

LCA 15 Upper Aire Valleys

Yorkshire Dales National Park - Landscape Character Assessment

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park Authority

LCA 15 Upper Aire Valleys



Key characteristics

- Undulating topography of rounded hills, broken ridges and winding river valleys; many hill and ridgetop (gritstone) summits have distinctive craggy/pointed skyline profiles which lend character to the valleys
- Generally well treed with small plantations of deciduous and mixed woodland, including areas of ancient woodland. Trees mark the line of rivers and streams. Coniferous plantations on adjacent uplands contribute to well-wooded character
- Fields divided by a mixture of hedgerows, fences and tree belts, with drystone walls extending onto higher slopes. Historic pattern of smaller fields near settlements and alongside streams
- Occasional barns and strip lynchets
- Sense of prosperity with halls, designed parklands, large houses and large farms, the parklands having a strong influence on the landscape.
- Numerous nucleated villages, hamlets and scattered farms connected by a relatively dense network of narrow roads.
- Buildings constructed in gritstone with stone slate roofs. Settlements and roads become larger and more influential, with a more varied range of construction materials, towards the southern fringes of the Yorkshire Dales National Park.





Flasby Fell from Calton

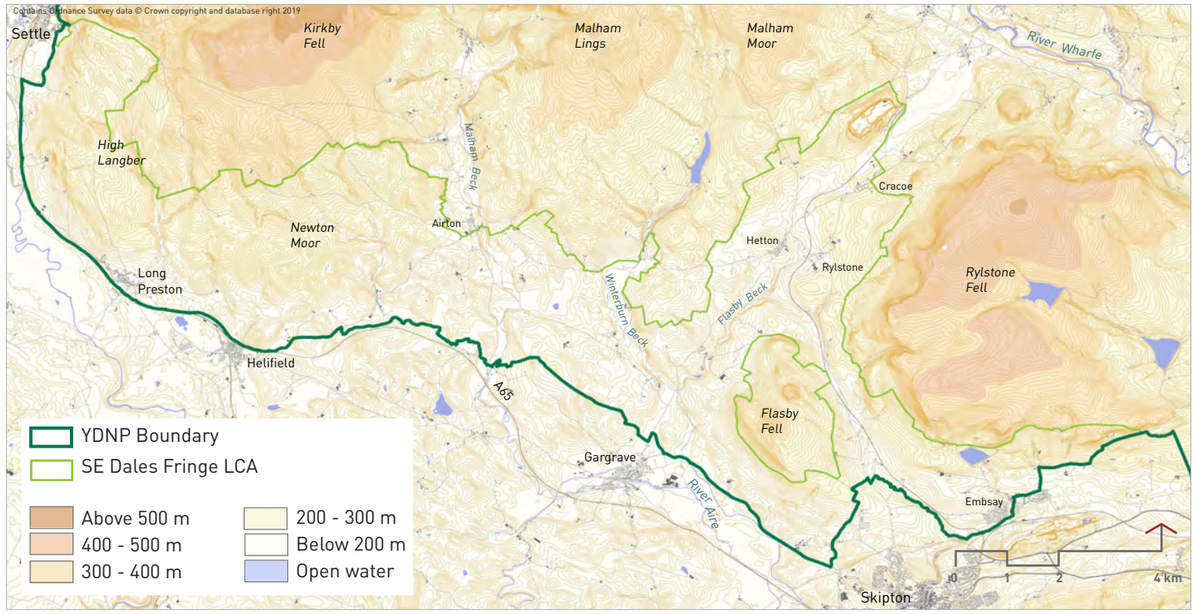


Otterburn Beck

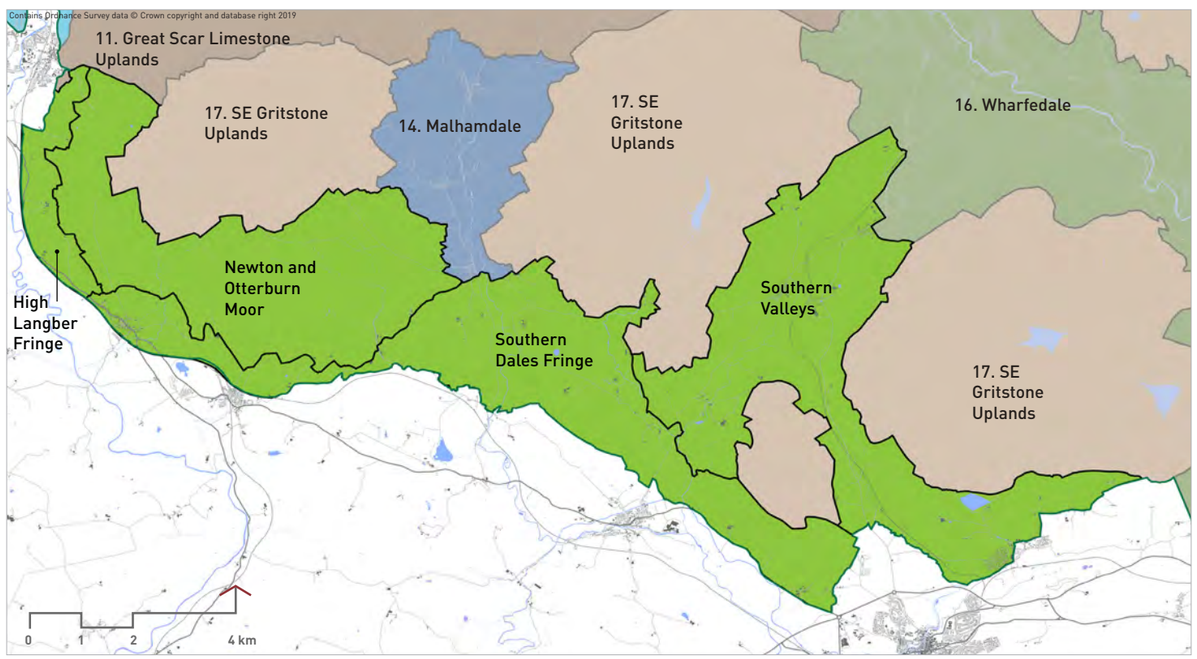


Hetton - village gateway

Landscape context: Upper Aire Valleys



Landscape character: Upper Aire Valleys



Landscape context

The Upper Aire Valleys landscape is part of a transitional zone at the eroded southern fringes of the Pennines. Here the gritstone and limestone uplands of the Yorkshire Dales are disrupted by the Craven Faults and dissected by the winding valleys of the upper River Aire and its tributaries, which meander southwards towards the broader valleys on the southern margins of the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP).

The area is bordered by a series of gritstone fell outliers - Kirby Fell to the west; Scosthrop and Winterburn Moors to the north; and Rylstone Fell and Flasby Fell to the east provide a backdrop to the views across this LCA. The dramatic and distinctive landscape of Malhamdale is squeezed between these higher gritstone uplands to the north and lower Wharfedale is to the east. The rounded hills alongside the upper River Aire are part of an area of drumlins which extends to the south of the YDNP.

The principal variations in landscape character at a local scale are:

- **Southern Valleys enclosed by Winterburn Moor, Rylstone Fell and Flasby Fell** - the craggy outcrops and conical landforms of the surrounding fells create distinctive skylines (eg. Sharp Haw and Rough Haw on Flasby Fell); area is well settled with roads along the valleys and numerous villages and hamlets. There is extensive tree cover, with a mix of broadleaf woodland along water courses and mixed woodland on valley slopes. Skipton Rock Quarry is prominent in local views to the south of Embsay; Swinden Quarry, to the north east of the village of Cracoe, is also a significant local influence.
- **Southern Dales Fringe** - the undulating landform in this part of the LCA results from presence of drumlins alongside the upper River Aire and Flasby Beck; areas of designed parkland (eg Eshton Hall and Newfield Hall are influential and contribute to the well treed character of the area. There is more pasture than in other parts of the Upper Aire Valleys LCA, with scattered hay meadows and a mix of field shapes and sizes. This is a relatively quiet area, which is bypassed by principal roads.
- **High Langber Fringe** - Strongly influenced by presence of roads on YDNP boundary; relatively open landscape, with pockets of woodland associated with estates and small parkland
- **Newton and Otterburn Moor** - a more open, elevated and sparsely settled area compared to other parts of the Upper Aire Valleys LCA. There are few field enclosures, particularly towards the upper slopes and tree cover is limited to some dominant large conifer plantations. This is a transitional landscape of rounded hills between the Gritstone Moors to the north and the lowlands of the Aire valley to the south on the fringes of the National Park

Distinctive landscape character

The complexities of the limestone/gritstone bedrock in this area are masked by glacial deposits of boulder clay, which create a smoothly undulating landscape. Many of the summits of the surrounding gritstone fells have landmark topographic features that create distinctive skylines.

The valleys typically have gentle longitudinal profiles and no distinct dale head, each flowing almost imperceptibly into the next and into Malhamdale and Wharfedale to the north. This makes the area seem rather disorientating, although the physical links between valleys provide opportunities for transport connections and a relatively dense network of roads and lanes. Drumlins on the floor of parts of the River Aire and Flasby Beck Valleys contain views and contribute to the sense of disorientation. They continue south of the National Park boundary.

Tree cover is extensive. Belts of broadleaf native woodland along gills and becks are supplemented by small blocks of coniferous and mixed woodland on valley slopes and some larger conifer plantations, such as those planted on the slopes of Flasby Fell and Crook Beck Plantation on Otterburn Moor. There are also numerous hedgerow trees, and clusters of trees within fields, on craggy outcrops and around farms and hamlets. The slopes of Newton and Otterburn Moor are typically more open, with fewer field enclosures. Here large conifer plantations are a dominant presence.

There is a mixture of pasture and arable fields, with a more historic pattern of strip fields on the lower valley slopes, the valley floor and around settlements. The larger, more regularly-shaped pattern of fields on the more open upper fell slopes are generally more visible and defined by drystone walls.

Designed parkland landscapes, with mixed woodland, formal stone walls, avenues and groups of mature specimen trees, contribute local variation and interest.

Small clustered gritstone villages are typically sited close to watercourses. Most have a proportion of suburban style buildings alongside those of the vernacular form. There is a relatively high number of barn conversions in this area. The southern margins of this landscape are influenced by the A65 corridor and there is a loose belt of larger settlements to the south, beyond the National Park boundary, including Gargrave, Hellifield and Skipton.

Numbered photographs illustrate specific key natural, cultural and perceptual features in the Upper Aire Valleys LCA (see page 5)



Eshton Park

Groups of fine specimen trees, railings, lodges and coped mortared stone walls

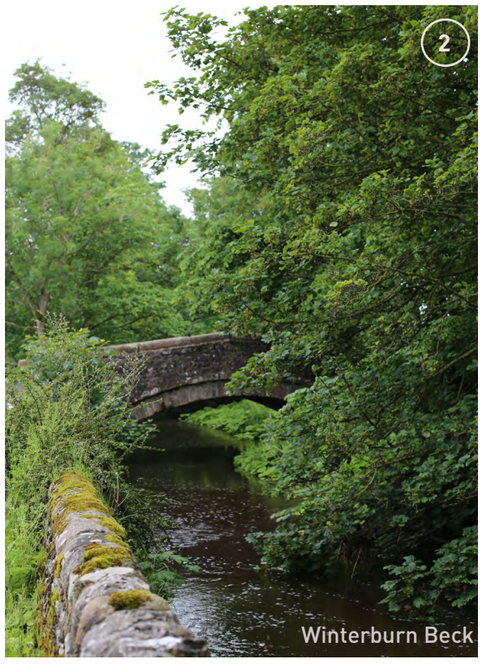


Gateway to Newfield Hall

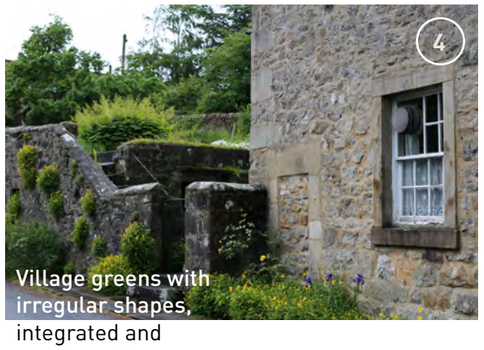


Hetton





Historic stone bridges over winding small watercourses

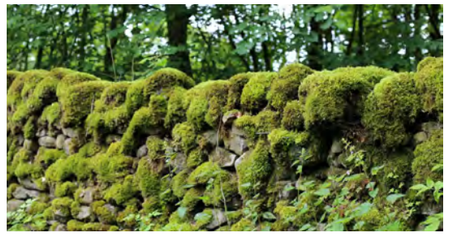


Village greens with irregular shapes, integrated and connected by stone walls

Quirky skyline crags and summits are local landmarks - each valley has its own identity



Strip lynchets on Lower Colgarth Hill





Distinctive skylines of Rough Haw and Sharp Haw on Flasby Fell from Flasby Beck valley

Key natural, cultural and perceptual features

NATURAL

Distinctive skylines formed by craggy gritstone outcrops on the surrounding moors - the conical forms of Sharp Haw and Rough Haw on Flasby Fell, the upswept form of Embsay Crag and the crag outline and cross on Rylstone Fell, which contribute a quirky and distinctive identity to the Upper Aire Valleys. (6)

Rounded drumlins in parts of the River Aire and Flasby Beck valleys contain views locally and tend to create a sense of disorientation - they continue to the south of the National Park. (7) (8)

Numerous winding small watercourses, bordered by meadows, strips of woodland, villages with stone bridges and historic mills. (2) (9)

Limestone knoll reefs - Swinden Quarry SSSI, to the north of Cracoe, is important for the exposure of knoll reefs within the Lower Carboniferous rocks; the conical hills on the fringes of Cracoe Fell are part of the Cracoe Reef Knolls SSSI.

Small areas of ancient woodland at Cleatop Park to the south of Settle, on the slopes of Sandy Beck Valley (Hollin Wood and Crookrise Wood), on the upper slopes of Flasby Fell (High Wood and Lord's Wood) and alongside Flasby Beck near Eshton Bridge (Great Wood and Low Wood).

CULTURAL

Historic designed parkland landscapes, eg at Eshton Hall, Newfield Hall, Mearbeck House, Fleet House, Scale House, Embsay Kirk and Flasby Hall. (1)

Striking variations in field pattern, with remnant irregularly shaped historic field boundaries around settlements, including some long narrow enclosures alongside water courses.

Prominent historic earthworks, including areas of strip lynchets on the slopes of Rystone Fell, on Middlesber Hill near Flasby and within the parkland at Eshton. (5)

Village greens with irregular shapes and enclosed by a diverse mix of houses, barns and farmsteads, integrated and connected by stone walls; chapels and pubs are often local landmarks - for instance at Hetton, Long Preston, Cracoe and Rylstone. (3) (4)

PERCEPTUAL

Richly varied mosaic of pasture, arable fields, woodlands and hedgerow trees - small hay meadows eg around Flasby Beck; variations in the size and shape of fields emphasise the local topography, with smaller fields alongside watercourses and larger enclosures on higher slopes. (10)

Diverse and well settled - quirky landmark skylines, individual village and farm buildings, remnant parkland elements (stone walls, avenues, groups of specimen trees) and gurgling streams contribute small elements of variation within the wider pattern of inter-connected gentle valleys and villages.

Occasional long views across the lowlands to the south of the National Park eg from the elevated slopes to the east of Embsay and from Langber Lane on the slopes of Otterburn Moor.

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



Rounded dome-shaped drumlins often contain local views





historic bridges and mills



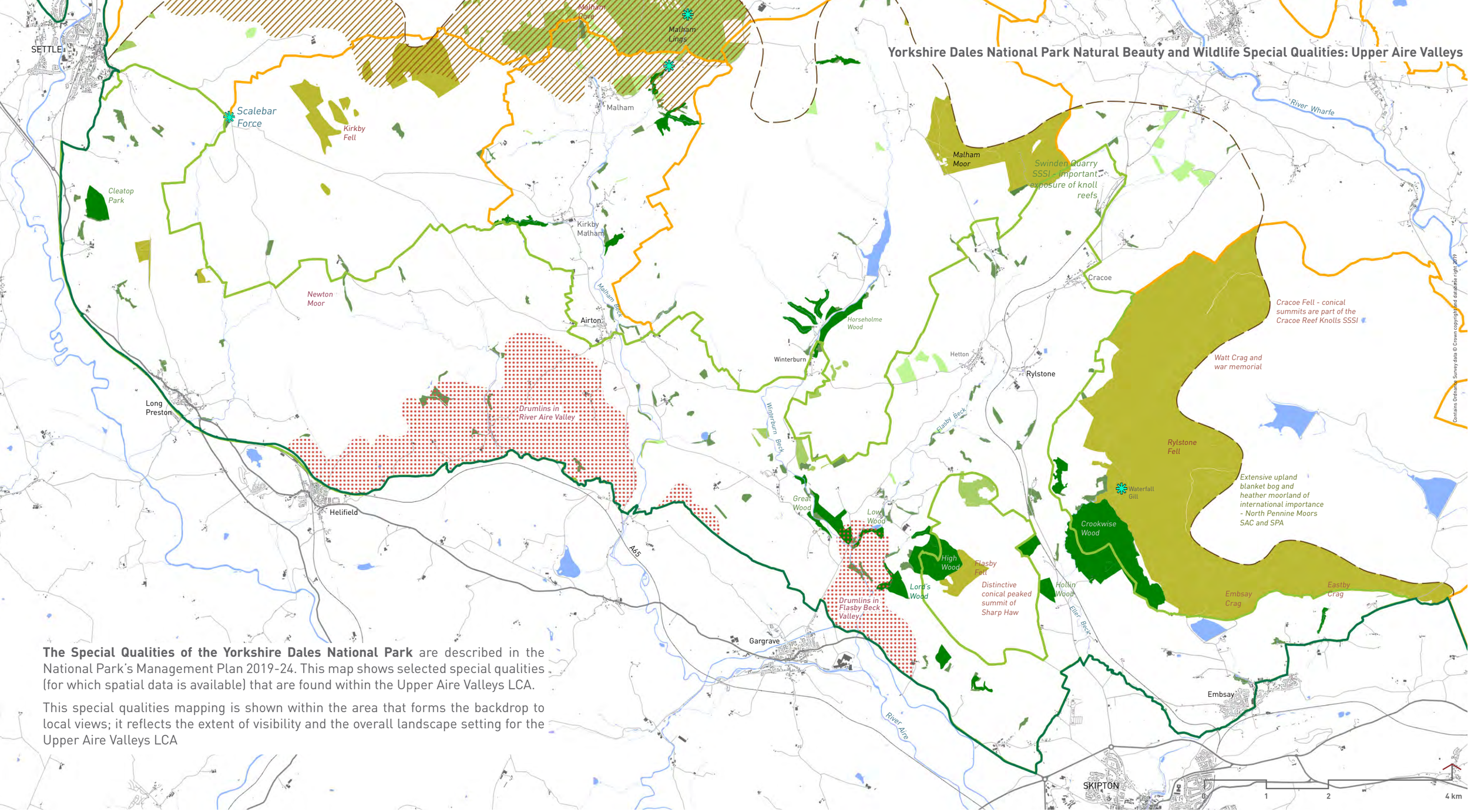


landscape - loose cluster of traditional stone farm buildings





Yorkshire Dales National Park Natural Beauty and Wildlife Special Qualities: Upper Aire Valleys



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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 Upper Aire Valleys 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 Upper Aire Valleys LCA

Special Qualities of the YDNP

- YDNP Boundary
- Upper Aire Valleys LCA boundary
- Boundaries of adjacent LCAs
- Extent of area that forms the backdrop to views from the Upper Aire Valleys LCA

Natural beauty

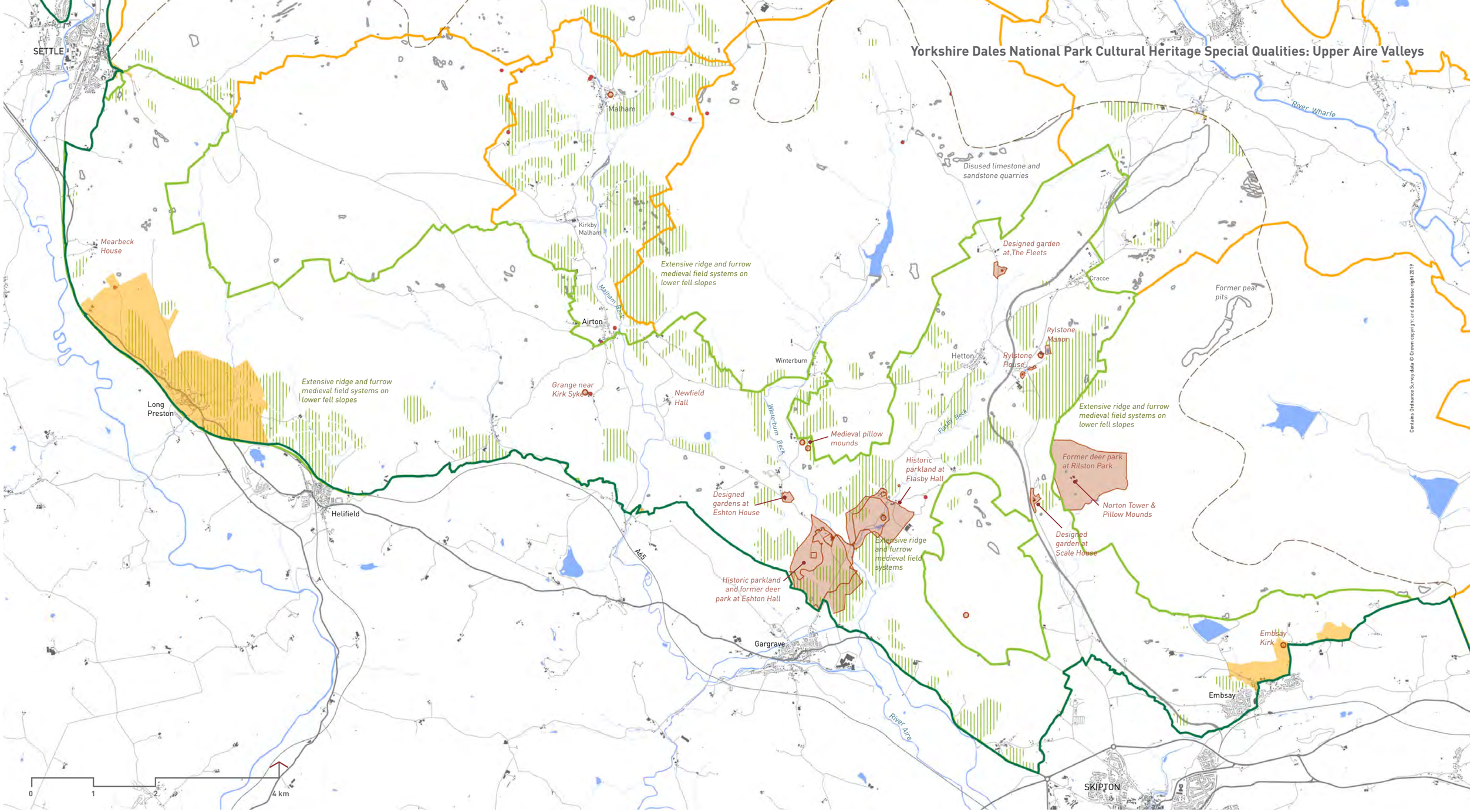
- **Outstanding classic limestone scenery**
  [Underlain by Great Scar Limestone & displaying distinctive karst character]
- **Spectacular waterfalls**
  ['Water features' noted as 'recognised attraction' in YDNPA Visitor Strategy]
- **Significant glacial/post-glacial features**
  [Prominent drumlins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

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]

Yorkshire Dales National Park Cultural Heritage Special Qualities: Upper Aire Valleys



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Special Qualities of the YDNP

- YDNP Boundary
- Upper Aire Valleys LCA boundary
- Boundaries of adjacent LCAs
- Extent of area that forms the backdrop to views from the Upper Aire Valleys LCA

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]
- **Historic settlements with distinctive traditional architecture**
  [Conservation Areas]

* YDNPA Historic Environment Record

sheilsflynn

www.sheilsflynn.com

Cambridge Studio
32 St Barnabas Road
Cambridge CB1 2BY

telephone: 01223 229994
email: cambridge@sheilsflynn.com