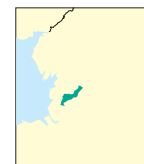


Lancashire Valleys



Key Characteristics

- The broad valley of the river Calder and its tributaries running northeast/southwest between natural backdrops of Pendle Hill and the Southern Pennines.
- Intensely urban character derived from main towns of Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley which have developed rapidly since the industrial revolution.
- A strong industrial heritage, associated with cotton weaving and textile industries. Redundant or under-utilised mill buildings, mill lodges and ponds.
- Profusion of communication routes along the valley bottom including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the Preston-Colne rail link and M65 motorway.
- Victorian stone buildings well-integrated into the landscape.
- Numerous large country houses with associated parklands particularly on northern valley sides away from major urban areas.
- Remnants of agricultural land fragmented by industry and scattered development.
- Field boundaries, regular to the west and irregular to the east are degraded around the urban areas, formed of hedges with few hedgerow trees and, at higher elevations, of stone walls and post and wire fences.
- Small woodlands are limited to cloughs on valley sides.

Landscape Character

This area is located mainly in the east of Lancashire. It is bounded in the north-west by the rural valley of the river Ribble and the Millstone Grit outcrop of Pendle Hill in the Bowland Fringe. The southern boundary is formed by the Southern Pennines. The Lancashire Valleys are concentrated in a broad trough which runs north-eastwards from Mellor Brook just outside Blackburn.

This is a visually contained landscape which would have once shared many characteristics with the rural valley of the river Ribble in the north. However, the development of industry and settlements has created a landscape with an intensely urban character. The remnants of agricultural land are now fragmented by industry and scattered development which severely disrupt the continuity of the field pattern. Field boundaries on the urban fringe are hedgerows that are generally degraded with an overall absence of hedgerow trees. At higher elevations, the field boundaries are stone walls and post and wire fences many of which are ineffective and in poor condition.

The main towns in the area are Blackburn, Accrington, Burnley, Nelson and Colne which have developed rapidly since the industrial revolution. The expansion of these towns has also been aided by the dense transport network which lines the valley bottoms. These include the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the Preston-Colne rail link and the M65 motorway. The buildings are predominantly Victorian stone terraces generally in good condition. There are substantial areas of contemporary industrial development which have replaced the traditional textile industries. However, there are numerous examples of industrial heritage which remain. These act as reminders of the historical importance of local industrial development to the character of the landscape.



COLLECTIONS/SAN WALSH

Developments in industry, housing and communication routes give the valleys a strongly urban character, as seen here at Huncoat near Accrington.



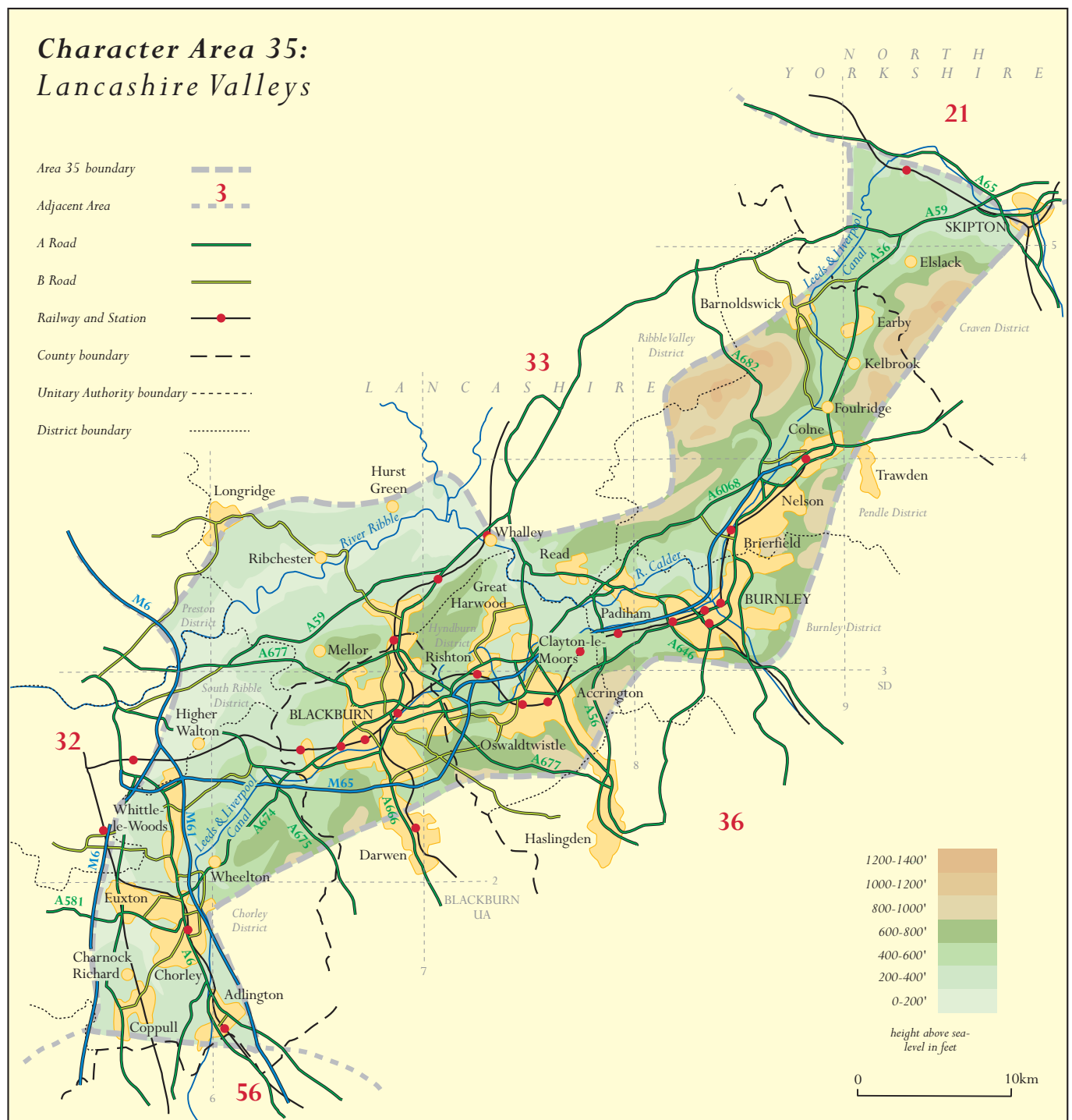
The extensive surface exposure of bedrock has given rise to many extractive industries in the area, including stone quarrying and coal mining. These areas are now generally well-vegetated and grazed by sheep. Most of the more conspicuous dereliction has undergone land reclamation schemes with some reclamation by domestic waste landfill.

The surrounding fells of Pendle and the South Pennines are an important natural backdrop which dwarf the settlements in the valley bottom. The moorland tops are linked to the valleys by small wooded cloughs which extend up the steep slopes.

Physical Influences

The character of the Lancashire Valleys is dominated by the key towns of Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley, which

occupy a broad trough underlain by Coal Measures. The presence of the coal accounts for the early industrialisation of the area. Coal has been worked at depth and by open-casting at the surface. The bottom of the trough is covered in glacial deposits, mostly till. In the Feniscowles/Pleasington area, west of Blackburn, extensive sand deposits impart a special landscape character. Bedrock resources have been quarried where the drift cover is thin. The main materials extracted were sandstone, worked on a small scale for local building, and mudstone, worked for brick-making in large pits at Accrington. The Millstone Grit outcrop of Pendle Hill forms part of the northern boundary to this area and, when combined with the fells of the South Pennines, creates an enclosure and serves as an important backdrop which dwarfs the scale of the settlement in the valley bottom.



The main river is the Calder which cuts out of the trough through a gorge in the gritstone ridge at Whalley. It joins the river Ribble at the edge of the area to the north-west of the town.



COLLECTIONS/SAM WALSH

The hills of the Southern Pennines and the Forest of Bowland provide a scenic backdrop to the valley bottoms. Woodland in the area is scarce, but some clough woodlands have been retained on the valley sides.

Historical and Cultural Influences

Prior to the expansion of settlement and industry during the 19th century, this area would have been used predominantly for agriculture and would have had a similar rural character to that of the river Ribble further north.

The development which lines these valleys began as a cottage industry during the 16th century and was predominantly an area of weaving rather than spinning. Traditionally wool came from the South Pennine hillsides and flax from the low-lying country of the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain around Rufford and Croston. By 1700 each district was specialising in the production of one type of cloth. Blackburn was a centre for fustians and most woollens and worsteds were manufactured in Burnley and Colne. The textile industry grew rapidly and, with new machines, the domestic system was replaced by factory systems which further accelerated the growth of these weaving communities. The proliferation of mills and associated residential development has created a fragmented landscape with a heavily industrialised character. Since the 1920s the textile industry has been in steady decline with many mills becoming derelict or converted to other uses.

Buildings and Settlement

Settlement within the Lancashire Valleys is extensive. There is a high proportion of built up land which includes the towns of Blackburn, Darwen, Accrington, Burnley, Nelson and Colne. Buildings are predominantly constructed from stone and are generally in good repair. There is substantial new industry in the area as well as many artefacts of the area's industrial heritage.

Scattered settlements on valley sides are comprised of older stone buildings, often of the Longhouse type, and isolated blocks of stone terraced houses perched at precarious angles on the steep slopes. There are also several large country houses along the Calder valley including those at Read Park, Huntroyde Demesne and Gawthorpe, Dunkenhalth and Towneley Halls.

Land Cover

This is predominantly an area of built-up land with major towns such as Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley spreading across the valley bottom. In addition to these urban developments the remaining land cover is a mix of pasture with areas of acid and neutral grassland and areas of semi-natural woodland/scrub. The field boundaries in this area are hedgerows with few hedgerow trees which give way to stone walls and fencing on higher ground. Field boundaries adjacent to urban/industrialised areas are frequently degraded indicating low economic viability.

Woodland is limited to small woods with areas of grassland flushes and wetland comprising of oak, alder and sycamore which extend along steep-sided narrow cloughs, such as Priestly Clough, Accrington; Spurn Clough, Burnley; and Darwen Valley. There are also small areas of woodland/scrub associated with abandoned industrial land.

There are several areas of parkland connected to large country houses. This area also bears the scars of extractive industries. Some of the quarries have undergone land reclamation schemes by domestic waste landfill such as Rowley and Brandwood and at Accrington Whinney Hill.



DAVID WOODFALL/WOODFALL WILD IMAGES

A neglected mill close to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal at Brierfield illustrates the area's historic associations with the cotton weaving and textile industries.

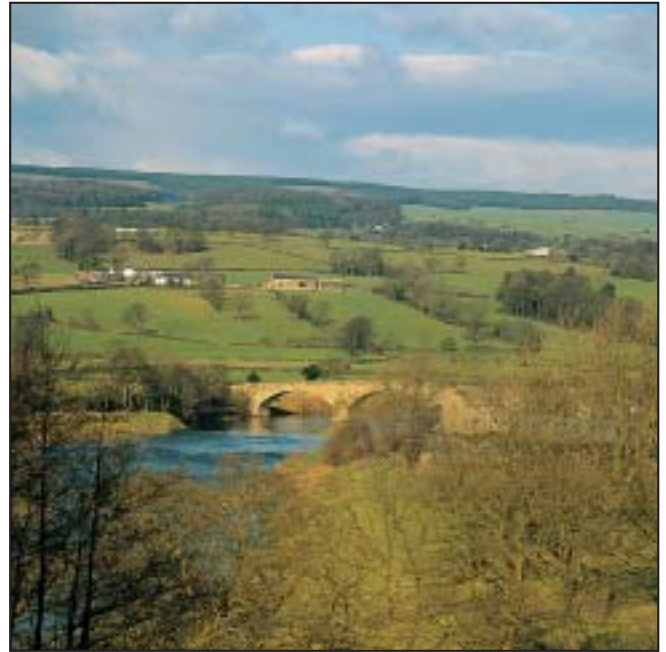
The Changing Countryside

- Development pressures in the valley bottom particularly associated with junctions on the M65.
- Rationalising farming operations leading to the conversion of traditional farm buildings to alternative uses.

- Pressures on remnant farmland adjoining urban areas causing degradation of field boundaries and alternative uses such as golf courses.
- Loss of hay meadows and reduction in biodiversity.
- Loss of industrial heritage features along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

Shaping the Future

- The restoration of field boundaries especially those adjacent to urban areas needs to be addressed.
- The conservation of remaining hay meadows is important as wildlife and landscape features.
- Opportunities are available for areas of new woodland especially on degraded farmland and derelict industrial sites surplus to current needs.
- The retention of valuable, industrial, heritage features should be considered especially along Leeds and Liverpool Canal.



MIKE WILLIAMS/COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION

Semi-natural woodland, improved grassland and hedgerows are characteristic of the more rural Ribble valley landscape.

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GROUNDWORK EAST LANCASHIRE

The river Calder running through agricultural land at Padiham. In the valleys, grazing land – commonly with poorly maintained field boundaries – is found on the fringes of the urban areas.

Glossary

cloughs: ravines; steep valleys