

Wharfedale and Littondale

+ Physical Influences

The landscape of Wharfedale and Littondale is a combination of the result of physical influences and the influence of man. The principal physical influences have been the nature of the underlying rocks, the influence of the Ice Age and the resultant thin, immature soils reflected in the nature of vegetation and agricultural practices found in the dale.

The characteristic broad shape of the dale and overall smooth form has resulted from the various periods of glaciation, the last of which reached its peak 20,000 years ago during which time both the dales and fells were covered in ice. As the climate became warmer, about 15,000 years ago, the melting of the valley glacier resulted in the formation a number of retreat moraines, such as those across the valley at Skirfare Bridge, Mill Scar Lash and Drebley, each of which may have resulted in the temporary formation of a glacial lake in the valley contributing to the very flat valley floor in parts of the dale. Lakes also formed, overflowed and cut channels high in the side valleys creating the complex features still visible above Storiths. At Conistone, a meltwater channel created a waterfall which retreated back into the hillside creating Dib Scar and below it the limestone gorge Conistone Dib, both now dry features as the water flows underground.

Since the end of the Ice Age the action of the River Wharfe and its tributaries has created waterfalls, cut gorges, created river cliffs and deposited patches of sand and shingle on riversides.

The geology of the dale is complex, but essentially comprises layers of rocks, mainly types of limestone, which have been exposed through the effects of glaciation, natural weathering, hydrological effects and the effects of the Mid Craven and North Craven faultlines and localised upthrusting of rocks such as the Skyreholme folds.

The two main types of limestone are the Great Scar Limestone, a pure limestone about 180m thick, and the overlying rock which comprises a series of 4 or 5 thin bands of limestone intermixed with thin shales and occasional sandstones, known as Yoredales. Both types of rock exert characteristic influences over the landscape, the first, a lighter coloured almost white rock, outcropping to form dramatic cliffs such as those at Kilnsey Crag (a spur of land truncated by the effects of glaciation) and, less prominently, at Grass Wood. The Yoredales, slightly darker in appearance, exert the greatest influence, outcropping for miles along the section of Upper Wharfedale north of Kettlewell, along each side of Littondale and along Langstrothdale, creating a very characteristic stepped or terraced appearance.

In addition to the cliffs and scars which are a prominent feature of the valley, Upper Wharfedale exhibits many other features associated with classic limestone scenery which occur less frequently or are on a smaller scale and thereby add both variety and detail to the overall unity of the landscape. These include gorges, as at Conistone, dry valleys, shakeholes, sinkholes, swallowholes and springs, together with caves and areas of limestone pavement, such as those above Conistone. In addition to above ground landscape, an underground landscape of passages, caves, pools and streams, waterfalls, stalactites and stalagmites has developed as a result of dissolution by water percolating through limestone. This extensive underground scenery is best represented at caves such as Dow Cave, Kettlewell and Boreham Cave, Littondale.

Boulders, carried by the ice, have been left strewn about hillsides and in the valley bottom and are often of a different rock type to that underlying (hence known as erratics). Pieces of non-local stone carried by the ice can often be found within drystone walls.

Further complexity is added by the Skyreholme Folds, an anticline that has thrust limestone to the surface visible as a darker limestone at Loup Scar and Trollers Gill, and the mineral veins which have resulted in the past development of orefields at Grassington Moor, Greenhow Hill, Appletreewick and the fells above Conistone and Buckden.

Along the Mid and North Craven Faultlines which cross the dale in an east to west direction between Grassington and Burnsall, the underlying rock changes abruptly from mostly limestones to the north to thick layers of shales to the south and this is reflected in the complex undulating topography and

vegetation changes that occur across the faultline. Lying near the faultline on its southern side is a line of green dome shaped hills known as reef knolls (eg the two Kail Hills, Stebden and Elbolton). The knolls comprise conical mounds of pure limestone which 330 million years ago formed part of a seabed reef and were eventually buried in mud, which has since eroded leaving the knolls exposed as features within the valley floor and on the valley sides. These features represent the national classic example of their type and are of great importance to the study of Lower Carboniferous carbonate environments and are essential for the understanding of reef communities and their paleoecology, having great potential for future research.

The underlying geology of Mid Wharfedale comprises mainly sandstones and shales of the Millstone grit series, which extend over the majority of the valley floor and on moor tops at Barden Fell and Barden Moor. The rock is a coarse yellow brown sandstone which is seen outcropping as rock stacks on the moor tops, eg at Simons Seat. Bowland Shales can be seen outcropping by the river at Bolton Abbey and near Bolton Bridge. Complexity is added by the Skipton anticline that has thrust underlying limestone to the surface, visible above and below the Cavendish Pavilion, upstream of Bolton Abbey.

Soils that have developed on the upper valley sides in this area are peaty and acid, and fairly infertile, supporting a limited range of plant species including heather, cotton grass, bilberry and bracken and plantations of coniferous trees. On the valley floor and lower valley sides soils formed by the effects of fluvial and glacial deposition are richer and support grazing by cattle and sheep and have allowed the development of mixed broadleaved woodland.

† Historical and Cultural Influences

Before the arrival of man, Wharfedale and Littondale were densely wooded with oak, elm and elder, ash woods on limestone and woodlands of hazel and birch on higher ground.

The earliest settlers forged routeways and made their settlements on the higher ground. Iron Age fields and hut circles are frequent on higher ground, the Grassington and Kettlewell areas being the most populated parts of the dale during the Iron Age.

The Romans left their mark on the dale with a road forged through Wharfedale over Stake Moss to Bainbridge in Wensleydale. In AD74 the Romans subdued the Brigantes of the area who resisted by building the wall of Tor Dike above Kettlewell and the stone Fort Gregory in Grass Wood, defending areas to the north and west.

The Romans mined lead at Greenhow, and left by AD410 leaving some of the Romano-Britons who settled in the dale and cleared valley floor areas. The Celtic kingdom of Craven was established and in AD620 the Celts were joined by the Angles, lowland farmers who instigated further clearances and new farming methods. These early settlers had an important influence on the form of settlements that are seen in the dale today. Animals were kept in safety surrounded by houses, the origin of the compact form of settlement around a village green that is common in Upper Wharfedale and Littondale e.g. at Arncliffe, Linton, Conistone and Thorpe. The Danes, also lowland farmers, came mainly to the lower dales, causing destruction to many early settlements before settling at Burnsall and Thorpe and merging with the Angles.

In the 10th century, the Vikings established individual farmsteads for sheep farming on the unoccupied land at the head of the dale at Cray, Kirk Gill, Raisgill, Yockenthwaite and Beckermonds and contributed significantly to the language of the dales. Viking settlements differed from the lowland Anglian settlements in that they were very scattered, mainly individual farms but also hamlets that instead of being grouped were spread out along the dale side. Extensive estates were in place at this time including Bolton in Craven, the estate of the Saxon Earl Edwin, which extended as far as Skipton, Hellifield and Malham. After the Norman invasion in 1066, the estate passed to Robert Romilly, who moved the manor house from Bolton to Skipton. Hunting forests were established for the new Norman lords such as the Romillys and the Percys at Kilnsey, Langstrothdale and Littondale.

Perhaps the biggest influence on the landscape of Wharfedale and Littondale came with the growth and power of the monasteries. In 1155 Alice de Romilly gave land for the founding of Bolton Priory and donated hunting land at Kilnsey to Fountains Abbey, 40km to the east. Bolton Priory came to own extensive lands with property far beyond Wharfedale, developing a vast sheep farming

enterprise, with drove roads and many farms and granges, contributing in time to the removal of trees from upland areas through grazing pressure. The monasteries created a market for grain, meat, linen, boots and shoes, and Grassington and Kettlewell thrived as trading centres. Many new roads and trackways were established across the dale as monastic trade grew between Ribblesdale and Wensleydale, e.g., Mastiles Lane connecting Kilnsey with Malham and the Lake District and the Monks Road through Arncliffe.

The dissolution of Bolton Priory came in 1539 and wealth and power were handed over to new landowners with the establishment of large private estates. Bolton was sold to Henry Clifford, the last descendant of this family marrying the fourth Duke of Devonshire in 1748. The Devonshire estate has exerted a considerable influence over the landscape of the lower dale up to the present day.

In the late medieval period the system of lynchets developed that are still visible in the present day landscape as a series of grassy terraced steps down the valley side. Ploughing was undertaken at right angles to the slope and allowed the soil to be turned down the slope, reinforced by the placing of stones on the edge of the ploughed strip. These are visible in many parts of the upper reaches of the dale including Thorpe Fell side, between Kettlewell and Starbotton and in Littondale. Crops grown included oats, barley, hemp and flax.

Some of the present drystone walls date from the 16th/early 17th century. Such walls usually enclose irregularly shaped fields and are often sited close to villages. The main enclosure period came in the late 18th century and early 19th century and is evidenced by straighter, more geometrically shaped fields.

Over the centuries, the higher slopes to the sides of the dale have played host to a range of small-scale industrial uses such as lime burning, quarrying, peat cutting and lead mining, all of which have left their mark on the landscape. Quarrying has increased considerably in the 20th century, the limestone quarry at Swinden to the edge of the Craven Fault character area being the largest and most visible, making use of the former Yorkshire Dales Railway from Skipton to Grassington. Other quarries at Skirethorns and Kilnsey are more hidden from view.

Wharfedale has attracted the attention of many writers and artists. Bolton Abbey in its riverside setting has been the subject of works by Turner, Landseer and Girtin.

Wharfedale is well sited for tourism being within an easy drive of the conurbations of West Yorkshire. The infrastructure required for tourism and recreation has a subtle but discernible influence on the landscape and tends to be concentrated in the lower reaches of the dale. Focal points for visitors are the villages, many of which have attractive pubs and teashops. Grassington represents the main centre for the tourist trade, housing the National Park Centre, the Wharfedale Folk Museum and a variety of shops, pubs and cafes. Other important attractions include those of the Devonshire Estate including Bolton Abbey, Barden Tower and the Strid; Parcevall Hall gardens; Long Ashes Leisure Centre at Threshfield and the fish farm at Kilnsey.

Walking is probably the most popular activity within the dale. The Dales Way, a 117km long distance footpath from Ilkley to Bowness-in-Windermere, runs the length of the dale within the National Park and the Yorkshire Dales Cycleway runs up the dale on minor roads before diverting to the east from Kettlewell into Coverdale. Camping and caravanning is well provided for within the dale, the majority of sites being well positioned and carefully screened with a limited influence on the landscape. Other popular activities include riding, mountain biking, angling and rock climbing.

+ Buildings and Settlement

Settlements in Langstrothdale are dispersed as isolated hamlets, sited near gills or on the hillside, reflecting their origins as Norse settlements. The Vikings had a tradition of hill farming and did not form clustered settlements like those of the Angles and Danes further south in the dale. Langstrothdale, which now seems wild and isolated, was once far more populated and was on the main cross-country route between Lancaster and Newcastle.

Many settlements in Upper Wharfedale and Littondale are sited on the flatter land deposited by the river's tributaries at the point where they join the River Wharfe eg Buckden, Starbotton, Arncliffe, Kettlewell and Conistone. Stone to construct these settlements was largely supplied by the quarries

of Burnsall and Thorpe Fell, where Millstone Grit was worked. The settlements were all associated with river crossing points and the bridges are important features of the settlements and the dale as a whole. The bridges often make use of massive stones supplied by these quarries for parapets and copings.

Settlements in the Craven Fault area include Grassington, a market and mining centre, Threshfield, a village formerly supported by the mining of coal on the moors to the west; Hebden, a lead mining village, and Linton, the site of a mill used for the production of wool, cotton and artificial silk.

Grassington is now the largest village in the dale and focal point for visitors to the dale. It is centred on a small cobbled market place and has a complex pattern of alleys and lanes. Ancient mining sites on Grassington Moor were expanded when miners were brought from Derbyshire during the reign of James I. Yarnbury on Grassington Moor was the focus of the lead mining industry. In the nineteenth century the mines were developed extensively by the Dukes of Devonshire before being closed towards the end of the century. In 1902 Grassington was linked to Skipton by the Yorkshire Dales Railway, which closed in 1930.

Due to the historic domination of estates since Saxon times, settlements in Mid Wharfedale are limited to those that grew up around the focal points of the estates. The Devonshire estate is centred upon Bolton Priory and its associated church, hall and ducal lodge, group of cottages in the estate style and tithe barn. The abbey is enclosed by high walls from the roadside through which an arch allows access and views of the priory set on the flat land associated with a broad bend in the River Wharfe. Many of the estate farms eg Park Farm, Stank Farm and the Arches are constructed in the estate style. Park House stands at the foot of what was once the estate deer park.

The building of stone farmhouses began in about 1600, replacing wattle and daub and thatch so that most buildings in Upper Wharfedale date from this period. Good examples of the typical dales farmhouse can be seen in the upper parts of Wharfedale and Littondale, where the farmhouse is long and narrow in plan, the living quarters having a connecting door through to the animals, under one low flagstone roof. The farmhouses had stone mullions between the windowpanes and often a dated stone lintel above the door. Many fine halls and manor houses also date from this period, including Low Hall and New Hall at Appletreewick

Scattered field barns are important features in the landscape of Upper Wharfedale and Littondale in particular, many of which were built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were an integral part of the pattern of subsistence farming that occurred throughout the dales. The barns housed several cows in the winter that were fed on the hay stored in the loft. The barns (or laithes) were of a standard plan and have stone flagged roofs, although older examples with steeper pitched roofs were thatched with ling. Lower down the dale, below Grassington, field barns are less frequent.

+ Land Cover

Wharfedale includes a wide variety of habitats that support a wide range of plant and birdlife. Habitats include broadleaved woodland of sessile oak and birch with planted beech, sycamore and conifers, particularly in the lower part of the dale; birch woodland; ash woodland; limestone pastures and scars; haymeadows; coniferous plantations; limestone pavement; heather moorland; bracken and rough grassland. Upper Wharfedale, Littondale, Langstrothdale and the northern part of the Wharfedale Craven Fault Area are included in the Pennine Dales Environmentally Sensitive Area.

Woodland, although not extensive in the dale, is a key feature of the steeper valley sides, particularly in combination with the outcropping rock scars. They are also found along the valley bottom by the riverside and in association with steep gills on the valley sides. Many of these woodlands are of ancient origin as they occur in steeper areas that have never been suitable for farming. Woodlands are more prevalent in the lower part of the dale below Appletreewick. In the medieval period, woods would have been more extensive and woodland formed part of the commons and wastes of their respective townships where there was a right to wood and pasturage. Much of the woodland was lost to indiscriminate cutting in the latter half of the 17th century. In the present day woods are often affected by undergrazing by stock, where boundary walls are collapsed allowing the ingress of sheep posing a threat to the future of the remaining woodlands in the absence of management. The loss of elm, which was a significant species in the dale, has contributed to the openness of woodland.

Strid Wood is the largest area of acidic oak woodland within the National Park and also contains the best remnant of acidic oak wood – pasture within the Dales. The second largest concentration of ancient woodlands within the park occurs in Upper Wharfedale. The largest ash wood within the dale is Grass Wood sited on the scars and pavements associated with outcropping great scar limestone and is a nature reserve managed by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Although ancient woodland it has been planted with beech, sycamore and conifers and its principal interest is in its diverse ancient woodland groundflora. Bastow Wood is an important example of ash-hazel wood pasture of which only two examples occur within the National Park.

In addition to woodlands, there is scattered tree cover in association with field boundaries, along riverbanks and associated with settlements.

Coniferous plantations have occurred within the upper parts of the dale generally on a piecemeal basis (although a very extensive plantation occurs at Langstrothdale Chase) and detract from the character of the dale, particularly within limestone areas. Within Mid Wharfedale, medium sized plantations occur on valley sides and appear less of an alien feature within the darker gritstone landscape.

Haymeadows are an important habitat within the dale and are declining in favour of improved pasture through pressure on agricultural practices. They are particularly prevalent in Upper Wharfedale between Kettlewell and Buckden where there is an almost unbroken pattern within the valley floor. Within Langstrothdale, Littondale and below Kettlewell the distribution is more localised, close to settlements; below Appletreewick haymeadows are infrequent. A number of important examples are designated as SSSIs, some of the best examples being found at Kettlewell Meadows.

Unimproved limestone grasslands occur in certain areas particularly good examples being found at Conistone Old Pasture and Malham-Arncliffe Cool pasture.

Moorland vegetation types are generally found within neighbouring upland character areas although occasionally bracken, rough grassland and upland heath extend down the valley sides into the valley character areas. These vegetation types are more prevalent in the dale head areas.

Limestone pavements and scars are particularly prevalent in Upper Wharfedale and Littondale to the south of Kettlewell and Arncliffe with smaller outcroppings occurring further north. Many of the limestone pavements receive special protection in the form of Limestone Pavement Orders and the best examples are included within Special Areas of Conservation. Scars are often also designated particularly where they occur in combination with ancient woodlands or wood-pasture, as at Skoska Wood and Hawkswick Wood.

+ Wharfedale and Littondale Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Types (Draft National Types in brackets)	Landscape Character Areas	Location
Limestone Dale with Ancient Woodland (VLA)	Langstrothdale	Oughtershaw and Beckermonds to Hubberholme and Cray
Limestone Dale with Ancient Woodland (VLA)	Upper Wharfedale and Littondale	Hubberholme and Cray, (Wharfedale) and North of Foxup (Littondale) to North of Grass Wood
Limestone Dale with Ancient Woodland (VLA)	Wharfedale-Craven Fault Area	North of Grass Wood to Appletreewick
Poorly Drained Dale with Ancient Woodland (VPA)	Mid Wharfedale	Appletreewick to National Park boundary

31. Langstrothdale

+ Key Characteristics

- Elevated winding steeply sloping v-shaped limestone dale, forming the wilder, higher reaches of Upper Wharfedale.
- Stepped rock outcrops dominate the dale sides in lower reaches, accompanied by distinctive bands of ancient woodland following line of contours.
- Pockets of limestone pavement present in upper reaches.
- Frequent loose rock and scattered boulders on moorland and rough grassland.
- River is shallow, fast flowing with a platformed rocky bed, waterfalls and smooth grassy banks and forms a focal point of the dale.
- Frequent stream valleys on southern dale side give an undulating, indented appearance.
- Trees follow the course of the river and tributaries and mark settlements, tree cover reducing with dale elevation.
- Extensive dark coniferous plantation at Langstrothdale Chase impinges upon character of upper reaches; other parts of dale affected by occasional exotic conifer plantings.
- Traditional unspoilt outward-looking hamlets near the river or tributaries on south-facing dale side.
- In the upper reaches walled sloping dale side pastures and moorland are interspersed with pockets of hay meadows, particularly around hamlets, and occasional field barns, giving way to flatter, walled valley-bottom meadows in the lower reaches.
- Moorland vegetation, including rough pasture, is increasingly dominant at higher elevations, extending down to the riverside in places.
- Sense of enclosure in lower reaches; increasingly open, remote and untouched character in upper reaches.

+ Landscape Character

An elevated winding steeply sloping v-shaped limestone dale forming the wilder, higher reaches of upper Wharfedale. Walled sloping dale side pastures and hay meadows grazed by Swaledale sheep alternate with areas of moorland vegetation (including rough grass and bracken) extending down the dale sides. The valley becomes increasingly wild, remote, open and exposed towards its upper reaches with moorland vegetation types becoming dominant.

Banded rock outcrops are a feature of the dale sides within the lower reaches; in the upper reaches rock outcrops are frequent but more irregular in pattern and areas of rough grassland and moorland vegetation are strewn with boulders and loose rock, with caves, pot holes and pockets of limestone pavement present but not obvious features from within the valley.

The fast flowing river forms the focal point of the dale, nearly always in view from the dale sides. The river has smooth grassy banks in places, to which trees cling, their roots exposed and undercut by the actions of water; a stepped and platformed rocky bed; shallow pools; small waterfalls; occasional steep and rocky banks and small scale historic bridges.

Frequent stream gullies on the dale sides give an irregular undulating indented shape to the southern dale slopes in particular. In some areas stream beds form a distinctive stepped appearance as they

cross the rock bands; in others, stream beds have been scoured by the actions of water exposing rocky beds.

Ancient woodland dominated by ash, hazel and hawthorn clings to the banded rocky outcrops of the steep northern upper dale sides in the lower reaches of the dale below Yockenthwaite; smaller areas of woodland exist to west of Deepdale. In the lower reaches hawthorn are scattered amongst areas of rough pasture and bracken but the upper reaches are generally more open although trees often line the river banks (eg below Oughtershaw) and mark the presence of hamlets and scattered farms.

Occasional plantings of Scots pine and exotic conifers are at odds with the character of the dale. Extensive and blocky plantations of coniferous trees in the area of Langstrothdale Chase to the west of the upper valley reaches are uncharacteristic in the context of the otherwise wild open landscape of the surrounding moors and fells.

The minor road through the dale follows the line of the river very closely particularly in its upper reaches, separated from the river by a few yards of open grazing land. Occasional tracks wind up the dale sides from the road to the moor tops. A few small traditional hamlets sited facing out across the dale mostly on lower south facing dale sides have their buildings aligned with the contours, sometimes echoing the alignment of rock banding on upper valley slopes.

Most buildings within the dale are of 16th and 17th century origin and are constructed in mixed stone types; there is little visual evidence of gentrification of property or conversion to holiday cottages, giving the dale an untouched and remote feel and an impression of 'time stood still' that is absent in other parts of Wharfedale. Electricity poles and vehicles are the only visual evidence of modern life. Other features such as the stone circle at Yockenthwaite and limekilns reinforce the strong historic character of the dale.

Low drystone walls, often falling into disrepair, enclose narrow pasture strips on the dale sides where the valley widens; elsewhere there is little or no enclosure and open moorland, rough grassland or bracken extend into the valley across the road and down to the river. As walled pastures are occasional features, their pattern is less marked than it is elsewhere in Wharfedale. Barns, occasionally falling into disrepair, are scattered within these walled pastures and are occasional features in the lower reaches of the dale although more frequent above Deepdale. In limited areas post and wire fences replace walls.

32. Upper Wharfedale and Littondale

+ Key Characteristics

- Relatively straight classic u-shaped glaciated dale over limestone, with steep wooded sides enclosing the broad, largely open flat valley floor with gently sweeping lower valley sides, contrasting with the open topland and allotments and limestone pavements above.
- Stepped and banded pattern of rock outcrops dominate upper slopes (particularly marked south of Kettlewell and Arncliffe) within adjacent open toplands or associated with dale side ancient woodlands.
- Small steep sided and often wooded tributary valleys and numerous small rocky gills, creating a notched pattern to the valley side and near horizon line, the gills crossing the stepped rock bands in a series of small waterfalls.
- Larger tributary valleys are infrequent hence the form of the dale maintains a strong definition over stretches of several kilometres, enhancing its sense of place.
- The shallow river meanders across the farmed valley floor, its course marked by well-treed banks, the river disappearing below ground for much of the year north of Litton to expose a dry rocky bed.
- Strong and distinctive patterns of field barns and drystone walls constructed largely in limestone enclose pasture and hay meadows with occasional field boundary trees.
- Hay meadows that abound with wildflowers in summer are almost continuous to the north of Kettlewell and concentrated near settlements south of Kettlewell and within Littondale.
- Traditional well-treed mainly gritstone nucleated villages often sited where tributaries meet the river on lower south west facing slopes are unified in their form, colour and siting and often appear in complete harmony with their landscape setting, making them very sensitive to occasional inappropriate development.
- Small pockets of dark coniferous planting weaken character and contrast with the light colours of the landscape.
- Extensive limestone pavements are a feature of the mid and upper valley sides and adjacent toplands particularly to the south of Kettlewell and Arncliffe. Presence of other features typical of limestone scenery add local interest including limestone gorges, limestone cliffs and the truncated spur at Kilnsey Crag, a landmark within the dale.
- Moorland vegetation runs down into valley in certain areas, particularly upper Littondale.
- Sense of enclosure and unity created by the valley form, colour and the pattern of elements diminishes towards upper Littondale, where moorland vegetation becomes increasingly dominant.

+ Landscape Character

Upper Wharfedale and Littondale are steep sided, flat bottomed and relatively straight classic u-shaped glaciated dales overlying limestone bedrock. Their dale sides steepen towards the upper slopes and are frequently characterised by stepped rocky outcrops running parallel with the contours both within the dale and within the adjacent topland areas. The form of the dales, the colour contrast of the light limestone walls seen against the greens of the meadows and pastures, the unity created by the pattern of rock outcrops, dale side woodlands, settlements, drystone walls and barns, represent a classic example of Dales landscape.

Numerous small rocky gills run down the steep dale sides, creating a notched pattern to the slope and near horizon line, the gills crossing the stepped rock bands in a series of small waterfalls. Larger v-shaped tributary valleys are less frequent than in the lower reaches of the dale with the result that the form of the dale maintains a strong definition over stretches of several kilometres, enhancing its sense of place. Although the dale sides create a degree of enclosure, the relatively straight form of the dale allows long views along the dale and up side valleys to distant moor tops. Where side valleys occur they have the effect of opening out the views and increasing the width of the valley floor area.

The river meanders across a generally very flat and open valley floor of walled pastures (grazed by Swaledale sheep and cattle) and hay meadows that abound with wildflowers in summer. Meadows are particularly prevalent in Upper Wharfedale occurring almost continuously above Kettlewell but with a more broken pattern in Littondale. Localised variations in valley floor topography occur where glacial retreat moraines have left mounds of clay and rock debris across the floor, examples being found at Skiffare Bridge and Mill Scar Lash. Small incursions of bracken, rough grassland and grass moor vegetation occur on the dale sides. The upper rocky dale sides are wooded and, outside the character area boundary, the toplands and allotments comprise large rectilinear walled enclosures of rough grazing, grass moor and areas of limestone pavement with some upland heath on highest areas. These toplands are visible from the valley floor and influence the dale character, however they do not dominate the dale in the way that the moorlands do in the lower reaches of Wharfedale.

Tree cover is concentrated on the steeper dale sides and often occurs in association with banded rock outcrops. Grazing by sheep in some of these dale side wooded areas has reduced tree cover leaving a spotted effect of trees amongst grassland, although on steeper areas less suited to grazing trees have survived better. Woodlands are generally of indigenous deciduous trees although small-scale inappropriate plantings of conifers such as pine and larch have been undertaken (for both ornamental and commercial purpose) and these have contributed to an erosion of valley character. This type of planting is particularly prevalent in Upper Wharfedale where planting has been carried out as part of an arboretum above Starbotton. Similar planting has occurred round Scargill house south of Kettlewell. Scattered trees also occur on field boundaries within the valley floor and trees mark the course of the river and the position of settlements. A few hedges occur; although where they exist they tend to be overgrown and gappy at the bottom and in need of management.

There is evidence that some tree planting has taken place in the valley within dale side woodlands and beside the river north of Starbotton. There is little evidence of replacement of field trees. Roadside tree management has taken place in this and other parts of the dale and has been overzealous with little regard to tree form.

Settlements are concentrated on the dale floor or lower dale sides (particularly where these face south west) frequently at the point where a tributary enters the main river. Settlements are often grouped about a small green and are constructed mainly in Gritstone with stone flagged roofs, although limestone is commonly used for less important buildings. Many of the buildings within these settlements are of 16th and 17th century origin and nearly every settlement is associated with a historic bridge. The settlements of the dale are unified in their form, colour and siting and often appear in complete harmony with their landscape setting; as a result these settlements are extremely sensitive to inappropriate development. Where development on the edge of settlements (or within open countryside) is inappropriately designed, sited or laid out it exerts a detrimental influence out of all proportion to the size of the development (eg modern expansion of Kettlewell and suburban style houses within open countryside south of Kettlewell). Within Littondale, while there has been little modern development, there has been significant conversion of farm buildings and modernisation of property, which has restored buildings that may have otherwise fallen into disrepair, benefiting the wider valley scene, although the frequent use of dark unpainted hardwood for windows and doors affects the detail of settlement character.

Roads within the dales are relatively straight and tend to follow the lower dale sides, a B road and a minor road paralleling each other on either side of the river up Littondale as far as Arncliffe and up Wharfedale as far as Kettlewell. Thereafter a road follows one dale side only. Minor roads, including old drove roads, monastic roads, market roads and mineral roads run up the side valleys linking to other dales and tracks run up the steep dale sides.

The strong and distinctive pattern of drystone walls and associated field barns are a key feature of Upper Wharfedale and Littondale. Field shapes are a mixture regularly shaped fields of the enclosure period and areas of narrow strip fields of medieval origin often close to settlements. These earlier

fields are particularly well represented at Kettlewell, Starbotton and Buckden where the field pattern exerts a marked effect on landscape character and tends to cross the direction of slope emphasising its cross-sectional form when viewed from the valley floor. Occasionally long narrow fields follow the contours emphasising the horizontal form of the slope and elsewhere strip lynchets running along the line of slope create a pattern of light and shade up the dale side. Ridge and furrow is noticeable in some areas. A significant area of coaxial field systems exists to the north of Conistone creating unique pattern to this part of the dale; smaller areas of this pattern exist at Litton. Occasionally the mostly limestone walls have fallen into disrepair and there are either gaps in the pattern or piles of rubble where walls have once been. In some areas, particularly north of Starbotton, walls have give over to post and wire fences with a significant effect on dale character.

Field barns become more frequent moving north up the valley and have occasionally been extended with other materials such as timber or corrugated iron. In certain areas eg north of Starbotton drainage is impeded and fields within the dale bottom include areas of wetland vegetation resulting in local variation to the simple pattern of pastures and walls towards a more complex and natural character.

Classic features associated with limestone scenery are present providing additional interest and variety where they occur eg limestone pavements, limestone gorges, limestone cliffs, shakeholes, swallowholes and dry valleys. Many of these features are present above Conistone. A focal point of the dale is the prominent outcrop of great scar limestone that occurs at Kilnsey Crag.

Features that detract from landscape character, in addition to those already mentioned, include electricity poles, caravan parks and the mast at Conistone Dib. Quarries are present but are relatively well hidden from view.

Historic Parklands occur in association with Buckden Hall and Chapel House, south of Kilnsey. Large areas of the western side of Upper Wharfedale including the village of Cray are in the ownership of the National Trust.

Littondale Head

Littondale Head exhibits landscape features that are similar but less pronounced than those occurring at lower elevations. The dale head is shallower and more open than the lower dale, the flat valley floor gradually narrowing to become a v-shaped valley north of Foxup. The valley of Pen-y-ghent Gill, which joins the dale from the south, allows views up the gill towards Pen-y-ghent contributing to this sense of openness. Rocky outcrops are less significant and dale sides are smoother and largely unwooded, with a less marked transition to the moor topland areas. For much of the year the river disappears below ground leaving a dry platformed rocky bed. Tree cover on the valley floor is less frequent contributing to the sense of openness. Plantings of larch appear inappropriate and are prominent as a result.

Traditional hamlets including Foxup, Halton Gill and Nether Hesleden are situated on or close to river crossing points. Walls and barns remain important features of the valley scene but decrease in prominence towards the dale head. Moving up the dale the open moorland becomes increasingly dominant, the moorland allotments extending down as far as the River Skifare north of Halton Gill.

33. Wharfedale-Craven Fault Area

+ Key Characteristics

- Winding, broad glaciated dale with complex topography and underlying geology; valley form is undefined and lacks unity.
- Sense of openness and light (in comparison to Mid Wharfedale) resulting from breadth of valley; the influence of limestone in wall building and vegetation cover; the lower height of enclosing uplands and reducing influence of dark gritstone moors.
- Distinctive nationally important conical grass hills (limestone reef knolls) interspersed with a marked pattern of strip lynchets contribute to a unique landscape on Thorpe Fell sides.
- Thorpe Fell side is strongly textured by the pattern of unwooded gills; on the eastern dale side trees line well-developed rocky gills.
- The river, often hidden from view, alternates between cutting a deep course fringed by cliffs and steep wooded banks and meandering across a broad open floodplain.
- Traditional nucleated gritstone villages, centred on the river, its tributaries and bridging points are marred in places by suburban style expansion.
- The varied pattern of predominately limestone walls is diluted in many cases by the complexity of the topography; barns are occasional features.
- Visitor facilities including campsites and car parks and occasional inappropriate development within open countryside, including suburban style houses, masts, former railway structures and electricity poles, detract from character.
- Woodlands are more prevalent moving north with a significant area of woodland at Grass Wood; occasional small enclosed copses occur in field corners where trees grow together into a characteristic domed shape.
- Dark coniferous plantations and exotic conifers planted in association with properties detract.
- Hay meadows are scattered on the valley floor and sides particularly in the Grassington area.
- Quarries are significant detractors within this part of the dale.
- Limestone pavements occur in the north of the character area, particularly within and above Grass Wood and on the edge of Malham Moor.

+ Landscape Character

The change in underlying geology between Upper Wharfedale, the Craven Fault Area and Mid Wharfedale is reflected by a marked change in the visual characteristics of the dale. A degree of complexity is added to the valley shape by the presence the Craven fault between Grassington and Burnsall. The underlying geology has led to the formation of a variety of topographical features in the faultline area with the result that the valley is undefined and lacks the unity found further north and south within the dale.

The breadth of the dale in this area together with the lower height of the surrounding upland and reducing influence of the dark gritstone moors to the south gives a broad, open and gentle feel to this part of Wharfedale. This sense of openness is reinforced as one moves north from Mid Wharfedale by the lightening in the colour of the landscape as the influence of limestone becomes apparent in the walls and where bedrock is exposed, contrasting with the darker colours of the gritstone landscape further south. Where the dale sides are lower many of the near horizons are a continuation of the

pastures and walls that dominate the dale floors and the dale sides and the transition to moorland is not always visible from the valley floor.

Dale sides are complex and undulating and their overall form is interrupted by a series of limestone reef knolls, conical grass hills that are striking in their simplicity of form and in their absence of vegetation. The knolls are concentrated on the side of Thorpe Fell at Kail Hill, Stebden and Elbolton but are also found to the east of the river at a second Kail Hill. On Thorpe Fell side to the west the knolls are interspersed by strip lynchets and drystone walls often following the line of contours and creating a pattern of light and shade on the hillside. This landscape is dotted with copses of trees that interrupt its line and pattern but contribute to its visual qualities. The upper fell sides are strongly textured by gills that are given emphasis by the pattern of vegetation that reflects the variation in slope, aspect and drainage. Small areas of rough pasture and bracken extend down the fell sides into the dale. By contrast the character of the eastern dale side has been significantly weakened in places by the presence of inappropriate development, coniferous trees and a mast structure.

The river cuts a deep course through parts of the faultline area, fringed by steep wooded banks and occasional riverside cliffs. In places the river is not visible from the broader dale sides and is marked only by the line of trees that follow its course. Trees also mark the line of the well-developed rocky gills on the eastern dale side. Hay meadows are a feature to the north and south of Grassington in particular and in other localised areas. A waterfall occurs at Linton where the river crosses the faultline. To the south of Burnsall the river meanders across a flat floodplain bounded by shingle 'beaches' and in these areas it forms a focal point of the dale.

Broadleaved woodlands become more common moving north up the dale, with an abundance of small woodlands occurring on the dale side in the Skirethorns area and the most sizeable woodland of the dale, Grass Wood, sited on a promontory of land extending from the eastern dale side to the north of Grassington. Occasional small enclosed copses occur in field corners where trees grow together into a characteristic domed shape when viewed against the hillside. Collapse of walls that often surround areas of woodland and copses has led to grazing by sheep in some wooded areas and has reduced or eliminated natural regeneration; such grazing poses a significant threat to the future of the woodlands. Small pockets of coniferous plantings occur, often in association with property, and have a detrimental effect on valley character. Otherwise the landscape is relatively open and trees, frequently ash, are scattered on field boundaries and also on the reef knoll Kail Hill to the east of the river. A few hedges occur, although where they exist they tend to be overgrown and gappy at the bottom and in need of management.

Nucleated settlements constructed in gritstone are scattered throughout the valley and are centred around the river, its bridging points and tributaries. Inappropriate suburban style residential and commercial development can be seen on the edges of many of these settlements eg at Grassington/Threshfield and at Hebden (where such development is far more limited) and within the open countryside; this has contributed significantly to the erosion of the character of this part of the dale. In particular, painted and red tiled houses of mostly inter-war origin stand out on the hillside. Settlements and farms are generally well-treed but are sometimes marked by the presence of exotic coniferous species that locally detract from landscape character.

Facilities provided for the many visitors to this part of the dale including campsites and parking on the edges of settlements have an important visual impact, particularly on summer weekends and in main holiday periods. Farmers' fields beside the river at Burnsall are turned into car parks during such periods with significant effect on the valley. Long Ashes Caravan Site also provides leisure facilities for visitors although it is generally well screened within a wooded site. In contrast, a group of dilapidated wooden chalets on the open site east of Linton is a localised eyesore.

Remnants of the former railway to Grassington, including the bridge and elements of municipal style design at Threshfield such as bus shelters, random stone walls, concrete post and rail fencing and floodlit sports pitches contribute to an urbanising effect within the countryside around settlements.

The pattern of drystone walls varies from a predominantly strip pattern on the eastern dale side between Hebden and Grass Wood to a more mixed and varied pattern on Thorpe Fell side. There are small areas with a coaxial pattern around Grassington. The visual strength of the pattern is diluted by the complexity of the topography in many areas and is more marked on the less undulating contours of the eastern dale sides where the long narrow fields often cross the contours emphasising

the shape of the slope. The walls although predominately limestone often contain gritstone. Field barns are occasional features.

An intricate pattern of roads and lanes run along and across the dale linking the dale to the moors to the west and east, reflecting the former importance of the moorland areas to the economy of this part of the valley.

Electricity poles are prominent as they cross the undulating landform and the mast on the edge of Grassington Moor is intrusive. Quarries visible on the hillsides include those at Swinden and on Malham Moor side significantly scar the landscape. Many small older quarries are also present but now blend with their backdrop. Other quarries are present but well screened by landform.

Classic features associated with limestone scenery are present providing additional interest and variety eg limestone pavements, shakeholes, swallowholes and dry valleys. Features associated with the past glaciation of the dale include frequent large boulders within farmland and woodland.

Historic features which reinforce the character of this part of the dale, in addition to those already mentioned, include significant areas of ridge and furrow which add further pattern and texture to the landscape, and the influence of the lead mining remains on Grassington Moor. Halls with parklands include Grassington Hall, Hartlington Hall and Netherside Hall. Linton Hospital on the village green at Linton designed by Vanburgh makes an important architectural contribution to this part of the dale.

34. Mid Wharfedale

+ Key Characteristics

- Gently graded winding semi-enclosed gritstone valley landscape with occasional outcropping limestone contrasting with wild open moorland beyond, which is dominated by rocky outcrops.
- Colour contrast between the greens of the pastures and woodlands within the valley, the darker greens of coniferous trees on the valley side and the dark patchwork of purple and browns mixed with greys and tans that make up the moorland areas.
- River Wharfe alternates between flowing swiftly through narrow shallow wooded rocky gorges occasionally opening out to meander across open terraced floodplains.
- The regularly spaced v-shaped tributary valleys are narrow, steep, rocky and well wooded, often with waterfalls.
- Frequent linear ancient deciduous woodland fringing the river and within the valley floor is supplemented by often abruptly edged medium scale coniferous plantations on the upper valley sides.
- The valley floor and lower valley sides are given over to grazing of sheep and cattle and occasional hay meadows within medium sized gritstone walled fields in the central parts of the area and smaller, irregularly shaped stone enclosures in the north and south with occasional boundary trees and field barns.
- Pattern of walls generally stops abruptly at the moorland edge; moorland vegetation types occasionally spill over into the valley sides.
- Settlement limited in the south of the area to that around the Bolton Abbey and at Bolton Bridge, with occasional estate farms on the lower valley sides; to the north small farmsteads are more frequent around the gritstone hamlets of Drebley and Howgill on the lower valley sides.
- Present influence of Devonshire Estate is evidenced by tree-lined roads, remnant parkland landscapes and modern development of low key visitor facilities and associated parking at the abbey, Strid and Bolton Bridge.
- Focal points within the valley include the ruins of Bolton Abbey, the Cavendish Memorial, Barden Tower and medieval bridges at Bolton Bridge and Barden, and the rocky outcrops including Earl's Seat and Simon's Seat on Barden Fell to the east.

+ Landscape Character

Mid Wharfedale is a gently graded semi-enclosed largely gritstone valley landscape contrasting with open moorland beyond, dominated by the rocky outcrops of gritstone on Barden Fell to the east (such as Earl's Seat and Simon's Seat) and Beamsley Beacon on Beamsley Moor to the south. Embsay Moor to the west is lower and its sides more gently graded, contributing less to the dale character. The winding nature of the dale contributes to its sense of enclosure and is in marked contrast to the straighter pattern of the valleys of Upper Wharfedale and Littondale to the north. Occasional glacial features within the valley floor (such as the retreat moraine creating a raised landform across the dale

at Drebley) and on the dale sides (eg at Storiths) interrupt the otherwise smooth contours of the dale.

The character area adjoins landscape type 14 identified in the Landscape Strategy for Lancashire (for Craven District Council) as 'Rolling Upland Farmland' comprising the character areas 14b 'Lothersdale and the Cringles'; landscape type Wharfedale Enclosed Pasture identified by Bradford Metropolitan District Council; and Moorland Plateau and Wharfedaleside identified by Harrogate District Council.

The lush greens of the improved pastures, occasional hay meadows and deciduous woodlands within the dale contrast with the darker greens of the coniferous plantations on the dale side and the dark patchwork of seasonally changing colours including purples, browns, greys and tans that make up the managed moorland areas. In places moorland vegetation, particularly rough grassland and bracken, extend down the dale side and encroach upon the valley.

Small pockets of limestone outcrop within the gritstone geology provide contrasting features such as the small limestone gorge at Trollers Gill and the rock formations on the banks of the River Wharfe above and below the Cavendish Pavilion.

The River Wharfe alternates between flowing swiftly through narrow shallow rocky gorges fringed by deciduous woodland and occasionally opening out to meander across broader grazed floodplains bounded by river terraces that become more marked south of Drebley. Frequent and relatively extensive ancient deciduous woodland fringing the river and its tributaries is associated with steeper, rocky slopes where grazing is difficult is supplemented by coniferous plantations sometimes abruptly edged, extend up the dale sides, although the mixture of Larch with evergreen species in many of these plantations serves to soften their appearance and avoid a blocky effect. The regularly spaced v-shaped tributary valleys are narrow, steep, rocky and well-wooded, often with waterfalls. Tree planting has been carried out both within parkland and areas of woodland, and there is some evidence of woodland management.

Elsewhere the dale floor and lower dale sides are given over to grazing of sheep and cattle within regularly shaped medium sized gritstone walled fields of the enclosure period in the central part of the character area and smaller, irregularly shaped stone enclosures of the medieval period in the north and south. The field pattern of mixed shapes and sizes is akin to a patchwork in contrast with the more regular and linear patterns of Upper Wharfedale and Littondale. Walls are generally in a good state of repair although there are breaks in the pattern in certain limited areas eg near Gamsworth Farm. Field barns are occasionally present but not a frequent feature of this part of the dale but are generally in a good state of repair. The pattern of walls which extend up the dale side generally stopping abruptly at the moorland edge is reinforced in many places by mature trees planted alongside the walls and by occasional small enclosed copses in field corners where trees grow together into a characteristic domed shape when viewed against the hillside. There are in addition to walls occasional stretches of hedgerow and post and rail fencing.

Roads, often walled to both sides, wind along the dale on each side of the river and are alternately enclosed by woodland and opening out to reveal views across the valley. The minor road forms part of the Yorkshire Dales Cycleway. Roads also cross the moorland to Embsay and Pateley Bridge. Parking pressure around the central area has led to erosion of roadside verges. The A59 cuts across the southern section of the character area linking Harrogate and Skipton, following the valleys of Hambleton and Rex Becks, and recent road improvements have been undertaken with appropriate attention to design detail. Elsewhere walled green roads climb to the moorland.

Historic domination by the estate lands associated with Bolton Abbey has limited development of settlement in the south of the area to that around the abbey and at

Bolton Bridge. To the north small farmsteads are more frequent around the gritstone hamlets of Drebley and Howgill on the lower dale sides. Settlements and buildings generally sit well within the dale and conversions of older buildings have been undertaken with sensitivity. The present influence of the Devonshire Estate is evidenced by tree-lined roads, remnant parkland landscapes and new replanting within parkland and on the steeper slopes adjacent to the river. Carefully restored buildings and well-maintained walls are a feature of the estate and development of tightly controlled low key visitor facilities and associated parking has occurred at the Abbey, Strid, Bolton Bridge and Barden Tower. The estate lands are recognisable by both their carefully tended appearance and the house style present in use of signage and paint colours for building details. Other estates whose influence is less marked include Beamsley Park and Parcevall Hall.

Focal points within the dale include the ruins of Bolton Abbey and its setting, the Cavendish Memorial, Barden Tower and medieval bridges at Bolton Bridge and Barden. Beyond the valley rocky outcrops at Barden Fell to the east and at Beamsley Beacon to the south are striking features.

Visual detractors within the dale include overhead electric and telephone wires, some blocky coniferous plantations and occasional larger modern farm buildings. The wind turbines at Addingham are visible from parts of the area but do not significantly intrude. Felling of plantations has created unsightly cut over areas creating scars on the dale side until these are re-established, although creating an opportunity for improved design of plantations and more use of deciduous trees. A number of camping/caravanning sites and large car parks are present within the dale although they are generally well integrated into the scene through tree cover. Additional tree cover would assist their further integration.