head of Buttermere, at Cragg Close, Hassness, Toad Pots

and Horse Close by the inlet of Warnscale Beck, and at Burtness Wood, a new plantation of 32 hectares, of mainly larch. Marshall and Wordsworth agreed on the aesthetics of choosing and managing estates for conserving natural landscapes and the desirability of tree-planting. But they were not in complete agreement on tree planting. Both preferred native broadleaved species on the lower land. But Marshall preferred larch for productive value on the higher, dryer land. The mutual benefit of their relationship was that Marshall provided the recognition and protection of the landscape that Wordsworth felt so strongly about, but was not in a position to achieve. Marshall could demonstrate and feel vindicated in the beneficial use of the profits of his businesses.

FIGURE 8.14 The well known Scots Pine trees planted at the head of Buttermere

Elsewhere, Marshall gave strict instructions on the management of Lanthwaite Wood for timber and coppicing, including avoiding the appearance of square patches where cut. Marshall made decisions on his woodlands in person based on site visits, with the twin aims of amenity value and timber production. He also attempted but failed to arrange the purchase of customary rights in Scales stinted pasture so that he could fence an area and plant the lakeshore of Crummock Water. Where Marshall could fence to enable tree planting, for example at Burtness Wood, he avoided straight fence-lines and attempted to follow the lie of the land to appear as ancient enclosures. This was a clear aesthetic choice in the interests of landscape. In addition to woodland investment, Marshall invested much of his own money into repairing and restoring the existing farm infrastructure.

The first major conservation issue affecting Buttermere was the proposal in 1881-3 for a railway from Keswick to Buttermere, to serve the slate quarries at Honister. A great campaign of opposition was mounted, led by Canon Rawnsley and the other future founders of the National Trust, Octavia Hill and Robert Hunter. The objectors based their opposition on the likely detrimental effect of a railway on the landscape beauty of the area, which was a difficult position to adopt in an age of railway mania. A parliamentary bill was submitted in 1883, but the protests were successful and a key victory in the protection of the Lake District landscape was achieved.

In the early 20th century the Buttermere Green Slate Company Limited built cottages near Seatoller, Borrowdale, for its workers and built a new toll road from Seatoller to Honister Hause. A new company took over in 1926 and a year later built a hostel for 40 men that has since become the youth hostel and built a new aerial ropeway to bring unfinished slates to new processing sheds at the Hause. In 1934 the road from Seatoller to the Hause was widened and tarmacked by the County Council in the face of strong opposition from the local Borrowdale and Cockermouth councils, the National Trust and a range of other conservation bodies. Further road widening down the valley was prevented by the purchase of Rannerdale farm in 1938 by Lake District Farm Estates. Internal inclined tramways were built in the mines in the 1930s. The mine changed hands a number of times in the rest of the 20th century and technology changed and

business rose and fell. In 1998 after 12 years of closure the tenancy was taken on by Mark Weir and mining operations re-commenced and since then a tourism operation has run alongside the slate business. The business attracts tens of thousands of visitors a year and provides dozens of local jobs.

In 1934 the Marshall family's extensive estate in Buttermere came up for sale, and a scheme was agreed between the National Trust, Balliol College (Oxford), G. M. Trevelyan and a number of other private individuals to purchase the land for conservation purposes. Most of the estate was bought by the National Trust, with the remainder purchased by the others who then entered into restrictive covenants with the National Trust in order to control future land use. Between 1935 and 1937 over 1,600 hectares of land, including the key valley head farm of Gatesgarth, were subject to restrictive covenant agreement. High Nook, Loweswater was one of the farms in this sale in the 1930s that was acquired by Lake District Farm Estates in 1970 and was then gifted to the National Trust on the winding up of Lake District Farm Estates in 1977. Nearby Holme Wood was bought by the National Trust in 1935 and Watergate Farm between Holme Wood and High Nook was bought by the National Trust in 1985. Crag House Farm was bought in 1987 and Wilkinsyke Farm in 1990. The National Trust owns 3,170 hectares of land of which 3,167 hectares is inalienable. It also has an additional one hectare of leased land and 2,441 hectares of covenanted land.

The Lake District Special Planning Board (now the Lake District National Park Authority) purchased Hassness and Dalegarth in 1954 with the original aim of improving an important broadleaved woodland. The property covered an area of 9.9 hectares (24.5 acres) and included two houses – Hassness and Dalegarth surrounded by semi-natural woodland of mixed species. The wood is a prominent landscape feature on the lakeshore and the Buttermere Valley.

8.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENGLISH LAKE DISTRICT'S OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

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 8.4.

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.

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 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. The one extensive industrial site is the Honister slate quarry at the head of Buttermere, which is still producing high quality roofing slate. The valley contains no major settlements and the pattern is rather one of individual farms and small farming hamlets.

Due to its close proximity to Borrowdale, Buttermere attracted the attention of early visitors in search of Picturesque beauty in the 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. Butteremere 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, with somewhat less evidence for aesthetic inspiration than other valleys but with extensive attributes relating to the early conservation movement.

FIGURE 8.15 The tranquil scene of Loweswater with Grassmoor in the distance