

The Upper Derwent: Long-term landscape archaeology in the Peak District

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with writing a long-term archaeological landscape history of the Upper Derwent, situated in the Peak District. It is based on fieldwork I have undertaken or directed on behalf of the Peak District National Park Authority between 1994 and 2002 while employed as a Survey Archaeologist.

Original field data, gathered by field survey, fieldwalking and excavation, documentary sources and the recorded results of research are discussed as the archaeological evidence for occupation and activity in, and perceptions of, the area. This evidence is integrated into an interpretation of the landscape history of the Upper Derwent, covering a period from the approximate end of the last Ice Age to the modern day. The nature, scale, visibility and chronological resolution of archaeological evidence vary enormously over time. The limitations posed by this variability are addressed, and the opportunities for more in-depth analysis acknowledged.

The thesis also explores Andrew Fleming's proposition that we can only interpret the long-term landscape archaeology of an area by exploring the detail of the local evidence in relation to its wider context (Fleming 1990). This takes the 'face-to-face' community as the main focus of study. There are two fundamental issues that have to be addressed in attempting such a study, which are related to reconciling different scales of time and geography. One, is how to write long-term landscape history that covers a time-span extending way beyond a person's comprehension of their past world as understood through personal memory, story-telling and folklore or by other forms of archive. The second is to try to interpret how occupants of a local geographical area interact with regional trends and broader social institutions. I have primarily based my approach on that outlined by Fleming, while also incorporating elements of theoretical developments in landscape archaeology since 1990. Implications of this approach for landscape archaeology are discussed.

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