Cultural heritage

lifestyle in the landscape

People have lived and worked in the area of the Yorkshire Dales for thousands of years. Their cumulative impact on the landscape has created today's cultural heritage, in terms of agriculture, religion, industry and domestication, to name a few. While the landscape continues to respond to natural forces, it is the expression of lifestyle which has brought about the major changes during recent times, such as the development of tourism and recreation within the National Park.

A short historical timeline of the area of the Yorkshire Dales, indicates how the cultural heritage of today has evolved over time. This can be read below. A more detailed timeline can be found here.

Historical Timeline

13000 YEARS AGO

The most recent glaciation was coming to an end at about this time. The retreating ice left behind a landscape of bare rock and deposits of glacial drift - a mixture of clay, sand, pebbles and boulders. The depressions left by melted ice filled with water to form ponds and lakes. Mosses and lichens colonised the bare ground, followed by grasses and herbs to create a tundra landscape similar to parts of Lapland today. Reindeer, great elk and horse grazed the tundra in the presence of wolf, arctic fox, and bear. As the climate warmed the tundra vegetation was succeeded by heath and later by woodland, initially birch, pine and hazel with alder and willow on the wetter ground, and open grassland in the higher places. The ponds and lakes gradually filled with silts and sands from incoming streams, creating shallower water in which vegetation developed.

11000 YEARS AGO

It was into this scene that the first groups of nomadic hunters entered, armed with tools made of stone, bone and antler, worked and shaped for scraping, cutting and piercing. In addition to hunting they gathered seeds, roots, nuts and berries and ate birds and fish, all activities which had little impact on the landscape. Simple shelters like wooden windbreaks and tents, covered with animal hide, grass or bark, are unlikely to have left any traces of their existence. A carved antler harpoon found in Victoria Cave near Settle thought to be about 11000 years old is the earliest and most reliable evidence of people in the area. Older bones of hyena, rhinoceros and hippopotamus, have been found in lower deposits in the same cave. Signs of earlier human presence are highly unlikely to have survived the 3 major glacial periods of the last half million years, during which even the highest peaks in the area were at times buried by ice. By about 8500 years ago average temperatures were about 2°C higher than those of today, and woodland probably covered 90% of the area.

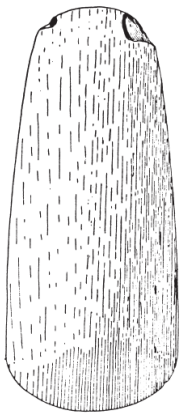
8000 YEARS AGO

Lifestyles evolved gradually throughout the Mesolithic period, seasonal movement following migratory animals likely becoming less important as time progressed. Large numbers of small flint and chert points and blades from which microliths were made. Microliths, small segments of flint or chert blades, as small as 13mm long and 3mm wide have been found dating from this period. These were used as barbs on shafts of antler, bone or wood. People at this time also used other stone tools, including scrapers, choppers, adzes, picks and some axes. Mesolithic flints have been found in the dales near Malham Tarn. We know little of people's beliefs at this time, but a number of possible head dresses made from deer antler frontlets have been found beyond the dales at nearby Star Carr, a world famous archaeological site in North Yorkshire. Small clearings created

by wind blow and lightning helped develop woodland edges. These attracted grazing animals which could be killed for food. The marshes and moraine lakes in the valleys were silting up and slowly decreasing in size. Tree burning and clearing hastened this process, burnt organic debris and soil from bare ground adding to the sediment load of streams and run-off. Removing trees reduced water loss and added to the water logging of the soil so helping the formation of peat.

6000 YEARS AGO

The Neolithic people introduced farming to the landscape and brought seed corn and domesticated cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. Domesticated species such as cattle and wheat were brought across the sea from the continent into Britain. We do not know if the first farmers arrived as migrants from abroad or whether they were the existing population adopting new techniques, but it is likely both happened. The latest DNA research suggests a major influx of people occurred and that there may have been significant displacement of the existing population. Although the evidence is difficult to interpret, with one issue being that the existing Mesolithic population would have been quite small, and may not have left much of a genetic legacy. The Neolithic famers used leaf shaped arrowheads, antler combs and introduced new technologies such as the use of pottery, the earliest being simple round bottomed bowls. They also began building large communal monuments Their polished axes of flint or hard volcanic rock allowed more sustained tree clearance and created more land for cultivation, a number of these have been found in the dales, including examples made from Langdale tuff from the Lake District. Few traces of their sedentary lifestyle are likely to have survived other than occupation debris such as hearths and animal bones, pottery, flints and stake or post holes for tents or insubstantial timber buildings However, recently an Early Neolithic house was found and excavated at Yarnbury, comprising a small rectangular structure built from substantial timber posts. The house contained evidence of a hearth and a small assemblage of Early Neolithic pottery and flint tools were also recovered. Evidence of other Neolithic monuments also survives in the dales, with a number of henges known, including at Yarnbury. Long cairns, long low stone mounds presumably used for burial, may also date from this time although none have been subject to modern excavation. In Britain generally although not in the dales, communal burials within large long barrows or chambered tombs takes place in the early part of the Neolithic, implying only a small number of people were granted this special rite. It is possible the long cairns were a local version of this wider tradition. Growing agricultural activity and woodland removal increased soil erosion exposing more stones to clear to ease the harvesting of grass and arable crops. Many clearance cairns were created at this time, some of them simply low lines of stones thrown out of the way, possibly the beginnings of early walls. Activities such as monument building, including for example henges, suggests a social stability, probably revolving around the farming economy producing a surplus, allowing for people to engage in non-agricultural work over longer periods.



A polished stone axe from the Neolithic Period

4000 YEARS AGO

During the early Bronze Age, the collective inhumation burials and cremations of Neolithic times gave way to single burials crouched in pits or beneath barrows of earth and turf or cairns made of piles of stones. These burials were sometimes accompanied by a variety of grave goods, including elaborate tools such as polished knives, barbed and tanged arrowheads, antler picks, copper and bronze knives and tools, jewellery items of gold, amber, and jet, such as ear studs, hair adornments and beads, archery equipment and beaker pottery. Metalworking is introduced to Britain during this time, first with copper and then with bronze artefacts, along with the adoption of a distinctive new style of pottery known as Beaker. A new style of arrowhead is also found, known as a barbed and tanged type. By the Middle Bronze Age, roundhouses are adopted and we see the development of more permanent settlements, with small farmsteads appearing, along with the development of large scale, complex field systems. Large scale prehistoric fieldsystems are known in the dales, for example in areas such as Swaledale which probably originated in the Bronze Age. Climatic conditions deteriorated around 1000 BC, during the late Bronze Age An average temperature drop of around 2°C probably shortened the growing season by about 5 weeks and lowered the crop ripening altitude by as much as 150m. Increased competition for growing space probably led to tribal groupings, in small farming communities, banded together under the protection of a warrior elite. This may explain the building of hill forts at this time to provide refuge during sudden raids by neighbouring groups.

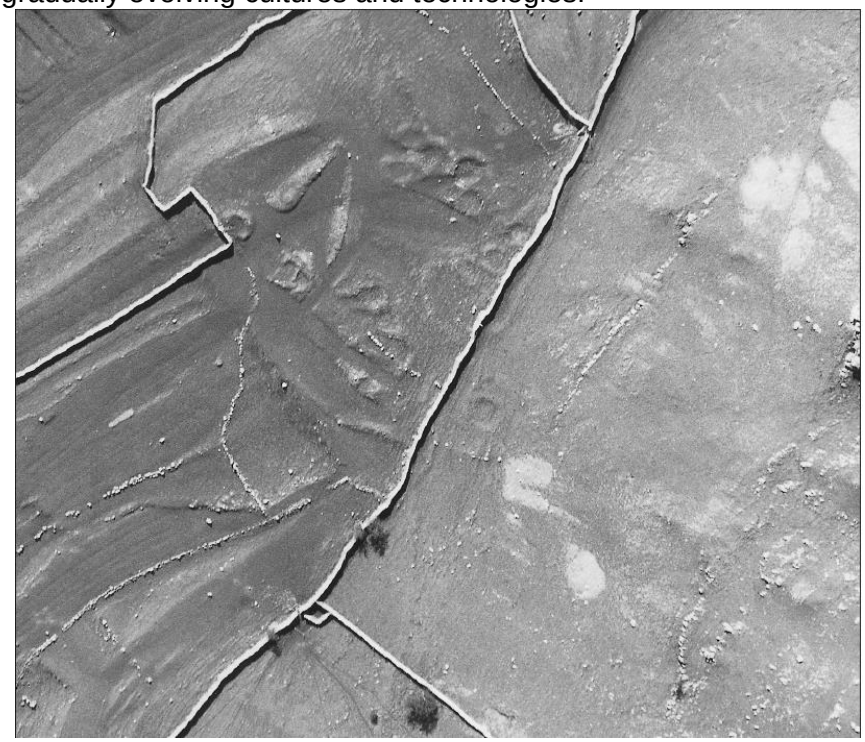


Bronze Age barbed and tanged arrowhead

2800 YEARS AGO

The local Iron Age people, the Brigantes further developed hill farms and small settlements surrounded by fields on the better soils of the lower hill sides. They lived in round houses often made from stone bases with a steep heather or turf thatch over a wooden frame. They ate oats, rye, wheat, barley and beans grown in fields marked by stone banks and hedges with cattle, sheep, goats and pigs corralled in adjacent yards. The native peoples of Britain were organised in complex tribal societies, who already had trading links beyond Britain before the Romans arrived. They also had craft specialists producing highly ornate items of metalwork, such as swords, shields, chariot fittings and elaborate jewellery such as torcs made of finely worked gold. A highly decorated Iron Age sword dating from the 1st century BC was found on Great Asby Scar and it is likely this was left as a deliberate votive offering. These people produced more than enough to supply their immediate needs and had complex food storage systems, with bell shaped pits and wooden granaries known in southern Britain. As arable farming expanded on the lower valley sides the remaining thin woodland of the steeper slopes was grazed by sheep and cattle, increasing the amounts of open pasture and scattered scrub. The wetter colder climate increased peat and

heather moorland formation and the bogs and heaths established at this time were probably similar in extent to those of today. It is reasonably certain that by about 100 BC, small amounts of woodland and the high moors were the only land remaining in the natural state. The lack of controlled excavation work on archaeological sites from throughout these times makes it very difficult to give accurate dates. Added to this many sites were probably occupied over long periods which spanned gradually evolving cultures and technologies.



Gordale: Iron Age/Romano-British settlement showing hut circles, partially surrounded by later lynchets

70 AD

The Romans arrived in the Dales to find an open farmed landscape, with perhaps more woodland in the gills and marshier valley bottoms than today. The years after the Roman invasion of Britain in 43AD would have seen great upheaval and conflict, as some groups fought the Romans whilst others accepted their rule. This probably lead to economic collapse and real strife. The loss of life in the many military campaigns the Romans fought against the Britons would have been great. Initially the Brigantian Queen, Cartimandua sided with the Romans, but eventually the Brigantes were conquered in the 70's AD. Excavations of the Roman Fort at Bainbridge showed the earliest buildings were constructed around 100AD, although it may have been established during earlier campaigns. Eventually with the Romans came more intensified agriculture which was necessary to maintain large numbers of troops in the area. Excavations at the Hagg in Swaledale of a Romano-British farmstead suggest a highly organised and intense system of agriculture existed, which possibly supplied Roman garrisons at Bainbridge and Catterick, as well as the local population. The Romans added forts, marching camps and roads to the Dales landscape and villas on better ground close by. There have been many finds of coins, pottery and jewellery in the Dales, suggesting that the native population adopted some of the activities of Roman civilisation. Excavations of settlements from this time have produced small quantities of Roman styles of pottery for example at High Carlingill and the Hagg.

410 AD

The departure of the Romans left the Britons organising themselves into tribal groupings and kingdoms. A gradual decline in climatic conditions increased crop failures and famine along with disease. This caused the population to fall and distribution patterns to change.

600 AD

The native British population was gradually supplanted by Anglian and Saxon invaders and migrants. The population continued to fall. This probably caused an increase in pastoralism and a shift away from labour intensive arable agriculture, particularly on the higher ground.

865 AD

Norse peoples arrived from the east from Scandinavia and via Ireland from the west. Many place names in the area are of Norse origin and providing a lasting legacy of this.
They farmed cattle and sheep in isolated settlements in remote Dales. By about 1000 AD the agriculture of the area was dominated by small farmsteads on the valley sides, partly surrounded by meadows. Some had ploughed fields on the gentler slopes, with pasture on the steeper ground and rough grazing on the higher slopes and hill tops.

1066 AD

The Norman conquest resulted in a dramatic change in land ownership. The Domesday Book of 1086 - 88, records land owners and their estates for the first time, along with details of pre-conquest ownership. Areas of the dales would have suffered during the 'Harrying of the North', where settlements and farmland were violently destroyed as the Normans asserted their control. As a result many areas were recorded as lying in waste in the Domesday Book, with estates being worth considerably less than prior to the conquest. The Normans designated forests with legal status as hunting areas to manage game, which included fallow, red and roe deer and wild boar. Forests included both open land for the hunt and wooded areas for shelter and feeding. For example, this included the Forest of Bainbridge or Wensleydale, Langstrothdale Chase and the Forest of Barden. Bainbridge village was established in the twelfth century for the purpose of administering the Forest of Wensleydale. They established the feudal system along with castles and monasteries. The Normans developed the political structure of the area considerably, based on the previously established Ridings of Yorkshire and Wapentakes, groupings of townships. The significance of parishes grew with the growth of the church. Much of the present day settlement pattern probably has its origins in this medieval period. Nearly all Dales villages are of agricultural origin, with tofts - house, outbuildings, garden, yards, small enclosures belonging to one family - being the home bases of self supporting farming communities. Regular village greens and back lanes are often signs of villages 'planned' at this time. Market towns developed on the fringes of the Dales.



East Witton: a ‘planned village’ with a rectangular green flanked by rows of ‘tofts and crofts’ leading off

1300AD

Strip farming reached a peak by about 1300 AD and began to decline in the 14th century. It enabled land of varying quality to be distributed fairly among tenants of a township, with farmers being well placed to manage strips spread across the area. Communal cooperation was of great importance with fields and pastures grazed by animals of every farmer. Oats, wheat, barley, rye, and beans were the main crops, while butter production was well established and ewes were milked to make cheese. Manure was spread on the land and over wintering animals were fed on hay and leaves. The remains of arable fields of medieval times can be found throughout the Dales. Lynchets dominate on the steeper slopes running parallel with the contours and forming broad terraces. Ridge and furrow was created by a single furrow plough drawn by oxen or horses going up one side of the strip and down the other, creating the ridge by constantly turning the sod towards the centre. Land was gradually given to monasteries in return for "prayers for the souls" of land owners. Upland sheep ranches were created, Fountains Abbey had a flock of almost 15000 sheep by the end of the 13th century. Hunting areas diminished as monastic estates and settlements grew. The richest landowners created enclosed deer parks for hunting, complex fish ponds to supply fresh fish and artificial warrens for rabbits. Networks of roads and trackways developed linking the monastic granges with their parent houses, and allowing for large movements of stock, Mastiles Lane being one of the best known examples.

1600 AD

Most houses were dwellings of single room width made from wood and clay with a heather thatch, or a dry stone wall base in the case of the wealthy. The 17th century saw an increase in stone used for buildings and the introduction of lime mortar. These dwellings developed into the classic Dales buildings with mullioned windows, some with animal byres at one or both ends. Piecemeal enclosure connected with earlier woodland clearance and private exchange and purchase of strips had produced a network of small stone walled and hedged enclosures surrounding most settlements by the 18th century.

1750 – 1850

This was a period of many agricultural improvements with much existing practice applied with renewed vigour including burning old vegetation, draining and liming of newly enclosed rough pasture. With the Industrial Revolution came the end of self-sufficiency and the decline of arable crops giving way to sheep and cattle. Improvements in guns during the mid-18th century helped develop the shooting of grouse for sport and eventually the management of moors for grouse. The parliamentary enclosure of the common grazing grounds extinguished common rights in return for individual rights to allotments. This greatly increased the total length of dry stone walls (In 1988 8000km of walls, 1000km of hedges and 250km of fences existed in the Dales.) Between 5 and 6 thousand field barns have been recorded in the Dales. The earliest surviving have 17th century date stones; most were built between 1750 and 1850. Almost 880 field lime kilns were mapped in the Park in the 1850's. Field barns were a sophisticated response to over wintering stock in the harsh environment. The system revolved around grassland management. In the meadows grass was allowed to grow to seed, then cut in July and left to dry. The hay was stored in barns and used to feed stock during the Winter. The cattle grazed upland pastures during Summer and were housed in the barns between November and May.



Old Gang Smelt Mill. Swaledale - once an industrial landscape

Lead has been mined in the Dales since Roman times. It flourished between 1720 and 1880 reaching its peak in the 1850's. Parts of Swaledale, Arkengarthdale and Wharfedale were the main areas and the activity has left many locally important marks on the landscape: spoil heaps, shaft mounds, chimneys, flues, derelict buildings, hushes, dams, reservoirs, leats ... as well as a network of tracks and paths. These have been added to by coal mining and stone extraction. Despite the major advances of this period, the basic agricultural, wood working and stone working tools of this time were very similar to those used by the Romans. Expansion of the mining and textile industries increased the demand for housing and more buildings appeared on the outskirts of the villages. New building styles were introduced with the coming of the railways and the new materials they brought. Population decline following lead mining collapse led to dereliction and combining of many houses.

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1837 - 1900

The Victorian period saw the coming of the railways to the Dales. The railway brought cheap goods to the to the area and It was a way for farmers to get milk and butter to distant markets. The railways also encouraged tourism and enabled workers to commute to the area. The Settle-Carlisle Railway built toward the end of the Victorian railway construction era was an extraordinary feat of civil engineering, crossing the rugged landscape of the Dales. The Ribblehead Viaduct is a great monument to the people who built it between 1870-75.



Ribblehead Viaduct today

20TH CENTURY

The first and second world wars have both left their mark. For example, both in terms of their social impact on local families as their loved ones went away to fight, and with a lasting visual impact in terms of the war memorials which provide a lasting commemoration of those who never returned. These can be found in many dales villages and elsewhere in the National Park. Archaeological remains of former military sites from this time can also be found, such as the remains of a Second World War search light battery at Cracoe.

Friesian cows appeared in the landscape replacing local breeds like the Craven Shorthorn during the 1940's, while the horse was commonly in use until the 1950's. Since the 1940's mechanisation and the intensification of dairy and beef farming has had a significant impact on the landscape. These forces for change have particularly affected the pattern of traditional barns, walls and hay meadows that the Yorkshire Dales is renowned for with declining condition or complete loss being a feature from the mid-20th century onwards.

The 20th century also saw a significant increase in the popularity of the Yorkshire Dales as a tourism destination, helped by the area's proximity to the big urban centres of West Yorkshire and Lancashire, together with increase in disposable income and leisure time. The historical landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales, shaped by humans over thousands of years, were a key part of the area's attraction, as were key monuments such as Bolton Abbey and Ribblehead Viaduct.

From the 1930s there was a growing lobby for greater protection for, and access to, the finest landscapes in the country. As a result, the concept of National Parks began to take root. An influential figure was John Dower who, during World War 2, wrote an influential report for the Government while living in Kirkby Malham in the Yorkshire Dales. In 1947 key planning laws were passed that allowed better control over development and paved the way for the protection of important 'listed' buildings and the built heritage of conservation areas covering whole settlements or landscapes. Finally, in 1949 the laws that allowed National Parks to be created were passed and, in 1954, the Yorkshire Dales became the seventh in the country to be designated.

One of the central aspects of the National Park designation is the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage of the area, including historical structures and archaeological remains. In addition to conservation, the National Park designation also requires the promotion of opportunities to understand and enjoy the cultural landscape. The same laws that created National Parks also

formalised public rights of way and so greatly improved access to historical sites and landscapes throughout the National Park.

The early years of the National Park saw little change in how the area was managed, as the country continued the post-war recovery and the National Park remained under the administration of local authorities. Gradually however more resources were made available to ensure that the purposes for which National Parks were designated could be realised. It wasn't until 1995 that National Park Authorities were created allowing even more organised and concerted effort towards managing the area's cultural heritage. This has seen programmes of repair and maintenance of key monuments, including much of the area's industrial heritage, together with traditional barns and walls. The planning system also has an important role to play, ensuring that development needs created by tourism, land management, local communities and businesses, can be accommodated without compromising important historical buildings, monuments and landscapes. Alongside this the National Park Authority coordinates programmes to educate and inform people about the area's rich history, including managing the Dales Countryside Museum, coordinating community archaeology, commissioning research and maintaining a Historic Environment Record database (HER), so that more and more people have the opportunity to learn more about the Yorkshire Dales' past.

THE FUTURE?

The historic environment is a vitally important part of the cultural landscapes of the National Park which helps to give them their unique character. People have lived and worked in the Yorkshire Dales for thousands of years. Their cumulative impact on the landscape has created today's cultural heritage. Historic features are a key draw for visitors, this is the primary reason for the large numbers of people visiting Ribblehead for views of the famous Victorian viaduct on the Settle to Carlisle railway line. Despite this, there are continued threats to the cultural heritage of the National Park, whether from development, dereliction or climate change. Ensuring this vital resource continues to be researched, conserved, managed and protected remains a key part of the Authority's role, carried out by the Historic Environment team.