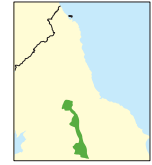


# Pennine Dales Fringe



## Key Characteristics

- Side slopes of Dales uplands, predominately sloping down to east, with locally varied topography formed by several significant river valleys running from west to east including the Washburn, Nidd, Ure, Swale and the broad vale of the Tees.
- Transitional landscape lying between the upland, predominantly grassland, landscape to the west and arable land to the east.
- Variation in enclosure patterns arising from different historic periods - small-scale irregular field patterns, often of medieval origins, close to villages and, elsewhere, larger scale enclosures sometimes creating very strong patterns.
- Transitions in type of field enclosure, from dry stone walls in the west to hedges at lower elevations in the east.
- Moderate density of small villages and large farmsteads linked by a network of minor roads.
- Millstone Grit predominantly used for buildings and walling, giving strong visual unity to villages, but mingling with Magnesian Limestone as a building material to the east.
- Well-wooded character with wooded valley slopes, small woodlands, plantations and hedgerow trees.
- Generally tranquil and undeveloped but with several notable historic market towns. Development pressures occurring in the south and east around Harrogate and the northern fringes of Leeds.

## Landscape Character

The area of the Pennine Dales Fringe is distinguished by its transitional character. It forms a long narrow zone marking the change from the upland landscape of the Yorkshire Dales to the west and the low-lying fertile landscape of the Vale of York to the east. This is a varied, diverse landscape unified by a strongly rural character throughout. It is

dominated by the influence of the topography which drops from higher altitudes in the west to the low-lying vales to the east and is cut by a number of major and minor river valleys. Physically and psychologically this landscape looks out to the east with the Pennine hills forming a physical and perceptual barrier to the west.



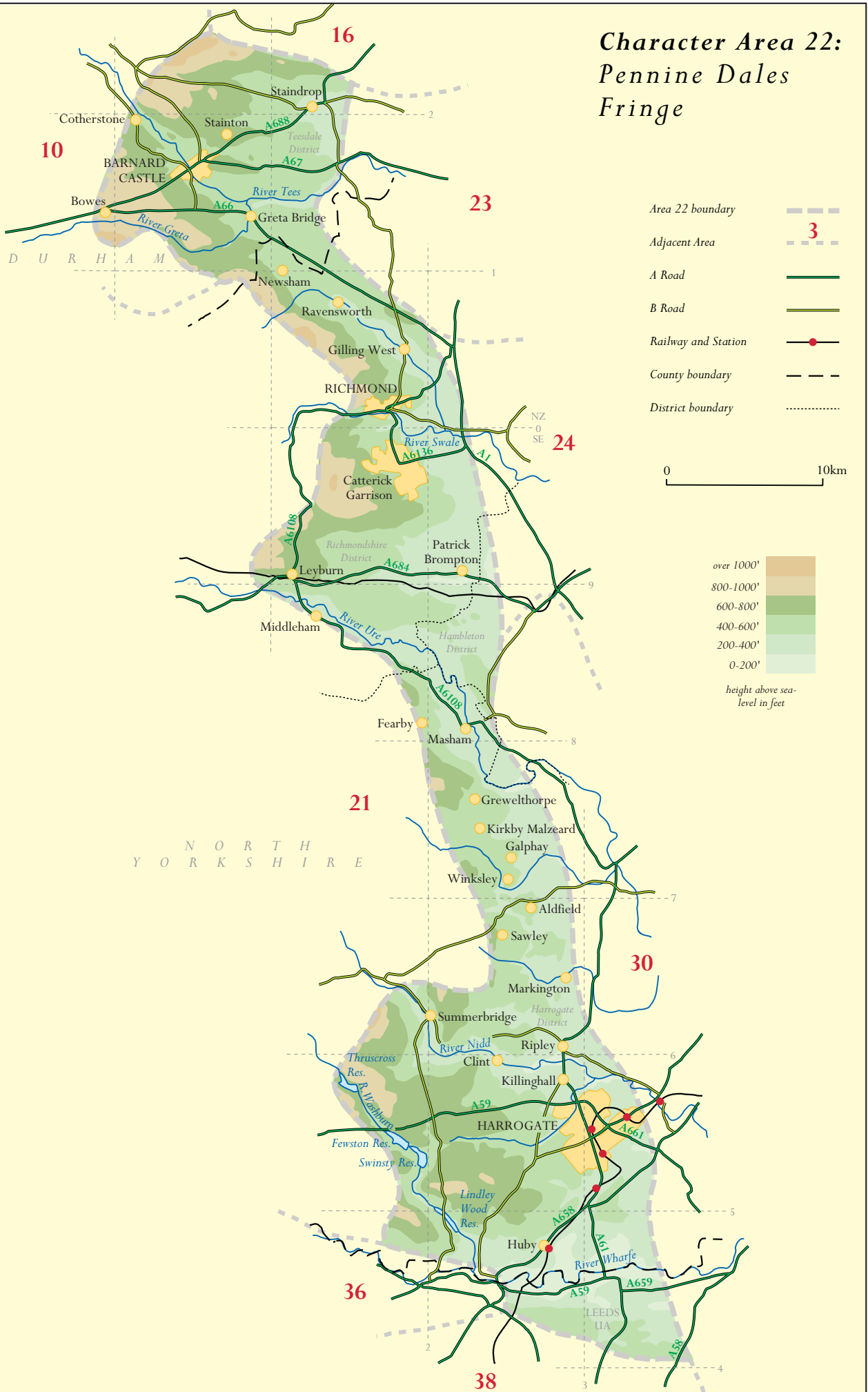
DAVID TARN

The Pennine Dales Fringe is distinguished by its transitional character. It forms a long narrow zone marking the change from the upland landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales, seen here rising to the west of Middleham, and the low lying, fertile vale landscapes to the east.

This is a typically transitional landscape, being generally both hilly and grassy, with a particularly ancient character in some parts, notably in the north and west. There is considerable variation in the landscape especially between the open, exposed plateaux and shoulders of the hills, the small and enclosed valleys and the broad river valleys. Local variation in the landscape is closely related to the landform. Thus the glacial deposits on the wide-floored valleys of the main rivers - the Tees, Ure and Wharfe - create an open and gently undulating landscape with arable crops grown on the lighter, more fertile land. The rivers themselves are often important features in these landscapes. Elsewhere, the landscape is generally small in scale with becks in narrow valleys, varied topography, small pastures and a network of narrow, twisting, rural roads. These valleys of the smaller tributaries have steeper sides and are distinguished by small hedged or walled grasslands and pastures as well as belts of trees following streams. Some areas, for example in the vicinity of Kirkby Malzeard, are more densely wooded



# Character Area 22: Pennine Dales Fringe



whilst the Washburn valley is more dramatic with steep valley sides, a string of reservoirs and extensive mixed and coniferous plantations.

By contrast, the exposed hills and plateaux on the ridges between the valleys are largely treeless with extensive rough grazing and strong rectilinear patterns of dry stone walls. Some of these plateaux are particularly open and distinctive, for example Forest Moor, a flat-topped plateau west of Harrogate. This is a high, bleak area of pasture, divided into large, very regular, rectilinear enclosures dating from the period of Parliamentary enclosure. The fields are defined by walls or fences and crossed by a few, long, straight roads. Farms are few and scattered and there is little tree cover which is generally limited to a few conifer plantations and linear shelterbelts. From this open plateau there are extensive views out to the east.

Hamlets, villages and small market towns built in local stone contribute greatly to the character of the landscape. Although generally undisturbed and rural in character there are nevertheless some significant and distinctive areas of recent development in this landscape. Menwith Hill, a military installation west of Harrogate, forms a dramatic skyline feature with its cluster of 'golfballs'; at Catterick Garrison the barracks, stores and training areas have expanded outwards onto the surrounding moorlands in an unplanned way and can be highly visible in this relatively open area of landscape.

This transitional area is underlain by Carboniferous strata, the resistant Millstone Grit which dips gently to the east forming the flank of the Pennines. The rock comprises alternating sequences of hard resistant sandstone and softer shales. These have been subjected to glaciation and weathering resulting in wide steep-sided valleys with sandstone steps along their sides. Resistant sandstones cap the hills and form wide, open areas commonly with a covering of glacial boulder clay (till). Where the rocks are bare, erosion of the sandstone has resulted in sculptured forms such as Plumpton Rocks near Knaresborough. Landslips in the soft shales form hummocky ground along the Wharfe Valley east of Otley.

Since most of this area was marginal to the ice of the last glaciation, the glacial influence on the landscape is large. Glacial till covers much of the land and increases in thickness and extent of cover towards the north and east of the area. The River Ure was blocked by ice and diverted into a more southerly course through Masham. Several other smaller rivers, in deep steep-sided valleys, such as the Burn, Laver, Kex Beck and the Skell, follow courses cut out and deepened by glacial meltwater. Erosive action by valley glaciers and their meltwater also widened the valleys of the Tees, Ure, Nidd and Wharfe. The Washburn Valley, which joins the Wharfe near Otley, cuts deeply into the sandstone plateaux and forms an ideal host for the numerous reservoirs that have been built along it.

The lower, eastern and southern parts of Nidderdale AONB demonstrate typical characteristics of this Character Area. Agriculture is the predominant landuse. Farming has traditionally been dominated by livestock rearing but, with a gentler climate than the nearby Yorkshire Dales, arable cropping has also been possible. Hedgerows are often allowed to grow thick and tall providing a valuable wildlife habitat.



SIMON WARNER



DAVID TARR

The area's attractive market towns, such as Kirkby Malzeard, Middleham, Masham, Richmond and Barnard Castle (seen here), testify to the long importance of agriculture and provide a strong sense of historical continuity and local identity.

### Historic and Cultural Influences

The foothills of the Pennine Dales Fringe have largely escaped the industrial influences which have shaped the comparable transition landscapes further to the north and south. This is mainly because of the lack of accessible coal reserves. Agriculture therefore has remained the predominant landuse creating a quiet, rural landscape with farms and parkland that is neither truly upland nor lowland vale. Farming has traditionally been dominated by livestock rearing but, with a gentler climate than the nearby Yorkshire Dales, arable cropping has also been possible and some of the land is quite productive especially in the larger valleys. The large number of historic market towns, some with charters dating back to the 12th or 13th centuries, indicates the long-standing importance of agriculture to the local economy. At that time, hunting forests, such as the Forest of Knaresborough, covered much of lower Nidderdale and the upper Washburn valley. The Chase of Nidderdale covered much of the upper dale and Kirkby Malzeard area. Much of the land outside these forests was under the control of the abbeys of Fountains and Byland.

The 17th century saw an expansion of the small-scale, home-based industry of linen and wool weaving, combined with small-scale dairy farming, which led to the enclosure of small plots immediately adjacent to villages for a simple level of subsistence farming. In the 18th century there was extensive planned enclosure of open land with hillside pastures divided up into allotments for the local farmers. This period created the strong pattern of rectilinear enclosures on the high plateaux with associated roadways. Only the highest land was left open for common sheep grazing.

Ironstone and lead mining did occur in the area but on a quite modest scale. This industrial activity came to an end in the 19th century and had a lasting effect on the fringe area. The textile industry was important in the gritstone

valleys of the Tees, Nidd and Washburn, developing from the small-scale home industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was, however, never able to compete with other areas of the industrial Pennines further south and declined rapidly in the early 20th century leaving a small-scale legacy of mills and related structures.

Reservoirs were built in the Nidd and Washburn valleys in the late 19th century, and at Thruscross in the 1950s and 1960s, to supply the expanding towns and cities of Harrogate, Leeds and Bradford. These took advantage of the narrow valleys, impervious bedrock and the greater rainfall at higher altitudes. Later still in the century came the military influence with construction of Catterick Camp and Menwith Hill.

Much of this landscape is relatively little known, although it has its beauty spots known to local people and visitors from nearby towns. One of the best known visitors in the past was the artist J M Turner who often stayed at Farnley Hall in Wharfedale. The river Greta was a favourite location for him to sketch.



ENGLISH NATURE/STEPHEN WARD

In some parts, such as here where Shipley and Great Woods enclose the river Tees, broadleaved woodlands form an important component of the landscape. Elsewhere, hedgerow trees give a wooded character to the pastoral scene.

### Buildings and Settlement

Villages, farms and larger settlements are all built in local stone which adds considerably to the character of the landscape, particularly where stone walls are also present as field boundaries. Most of the buildings are built of Millstone Grit but Magnesian Limestone also occurs especially in the eastern part which abuts the Southern Magnesian Limestone character area. There are a number of small, attractive historic market towns throughout the area such as Kirkby Malzeard, Middleham, Masham, Richmond and Barnard Castle, which help to provide a strong sense of historical continuity and local identity. Most have a central market place and the buildings are built predominantly of Millstone Grit or local sandstones although Masham is remarkable for its range of styles and inclusion of limestone as a building material. The towns have a



DAVID TARN

Attractive villages, built of local stone, are a feature of the area. West Tanfield lies on the banks of the river Ure, one of several large rivers to flow west to east through the area.

strong visual unity about them and have, in the main, managed to retain many of the older historic buildings in the town centres giving each a strong character and high visual quality.

The spa town of Harrogate is the most significant settlement in the area with its fine hotels, arcades and parks. The health-giving properties of the spring waters were discovered in the 16th century but it was not until the 19th century that it became a popular resort. It is now a buoyant shopping and conference centre but retains an air of gentility that is in keeping with its role as health spa and resort. The major buildings are of sandstone which creates a link with the surrounding landscape.

### Land Cover

Although predominantly pastoral, the land cover nevertheless varies from grassland, with some arable on the broader valley floors, to the small-scale pastures on the hillsides and the large rectilinear enclosures of rough grazing on the higher land. The fields are often small around the villages. This dates from medieval enclosure of open fields or common grazing and also reflects the later influence of the continuation of small-scale dairy farming with textile weaving. On the hills and plateaux the fields are larger and more regular in shape dating from later parliamentary enclosure.

Boundaries tend to be of stone on the higher land to the west gradually changing to hedgerows on the lower land. Hedgerows are often allowed to grow thick and tall and are valuable for wildlife. Similarly the rural character of the roads means that many of the road verges are important for plants and wildlife as well as for their contribution to the landscape.

Trees and woodlands are a locally important component of the landscape. Hedgerow trees in places give an impression of a wooded landscape but many are over mature and likely to disappear in time. In some areas there are many broadleaved woodlands, especially on the sides of valleys, as well as coniferous and mixed plantation woodlands. These usually occur on estates and are generally under positive management for timber production and shooting interests.

### The Changing Countryside

- Agricultural intensification, resulting in improvement of marginal pastures and a move from grassland to arable in some areas.
- Inadequate or inappropriate management of hedgerows and dry stone walls some of which are becoming derelict.
- Loss of hedgerow trees through ageing and disease which is especially apparent in ash trees.
- Lack of management of forestry plantations around reservoirs.
- Pressures for residential development within villages especially as the area is attractive to commuters as a place to live. Also pressure around the fringes of major towns.
- Pressures for recreational developments, such as caravan sites, riding establishments, golf courses, holiday complexes and dry ski slopes.
- Separate sale of farmland and farm houses, with the latter often sold for residential use and subject to inappropriate conversion.

- Varied development pressures, including extension of military complexes, roads (both major new schemes, such as the planned relief road to the north and west of Harrogate and minor improvements such as the widening and kerbing of rural lanes) windfarms and telecommunications masts. Building materials are changing from stone to brick.

### Shaping the Future

- The main consideration in this fringe area is the maintenance of the diverse transitional character of the landscape. This means retaining the distinction between the pastoral areas and the arable valleys and between the pattern of walls in the west giving way to hedgerows in the east. Retention and appropriate management of field boundaries is therefore important. The importance of woodlands in the landscape needs to be recognised by encouraging appropriate management.
- Increases in the amount of woodland could be accommodated particularly by reinforcing the existing pattern of valley-side woods. There is a unity to the buildings and settlements in the area which is due to the use of Millstone Grit and, sometimes, Magnesian Limestone. New development should address this strong vernacular character.

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