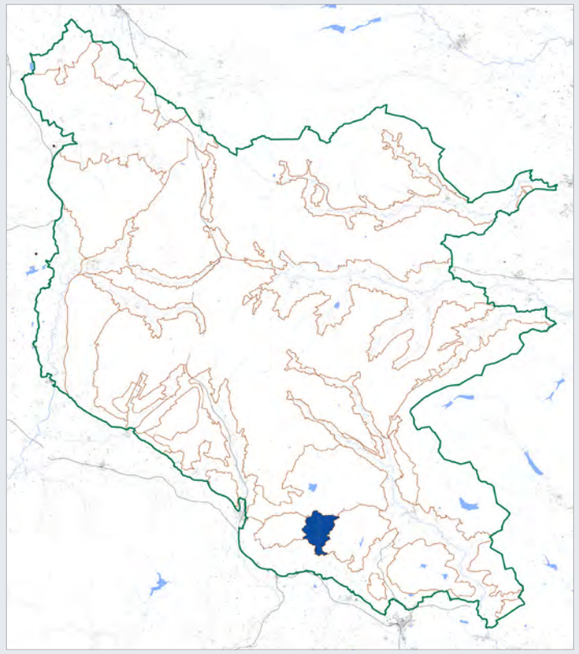
Malham Cove from Cove Road

LCA 14 Malhamdale

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Landscape Character Assessment

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

LCA 14 Malhamdale



Key characteristics

- Classic example of limestone faultline landscape of national importance enclosed by Great Scar Limestone upland to the north and gritstone moors to east and west.
- Dale relatively broad in upper reaches with gently sloping valley sides stopping abruptly at the line of the Great Scar limestone escarpment; more narrow and enclosed in lower reaches, with often steep banks to beck.
- Huge natural amphitheatre at Malham Cove, 70m high, dominates Malham village and the open dale head. Gordale Scar, with its towering limestone walls, is cut into the dale head limestone escarpment.
- Significant deeply incised wooded tributaries drain the valley sides.
- Well treed with mixed and deciduous species in lower reaches, concentrated within gills, on steeper slopes by river and around settlements; less wooded with increasing elevation.
- Pastoral landscape of light limestone walls and barns with hedgerows more frequent in lower dale. Historic pattern of drystone walls and walled lanes climbing the hillside is a dominant feature of the more open dale head.
- Traditional settlements of largely Anglian pattern constructed in gritstone and limestone, the latter prevalent in the upper reaches of the dale, and some buildings are rendered/pebbledashed and painted white.
- Visitors have significant visual effect upon Malham and access roads in busy periods.

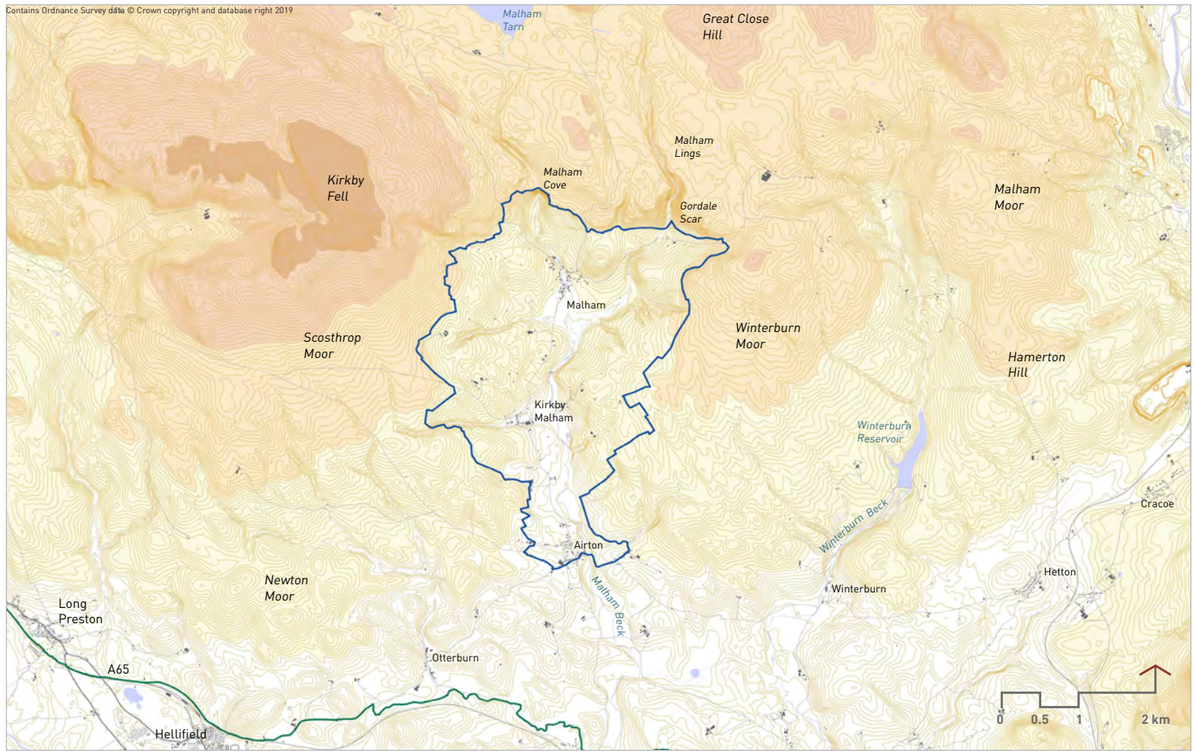


The Lister Arms, Malham

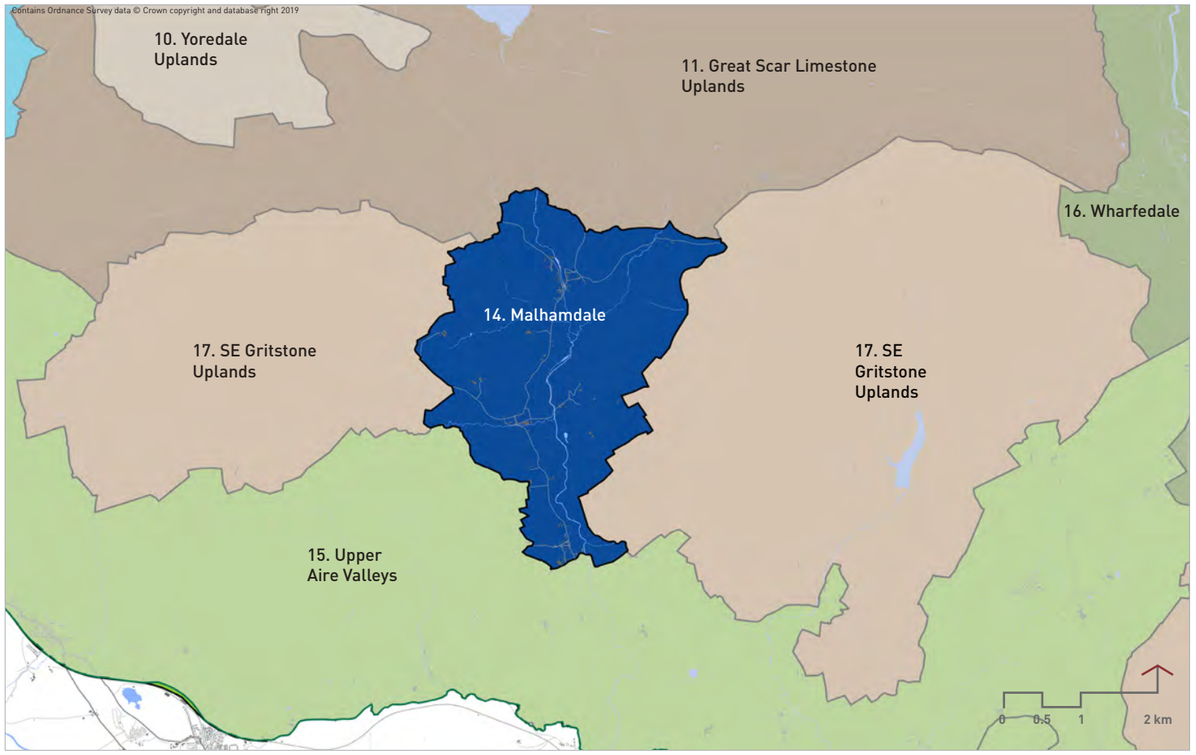


Shorkley Hill from Cove Road

Landscape context: Malhamdale



Landscape character: Malhamdale



Landscape context

The landscape of Malhamdale includes some of the most spectacular examples of limestone scenery within the YDNP and within the UK.

Malhamdale is a broadly U-shaped dale overlying limestone. The Mid Craven Fault cuts across the landscape from west to east dividing the Great Scar limestone of the uplands to the north from the Bowland shale and reef limestone which underlie the dale, creating the dramatic landscape for which the dale is nationally renowned. The dale is enclosed by the Great Scar limestone upland to the north, and the contrasting character of the more elevated gritstone uplands of Kirkby Fell/Scosthrop High Moor to the west and lower Calton Moor to the east. The dale head stops abruptly at the long escarpment and scars of Great Scar limestone into which are cut the impressive features of Malham Cove and Gordale Scar.



Long view to Malham Cove from Scosthrop Moor to the south west of Malhamdale

Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in Malhamdale (see page 6)



Striking historic pattern of limestone walls alongside Malham Cove on the slopes of Shorkley Hill

Distinctive landscape character

The huge natural amphitheatre of Malham Cove is thought to have been formed by an unusual combination of erosion by ice, glacial meltwater and possibly underground water. The soft shales to the south of the Mid Craven Fault were easily eroded to form a sharp southern edge to the Great Scar Limestone plateau to the north. This natural step in the landscape was further developed by glacial erosion; the ice sheet deepened the basin where Malham Tarn now stands and scoured the surface of the rocks between the tarn and the village, to create the limestone pavements on this part of the plateau. It is thought that Malham Cove was formed by glacial meltwater pouring over the rock step and cutting the rock back from the faultline. The wall of rock may also have been gouged by glacial erosion.

To the east, Gordale Scar is a deep, narrow rocky gorge formed by glacial meltwater which extends for about 1½ km into the Great Scar limestone. It is drained by Gordale Beck, which flows partly underground, but which after heavy rain forms waterfalls in the gorge. Beyond the scar, the beck flows over a further series of waterfalls surrounded by ancient woodland at Janet's Foss, to the south of Gordale Lane, where the falls flow over an apron of Tufa (pure calcium carbonate) some 4 metres wide.

The winding Malham Beck drains the dale. In the upper reaches the dale is relatively broad and the beck follows a stony shallow course within the valley floor with the valley sides sloping gently towards it. In the lower parts of the LCA the beck flows within a more narrow, steeply incised valley. Tributary streams, including Gordale Beck, Hell Gill Syke and Tranlands Beck are often steeply incised into the valley side; all are wooded with deciduous or mixed woodland, creating a distinctive pattern to the valley sides.

Tree cover including mixed and broadleaved woodland is significant with the lower dale, concentrated within gills, on steeper slopes by the river and around settlements. A few areas of ancient woodland occur in the north east of the character area and around Kirkby Malham. With increasing elevation the dale becomes more open and less wooded and the influence of limestone in the walls, buildings and geological features becomes more dominant. In these areas trees still occur on boundaries within fields, beside roads and around settlements. Small parklands associated with the halls at Hanlith and Accraplatts add to the extent of tree cover locally.

The dale is principally a pastoral farming landscape of light limestone walls enclosing improved pastures and occasional hay meadows grazed by sheep and cattle scattered with field barns. It is divided into an irregular and varied patchwork of fields. Hedgerows are intermixed with walls in the lower dale but these diminish in number with increasing elevation.

Whilst in the lower dale the pattern of walls is diluted by the presence of hedges and the extent of tree cover, the upper dale is increasingly open, with a striking historic pattern of limestone walls on the hillsides below the cove. Walls also line the minor roads and green lanes creating distinctive patterns winding up the hillsides. Hay meadows are a feature of the dale with a concentration occurring on the west facing slopes. Small patches of bracken are an occasional feature and scattered small rocky outcrops and loose boulders occur in fields at the dale head.

Most settlements have a nucleated form, with buildings clustered around a traditional village green. However, Kirkby Malham is of Danish origin with a distinctive layout of houses aligned in rows to face south down the valley. Beckside mills, reflecting the valleys industrial past are a feature of a number of settlements. Buildings are constructed in a mixture of gritstone and limestone; limestone is more frequent in the upper dale where it is supplemented by gritstone cornerstones. Some buildings are pebbledashed or rendered and painted white.

Malhamdale was dominated by monasteries, with lands owned by Fountains Abbey, Bolton Priory and Dereham Abbey (in Norfolk). Some of the medieval water mills were re-used in the 18th century to power cotton mills. Malham was a centre for mining, with calamine and copper mined at Pikedaw, lead on Malham Moor and coal pits on Fountains Fell. The minerals were taken to Gargrave for shipment on the canal.

A minor road follows a winding course up the dale, frequently lined with trees and hedges or stone walls. The roads follow the route of the former mineral road to the dale head. From the dale head walled lanes rise up onto the fells on either side of the cove, following the medieval or monastic routes. Minor walled roads also climb the dale sides from Kirkby Malham.



Malham

Clustered gritstone/ limestone buildings and bridges; narrow walled lanes lead onto the moors



Gordale Lane



Malham Beck flows within a steep-sided valley, incised and often hidden within the wider dale

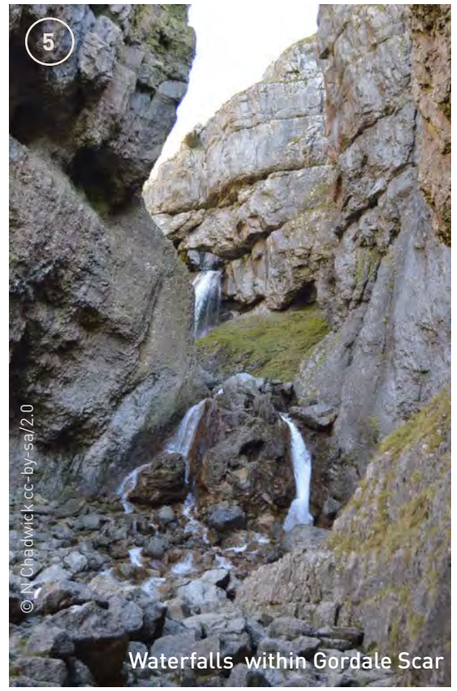
Malhamdale from Scalegill Mill



4

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Gordale Scar from New Close Knotts



5

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Waterfalls within Gordale Scar



6

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Airton Mill, a historic cotton mill (now converted into flats) on the River Aire

Awe inspiring, dramatic scenery - with hints of ancient connections - across geological time



Malham Cove from Kirkby Brow

.. a string of characterful small beckside villages along the dale



7

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Airton

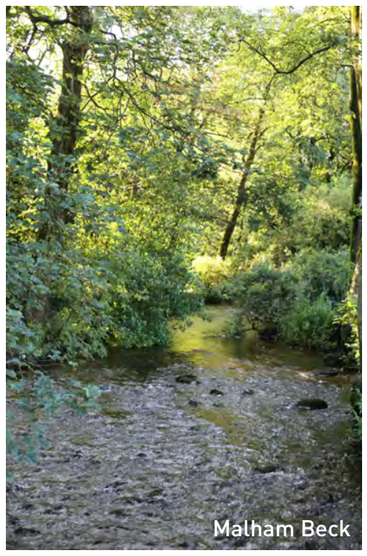
Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in Malhamdale (see page 6)



Dramatic limestone pavements on top of Malham Cove - people are dwarfed against the huge scale of this landscape



Mystical waterfalls and wooded tributary valleys; ancient woodland







Diverse mosaic of wetland habitat at the source of the River Aire, just south of Malham

Key natural, cultural and perceptual features

NATURAL

Malham Cove - a spectacular 70m vertical wall of limestone cut into the Great Scar Limestone at the dale head which, together with Gordale Scar, is renowned as one of the most striking examples of limestone scenery in the UK. (8)

Gordale Scar - a deep, rocky trench with towering limestone walls scoured by glacial meltwater; dramatic waterfalls after heavy rain; to the south of Gordale Scar, at **Janet's Foss**, Gordale Beck flows over more waterfalls and across a broad apron of Tufa (calcite redeposited from the lime-saturated beck). (4) (5) (9)

Outstanding and diverse geological and biological interest - a wealth of limestone habitats: a large part of the area between Malham Cove and Littondale (including part of the dale head) is designated as the Craven Limestone Complex SAC and the Malham-Arncliffe SSSI. It contains freshwater systems of international significance, as well as calcareous grasslands, limestone pavement, fen and mire habitats.

Limestone pavement on the surface of the cove; the fissures (grykes) are rich in plant life including wood sorrel, wood garlic, and anemone.

Hay meadows - scattered throughout Malhamdale. Lime-rich soils, closely grazed by sheep and rabbits, support nationally scarce species; intimate mixtures of calcareous, neutral and acidic grasslands are characteristic.

Ancient woodlands, often concentrated in steep tributary valleys and gullies, eg at Janet's Foss and around Kirkby Beck and Hanlith Gill Syke. (9)

CULTURAL

Prominent and striking historic pattern of limestone walls enclosing fields and lanes on the open upper dale slopes. (1)

A string of characterful traditional small beckside villages with gritstone/limestone buildings and bridges, often clustered around with village greens. (2) (7)

Narrow walled lanes and tracks, which lead from the dale up onto the surrounding moors, were monastic routes (eg Mastiles Lane over Malham Moor), typically developed to transport sheep in medieval times. (3)

Strip lynchets on the open hillsides and **stone lime kilns**, date from the Middle Ages, when there was pressure for more farmland and improved productivity. (10)

Historic (18th C) beckside cotton mills at Scalegill Mill, north of Kirkby Malham and at Airton. (5)

PERCEPTUAL

Awe-inspiring scenery - which hints at ancient connections across geological time. Dramatic cliffs and gorge, carved from limestone rock, mystical waterfalls and spectacular views. (4) (5) (8) (9)

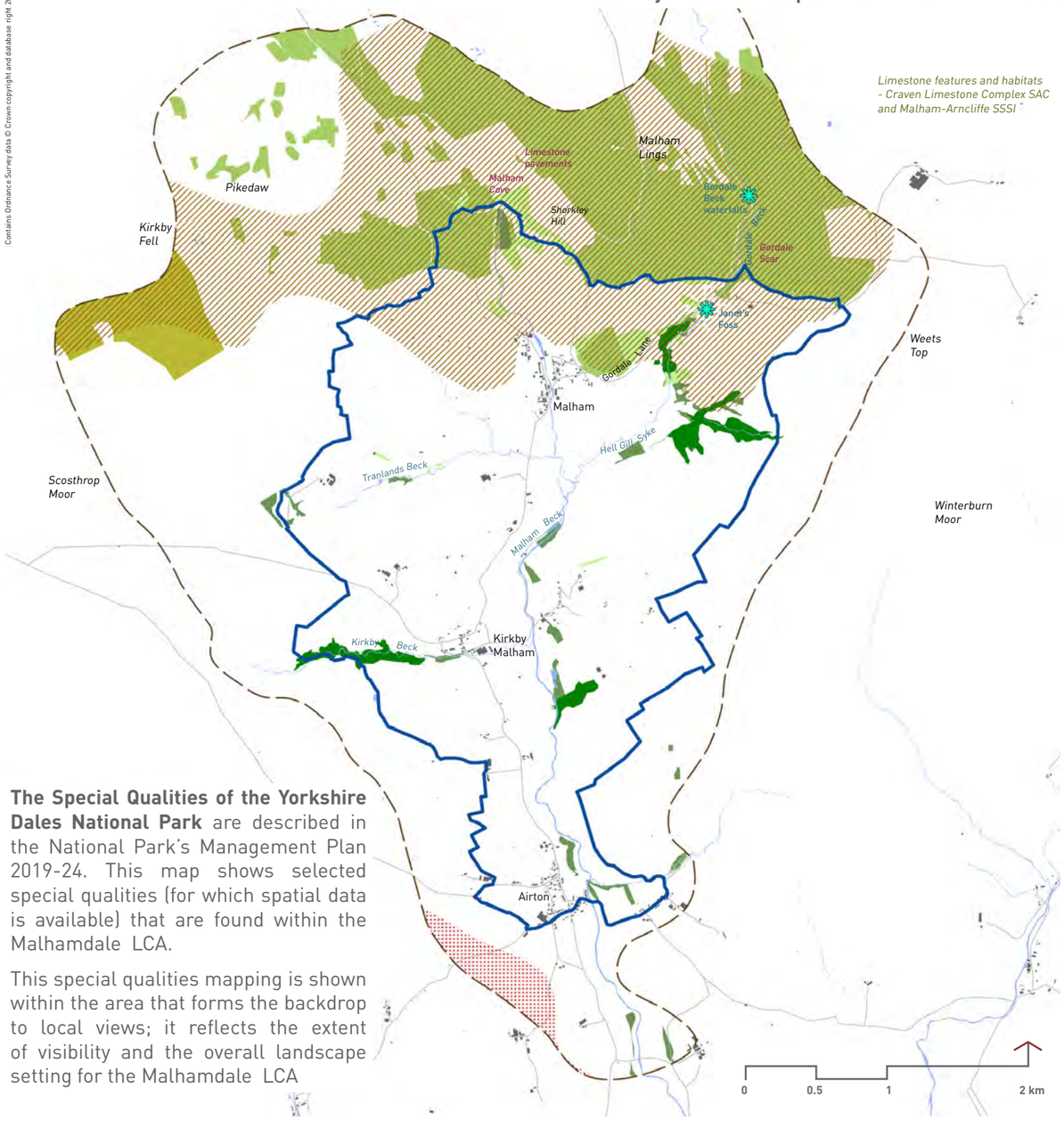
Strong sense of history which pervades the dale - the distinctive and prominent historic pattern of stone walls contributes to this sense of time-depth in the landscape.

Inspiration for artists throughout the centuries; James Ward's enormous canvas of Gordale, completed in 1815, hangs in the Tate Gallery. JMW Turner painted here and David Hockney has composed a photomontage of Gordale. Wordsworth and John Ruskin's poetry features Malhamdale and its scenery inspired Charles Kingsley's book, 'The Water Babies'.

Photos that illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features are numbered eg. (10)

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Natural Beauty and Wildlife Special Qualities: Malhamdale

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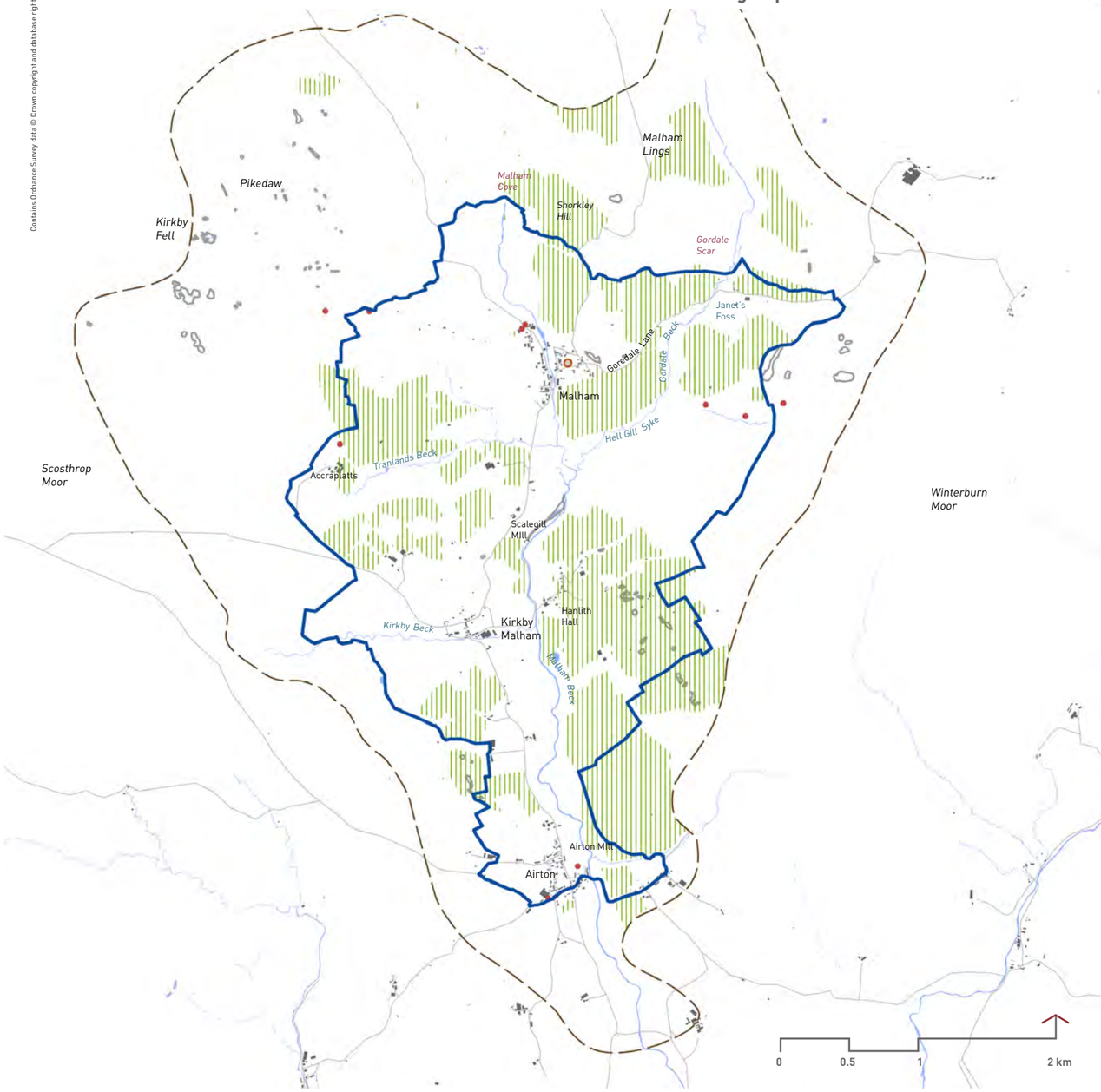


The Special Qualities of the Yorkshire Dales National Park are described in the National Park's Management Plan 2019-24. This map shows selected special qualities (for which spatial data is available) that are found within the Malhamdale LCA.

This special qualities mapping is shown within the area that forms the backdrop to local views; it reflects the extent of visibility and the overall landscape setting for the Malhamdale LCA

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Cultural Heritage Special Qualities: Malhamdale

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Special Qualities of the YDNP

- YDNP Boundary
- Malhamdale LCA boundary
- Extent of area that forms the backdrop to views from the Malhamdale LCA

Natural beauty

- **Outstanding classic limestone scenery** [Underlain by Great Scar Limestone & displaying distinctive karst character]
- **Significant glacial/post-glacial features** [Prominent drumlins and glacial drift landforms]
- **Spectacular waterfalls** ['Water features' noted as 'recognised attraction' in YDNPA Visitor Strategy]

Wildlife*

- **Flower-rich hay meadows and pastures** [Lowland meadows; Upland hay meadows]
- **A range of rare limestone habitats** [Limestone pavements; Lowland calcareous grassland; Upland calcareous grassland]
- **Extensive areas of moorland** [Upland heathland; Blanket bog; Lowland raised bog]
- **Small areas of broadleaf woodland** [Deciduous woodland; ancient woodland (darker tone)]

*Priority Habitats [S41 NERC Act 2010]

Cultural heritage*

- **A traditional pastoral landscape** [Traditional stone-built field barns]
- **An exceptional range of archaeology** [Strip lynchets & prehistoric field systems that are prominent]
- **Powerful reminders of periods of dominance by large estates and religious houses** [Ancient & historic parklands & other ornamental landscapes]
- **The remains of former rural industries** [Sites of former lead & coal mines & lime kilns]

* YDNPA Historic Environment Record

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