

CHAPTER 8. SETTLEMENT

The mapping of settlement within the HLC was divided into two separate types: nucleated and isolated developments. Nucleated settlement comprised groups of three or more houses with any associated farm buildings, in addition to hamlets, villages and towns. Isolated

developments included individual farms or houses, and their associated farm buildings, discrete churches or other single structure settlement types. All settlement was dated according to the set chronological bands devised for the HLC:

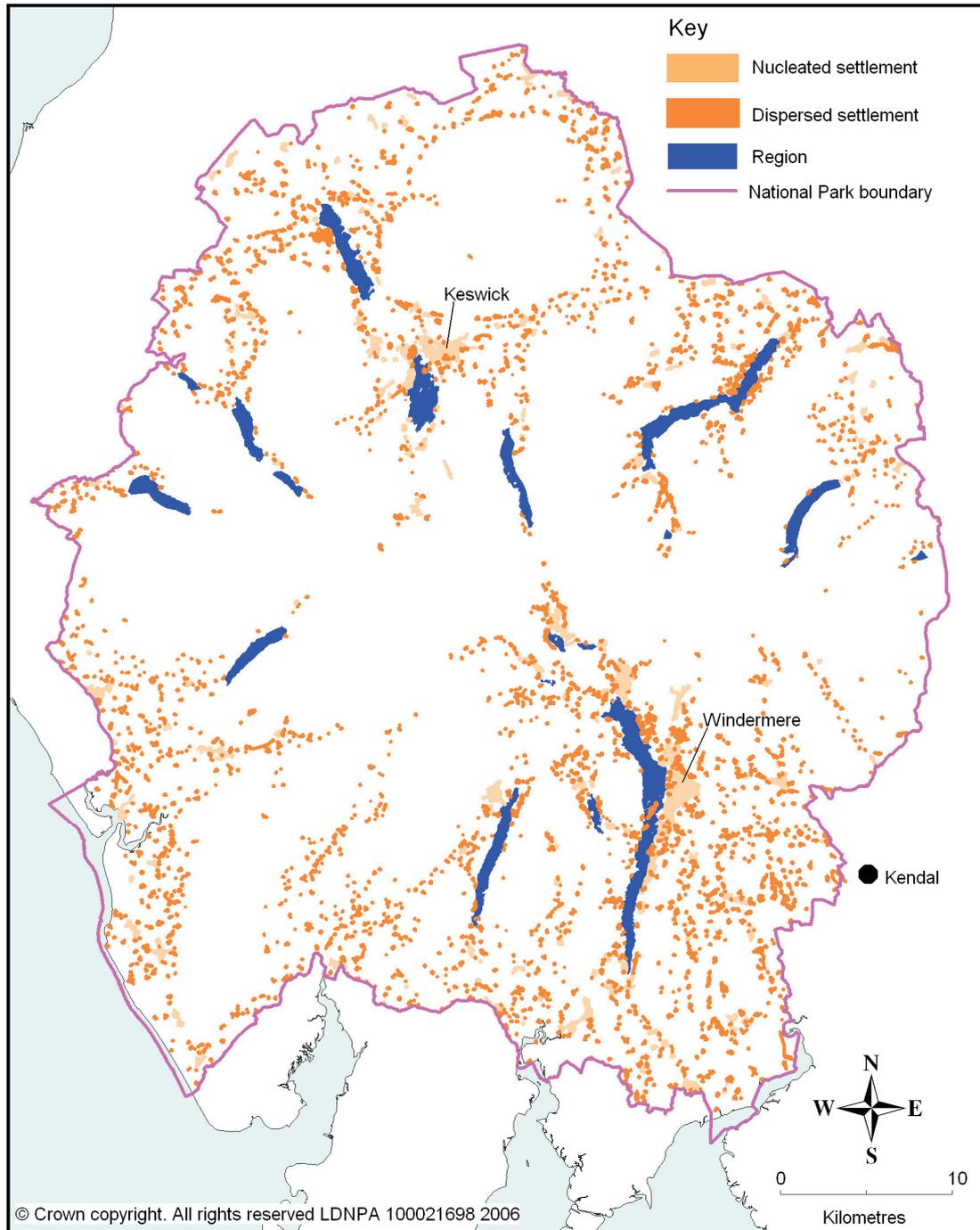


Figure 27: Distribution of nucleated and dispersed settlements in the Lake District National Park

- Pre-1770
- Pre-1860s
- Pre-1950
- Post-1950

Settlements were deemed to pre-date 1770¹ if they were marked on the late-eighteenth century county maps. Settlements pre-dating the 1860s were marked on the Ordnance Survey first edition maps. Other data was taken from modern Ordnance Survey maps.

Nucleated Settlements

Cumbria had relatively few towns in the medieval period, it was thinly populated and, outside of Carlisle, underdeveloped economically in comparison to other areas of England. What towns there were, were small and often lacked some of the urban characteristics that might be expected in boroughs in lowland England.² This was especially true of the area covered by the Lake District National Park, where the landscape is dominated by marginal and uncultivable land. Indeed, the only successful medieval borough within the National Park is Keswick which, from its street plan was clearly planned, with burgage plots laid out on either side of the main street and market place. Burgage plots are documented,³ and it was granted a market charter in 1276.⁴ Failed attempts were made to establish towns elsewhere,⁵ for example a market charter was granted for Pooley Bridge in 1216, and nine burgesses were documented there in the sixteenth century, though it seems never to have grown beyond a village. Bootle appears to have had a little more success, following the granting of a market charter in 1347, and was described as a market town in the late

eighteenth century,⁶ though it was probably never more than a village with a local market function. Further north, Ravenglass, too, was granted a charter for a market and fair in 1208 and, although it never developed into a town, it functioned as a successful port, trading cattle and other commodities with Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man until around 1800.⁷ Other market charters were granted in the medieval period to Staveley, Hesketh Newmarket and Ireby,⁸ and although they succeeded as central places for trading in an area where travel was difficult, the population levels were too low to support true urban functions. Their failure to develop successfully as towns is reflected in the HLC mapping, which demonstrates that these settlements did not grow significantly larger than most other small nucleations within the Lake District National Park. Apart from Keswick, therefore, the settlements that did succeed as towns all lay within the lowlands surrounding the fells, and outside the boundaries of the National Park, such as Kendal, Penrith and Cockermouth⁹ which were deliberately excluded from the Lake District National Park.

It is not until the post medieval period that other settlements began to exhibit urban functions, with the growth of Broughton in Furness, Ambleside and Hawkshead. These all became small market towns from the early seventeenth century with the expansion in the wool and woollen cloth trade.¹⁰ Hawkshead especially, following the granting of a market charter in 1608, became the main wool market for the Furness Fells, acting as a gathering point before transferring goods onto the larger trading centre at Kendal. Ambleside, too, became a trading centre for the wool trade from

¹ Donald 1774; Jeffreys 1770; Yates 1786

² Winchester 1987, 121; C Newman 2006, 126

³ Winchester 1987, 122

⁴ Whellan 1860, 342; Millward and Robinson 1970, 213

⁵ Winchester 1987, 122-4

⁶ Nicolson and Burn 1777, 16

⁷ Millward and Robinson 1970, 211-12

⁸ Millward and Robinson 1970, 214-15

⁹ Millward and Robinson 1970, 205-10

¹⁰ Farrer and Brownbill 1914, 379

the early seventeenth century. The markets in Hawkshead and Ambleside failed along with the decline in the woollen cloth trade, and both came to rely on income from the tourist trade, with Hawkshead remaining a rural community, and Ambleside expanding into a favoured tourist destination. The success of the market in Broughton in Furness, however, continued into the second half of the nineteenth century, with wooden tools, baskets, hoops and other by-products of the area's extensive coppiced woods replacing wool as the chief commodity. The large, formal market square surrounded by terraces of town houses, is now the chief reminder of Broughton's past as a busy market centre, as it was overtaken at the end of the nineteenth century by the rapidly expanding iron towns of Barrow and Millom.¹¹

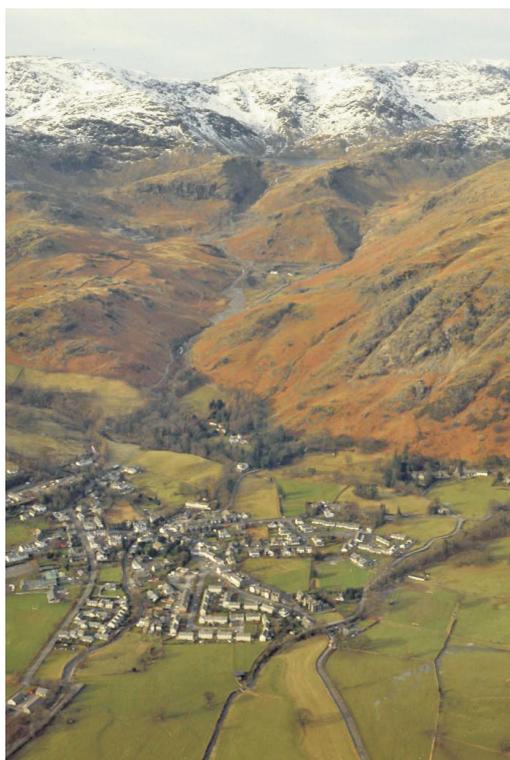


Plate 53: The village of Coniston, which grew as a result of the extensive copper mines in the fells above the settlement (© LDNPA)

Industry, too, stimulated urban growth in limited areas. Keswick, as an existing market town and centre of the textile industry for the northern Lake District, was a natural focus for the growing lead and copper mining industries of the surrounding area in the post medieval period. Coniston, likewise, became a substantial village associated with the extensive copper mines on the fells below the Old Man.¹² Many of the Lake District's woodland industries remained dispersed in individual production centres, but at Staveley on the River Kent, the plentiful water power supplied by the river led to a concentration of bobbin manufactories there, stimulating development from the early nineteenth century. In 1860 there were five bobbin mills in Staveley alone.¹³ The main impetus for urban expansion, however, was tourism, with the main road between Kendal and Keswick, the A591, providing the focus of growth along the main route into the Lake District in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As well as providing a further stimulus to growth in Keswick, it led to the creation of ribbon settlement along the eastern shore of Lake Windermere, with expansion concentrated at Bowness-on-Windermere and Windermere, with further development in Ambleside, Grasmere and Keswick. It is in these areas where the greatest urban expansion was mapped by the HLC, in particular around Bowness and Windermere which now forms the largest block of urban development within the National Park. Linking the more intensively developed areas are nineteenth century villas with extensive gardens and pleasure grounds.

¹¹ Farrer and Brownbill 1914, 401

¹² Davies-Shiel and Marshall 1969, 142-8

¹³ Millward and Robinson 1970, 252-3

Non-urban nucleations are few, small in extent, often with areas of late nineteenth or early twentieth century expansion. Nucleated settlements do not form the dominant settlement type in any part of the Lake District. Even on the low, coastal lands of west Cumbria, from Gosforth down to Silecroft, the small nucleated settlements are interspersed with numerous individual farms. Elsewhere, in the low fells of the

southern Lake District, the valleys of the high fells, and the northern lowlands, nucleated settlements are few, and include hamlets as well as villages. The HLC shows that most pre-1770 settlement within modern nucleations were individual farms, or small clusters of farmsteads around which expansion occurred mostly in the late-nineteenth century or later. This scarcity of nucleated settlement is reflected in the national distribution of

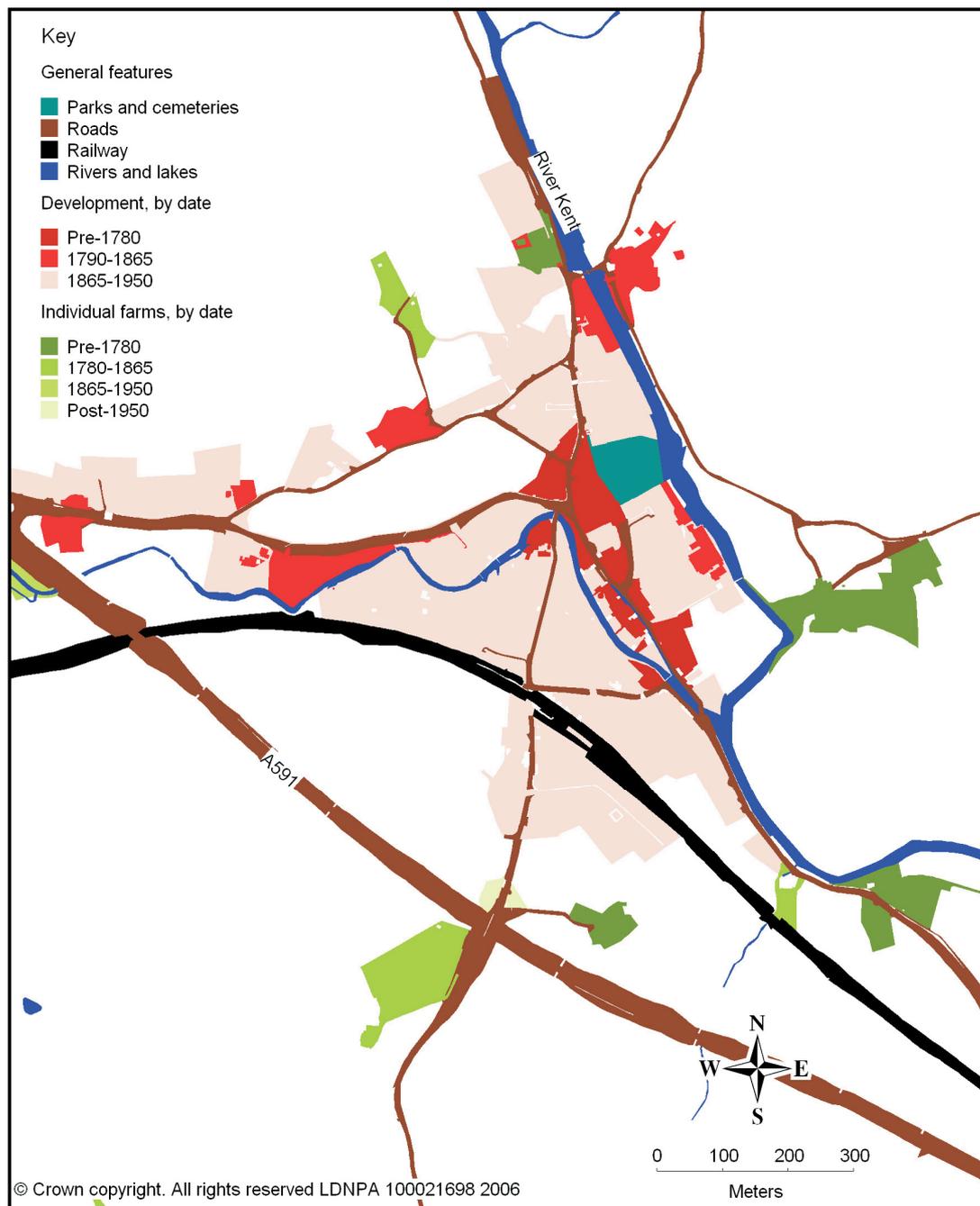


Figure 28: The development of the settlement of Staveley, which shows the greatest period of expansion was between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, as a result of industry and tourism

nucleations, as shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey maps of the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴ As might be expected, the area of the Lake District National Park has one of the lowest densities of nucleated settlements, along with other upland areas such as the Pennines, the North York Moors and the Forest of Bowland. Keswick formed the only nucleation of any size. It is on the northern fringes of the National Park, and on its western coast strip where nucleated settlements are most significant. On the western coastal plain, this includes villages such as Bootle, Ravenglass and Gosforth. On the northern edge of the Park are a number of nucleated settlements with considerable areas of former commonfield, such as Hesket Newmarket, Caldbeck and Uldale. North of Bassenthwaite Lake, small villages such as Sunderland and Blindcrake were clearly laid out as planned two-row settlements, with former commonfields surviving in part as fossilised strip fields. The form of these settlements, however, has more in common with a number of other planned two-row villages outside the National Park, on the Solway Plain.

Dispersed Settlement

The HLC has demonstrated that the dominant settlement pattern across the Lake District National Park is one of dispersion, comprising mostly individual farms or small groups of farmsteads or cottages. The dominance of a dispersed farming pattern is to be expected in an area of extensive agriculture, dependent on pastoralism, where there was less competition for land. The division of the primarily dispersed settlement pattern from areas of mixed nucleated and dispersed settlement can be seen even on a national scale, where the cattle and sheep rearing of the Lake District and other Cumbrian uplands, is distinct from the more mixed farming of the northern Cumbrian lowlands and

Solway Plain.¹⁵ Looking more closely at the pattern mapped by the HLC, there is no settlement at all across most of the high fells as might be expected, but there are scattered farms on the lower fell sides. The main areas of settlement are in the valleys, low fells and lowlands surrounding the central massif. The greatest densities of dispersed settlement are on the west coast south of Ravenglass, and across the low fells of the southern Lake District, particularly along the A591 Kendal to Keswick route, in the valley of the River Rothay, around Hawkshead, and in the area between Kendal and Windermere. The pattern mapped by the HLC is reflected in the national distribution of dispersed settlement, which shows extremely low densities of dispersed settlement across the central fells, with medium to high densities in the low fells and lowlands on the fringes of the Lake District.¹⁶ The HLC shows larger individual holdings in the valley of the River Rothay, between Windermere and Ambleside, and also around Keswick. These mainly date to the nineteenth or early twentieth century, and reflect the

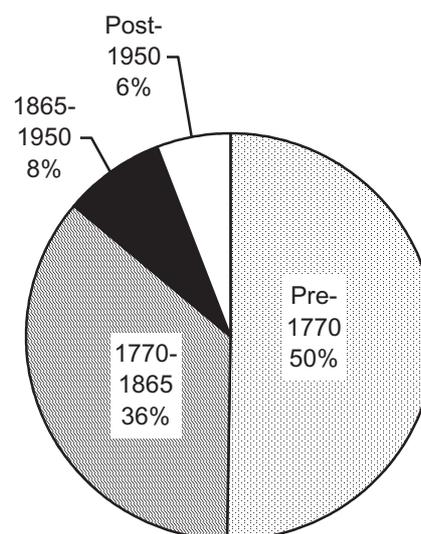


Figure 29: The proportion of dispersed settlement by date

¹⁴ Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 5

¹⁵ Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 60

¹⁶ Roberts and Wrathmell 2002, 9

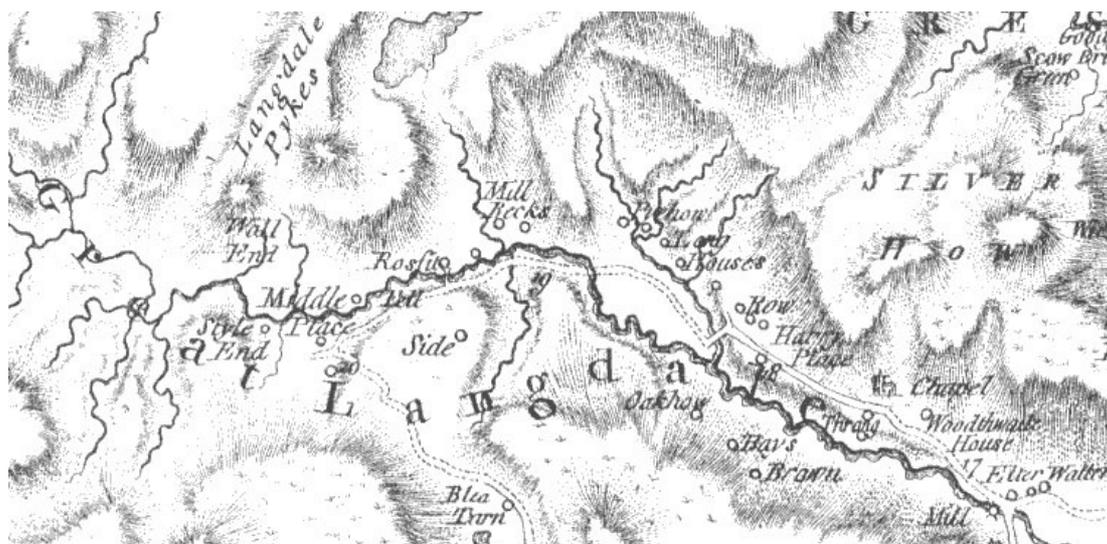


Plate 54: Settlement in the Great Langdale valley, as shown on Yates's map of 1786. Most of the named settlements represent individual farms or small clusters of houses, and are still marked on modern maps

popularity of the Lake District as a tourist destination, and the growth in villa development around both Lake Windermere and Derwent Water. In most cases these were built as large houses with extensive grounds, and many are now hotels.

The dates recorded by the HLC for dispersed settlement shows that 50% were definitely in existence by the late eighteenth century, as they are shown on the county maps of Donald, Jeffries and Yates,¹⁷ and many are named. These maps would have depicted only the more significant farms and dwellings, however, and at least some of the smaller farms and cottages known to be extant by the time of the Ordnance Survey first edition maps of the mid-nineteenth century, were probably much older. Altogether, 86% of dispersed settlement was in existence by around 1865, and it can be assumed that a large proportion of this pre-dates 1770. This, along with the dominance of ancient enclosures across most of the field systems of the Lake District,

demonstrates that the pattern of farming and settlement across much of the Lake District National Park is what Rackham termed 'Ancient Countryside'.¹⁸ The pattern is more mixed in the low fells between Kendal and Windermere, where there was a greater degree of planned enclosure from the late eighteenth century onwards. Here a larger number of early nineteenth century dispersed settlement was noted, at least some of which would have been established following the enclosure and improvement of the extensive common wastes. This area, too, has the largest concentration of orchards recorded by the HLC. The orchards contain mostly Westmorland Damsons, and are thought to have been grown and sold in Westmorland since at least the early 1700s.¹⁹ Most orchards are small, and are attached to a farmstead. Their greatest concentration is along the Lyth and Winster valleys, and particularly the upper end of those valleys between Bowland Bridge, Crosthwaite and Underbarrow.

¹⁷ Donald 1774; Jeffries 1770; Yates 1786

¹⁸ Rackham 1986, 4-5

¹⁹ Westmorland Damson Association, www.lythdamsons.org.uk



Plate 55: Farmhouse in the Kentmere valley, listed grade II. Marked by Yates on his map of 1786, the farmhouse is thought to date from the seventeenth century (© Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd)

In general, however, dispersed settlement across much of the Lake District National Park is dominated by farms and cottages which pre-date 1770. Many of these farms are the substantial, stone-walled, slate-roofed buildings associated with the 'statesman' farmer of the early post medieval period.²⁰ The statesmen were yeoman farmers, with secure tenurial holdings, who formed a prosperous rural middle class from the seventeenth century.²¹ Many made money from the growth in livestock farming, both cattle and sheep rearing, and were also involved in small-scale industrial enterprises such as textiles, quarrying, potash production, charcoal burning, and so on. The agricultural depression and downturn in many of the domestic-based industries in the

nineteenth century led to the decline and even ruin of a large number of yeoman farmers. Their farmhouses, however, are the legacy of a more prosperous era of farming in the uplands, and represent a high water mark in the development of the Lake District farm. Many appear to have been a rebuilding of an existing farmhouse on the same site, indicating a large degree of continuity in the farms of the Lake District. This process of rebuilding is a national phenomenon, and has been called the 'Great Rebuilding',²² but this is now accepted as an oversimplification of a process subject to a great deal of regional and social variation. Eighty eight percent of the 1,127 listed farmhouses in Cumbria and the Lake District pre-date the nineteenth century, and most contain evidence of several phases of change and improvement, from the sixteenth century onwards.²³

This process of rebuilding does not necessarily imply that the houses which they replaced were of poor quality. Indeed, in areas such as the north and west of England, there is no reason to think that the buildings which went before were any less durable, whether built of stone or timber. The process of rebuilding related more to long-term social changes, such as fashion, status and ideas of modernity,²⁴ originating in the fifteenth century. It has been described as a process of 'closure', in which houses became less communal and more private and exclusive. The physical manifestations of closure were seen in the flooring over of open halls, the enclosure of the open hearth into fireplaces, and the division of open spaces into separate rooms, and the segregation of specialist functions such as food preparation and

²⁰ Rollinson 1996, 66-7

²¹ See also the chapter on ancient enclosures

²² Hoskins 1955, 155-7

²³ Images of England, www.imagesofengland.org.uk

²⁴ Newman 2001, 59-60

sleeping.²⁵ This can be seen in the evolution of the Lake District farmhouse, where the single-storey long house was replaced by two-storey structures, with bedrooms on the first floor, a separate parlour, kitchen and dairy and, in many instances, a spinning gallery.²⁶

The Changing Countryside

A number of nucleated historic settlements, or parts of settlements, have already been designated as 20 Conservation Areas within the National Park. These include:

- Ambleside
- Askham
- Bampton
- Bampton Grange
- Blindcrake
- Bowness on Windermere
- Broughton on Furness
- Far Sawrey
- Grasmere Town End
- Grasmere Village
- Hartshop
- Hawkshead
- Hesket Newmarket
- Keswick
- Lowther
- Near Sawrey
- Ravenglass
- Rydale
- Staveley
- Troutbeck

These Conservation Areas are covered by policy E34 of the Cumbria and Lake District Joint Structure Plan²⁷ which seeks to resist proposals which “...fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas...”. The National Park Management Plan²⁸ recognises that the towns and villages of the Lake District each have a distinctive character which is a product of their evolution and that this character needs

to be protected and enhanced. Towns and villages, however, are dynamic places where change is a necessary as part of their continuing evolution. HLC is the first step in defining the character of the different settlement types within the National Park. It can then be used to determine how the settlement pattern within the National Park might be affected by change.

The historic character of settlements, in particular nucleated settlements, is examined in more detail in the Extensive Urban Surveys funded by English Heritage and carried out within the Lake District National Park and Cumbria. HLC takes a broad brush approach by looking at settlement form, but has not, at this stage, sought to link the findings of the Extensive Urban Surveys with HLC data. At the time of writing, the Extensive Urban Survey for the Lake District was not yet complete, but when it is, the results should be merged within the broader HLC to provide characterisation for rural and urban areas. The characterisation process lends itself well to the historic urban environment and can form part of the Extensive Urban Survey, or can be the basis of Conservation Area Character Appraisals for relevant towns and villages. Such appraisals help to inform planning decisions and broader strategic documents and can also help to target limited public resources towards key buildings which contribute towards the historic character of a settlement significantly because of its historic value or position within the townscape. Such Character Appraisals are vital before the more prescriptive Design Briefs are produced for development areas and can ensure that new developments enhance historic character and local distinctiveness. Without an understanding of how our settlements developed, we cannot hope to make informed decisions about how they should grow in the future.

The historic settlements and buildings within the National Park are valuable

²⁵ Johnson 1993, 111-19

²⁶ Brunskill 2002, 50-6, 64-83

²⁷ Cumbria County Council and the LDNPA 2006

²⁸ LDNPA Authority 2004, 36, 38, policy HE 5

catalysts for conservation-led economic prosperity. The attraction of these villages and towns lies in their historic character and if this is lost through inappropriate development, the vital income derived from tourism will reduce. It is therefore important that any proposals which may affect the character of historic buildings and settlements should be assessed before a decision is made. Such assessments should be careful to

explore the contribution buildings and smaller historic features such as finger posts, milk churn stands and shop fronts make to the wider historic character and not confine themselves to the potential impact on archaeological remains.

The erosion of historic character within a settlement can take place in a number of ways. The replacement of traditional windows and doors with

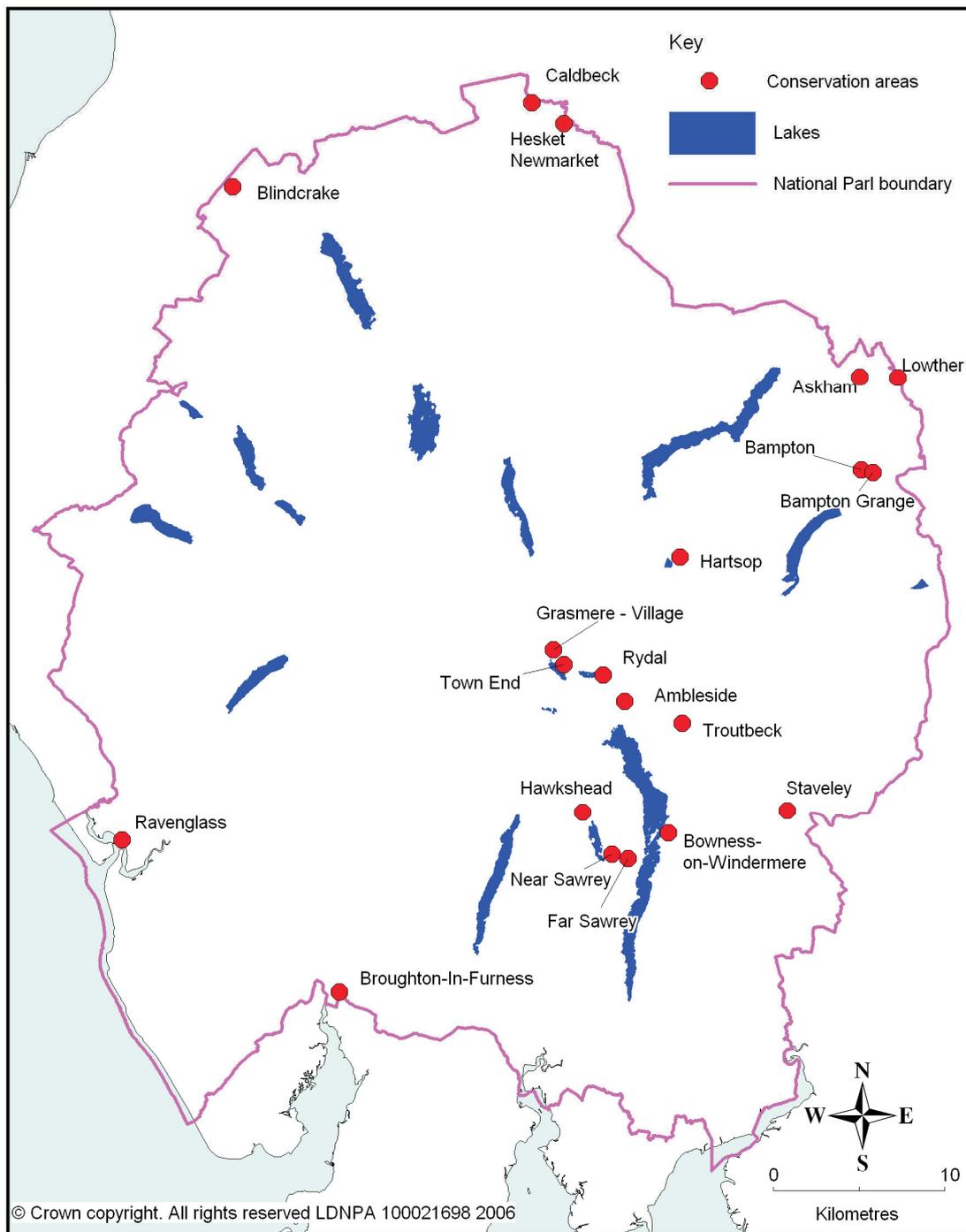


Figure 30: Conservation areas within the Lake District National Park

modern plastic versions will erode the character of individual houses, and will also ultimately lead to the loss of character over a larger area. In Conservation Areas, the National Park Authority has the power to withdraw permitted development rights which will provide an opportunity to control this loss of character. If this control is not used, there are very few remaining reasons to create Conservation Areas.

Dispersed settlement in the Lake District is normally made up of farm buildings, or former farm buildings. Such buildings are under threat as farming changes and their traditional use is no longer applicable. Nationally a third of listed working farm buildings have already been converted to other uses, the majority to residential use, while large numbers of agricultural buildings are well on their way to becoming derelict.²⁹ New uses for these buildings need to be sought, but they should not result in the gradual erosion of historic character. Agri-environment schemes and the Rural Enterprise Scheme offer sources of funding to conserve former agricultural buildings or to find sustainable new

uses for them. It is important that the National Park Authority is consulted before such funds are granted.

Maintaining historic buildings within our historic settlements requires access to affordable craft skills and traditional building techniques. Such skills are in short supply nationally and around 400 additional skilled crafts people are needed in the north west region to meet the demands for repair and maintenance of historic buildings.³⁰

Investing in repairs to historic farm buildings makes economic sense: every £1 invested in the Lake District Environmentally Sensitive Area generated £2.49 in additional economic value³¹

Settlements, whether nucleated or dispersed are normally on sites which have been occupied for many hundreds of years. This means that below the feet of every resident, farmer and visitor lie the buried remains of earlier houses, farms and villages. The historic core of the village or the farmstead is often the



Plate 56: Kentmere Hall, listed grade II*, it is a fourteenth-century tower house with a late fourteenth- to fifteenth-century farmhouse attached (© Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd)

²⁹ English Heritage 2005b

³⁰ English Heritage 2005b

³¹ English Heritage 2005b, 1

core of modern commercial activity and this can conflict with the desire to preserve buried archaeological remains. The planning process makes provision for the impact of development on these buried remains to be assessed before an application is considered.

Less often used are the powers to protect the hidden remains of earlier buildings within existing buildings. Many of the farms and village houses of the Lake District have their origins in medieval and post-medieval times and parts of these early houses may be incorporated in the present day buildings. Such historic features may not be recognised in the Historic Environment Record and so the buildings carry no protection such as Listing. It is therefore important that the powers given in PPGs 15 and 16³² are used to ensure that adequate information about buildings is provided as part of a planning application before decisions are made regarding future development and that where historic remains may be exposed or altered, that a programme of recording is required prior to or during development.

The historic settlements of the Lake District are also a valuable research tool. The Research Agenda for the North West Region³³ has identified the need to examine different landholdings in order to establish how they affected settlement pattern. We know very little about the origins of nucleated villages with assumptions regarding many of their twelfth century origins rarely supported by further evidence. Recent survey work by The National Trust on some of their landholdings has shown that the history of dispersed farms can be complex with a story extending back to Norse times. More work of this nature needs to take place in order to provide an absolute chronology for the growth of farming

and settlement within the National Park. There is very little excavated data for dispersed settlement and there have been few opportunities to link below ground evidence with extant buildings. There are also some settlement types for which we have very little data in the National Park, such as moated sites and their impact on the wider settlement pattern. The value of the HLC data in providing the first step in many of the research proposals outlined below is obvious, although some additional enhancement of the HLC data will be required over time.

Shaping the Future: Recommendations

- In order to maintain and enhance the distinctive historic character of nucleated and dispersed settlement, development and other proposals for change should have due regard to:
 - ❖ Local distinctiveness
 - ❖ The layout and scale of buildings, open spaces and vistas
 - ❖ The quality and character of the built environment
 - ❖ Historic patterns and attributes of the wider historic landscape
- Towns and villages with historic origins should have Extensive Urban Surveys completed and nested within the HLC data
- HLC and EUS data should then inform Conservation Area Character Appraisals
- Conservation Areas should have permitted development rights withdrawn in order to manage the influx of modern plastic windows and doors in historic buildings
- HLC should be enhanced to include place name evidence linked to early medieval settlement names such as *thwaite* (assumes a woodland clearing for occupation), *tun*, *botl*, *byr* etc

³² DoE and DNH 1994

³³ Newman and Newman, 2007

- Agri-environment schemes and the Rural Enterprise Scheme offer sources of funding to find sustainable new uses for former agricultural buildings. Before applications for funding are granted, they should be assessed by the National Park Authority (whether listed buildings or not) in order to assess the impact on the historic character of dispersed settlements and the individual buildings.
- The Northwest Regional Research Agenda³⁴ has identified a number of key themes requiring additional research into settlement patterns. They are as follows:
 - ❖ Research into particular landholdings, (such as those surveys carried out by the National Trust at Langdale and Wasdale Head), can examine the impact of particular forms of landholding and lordship on settlement pattern.
 - ❖ A study of how dispersed settlement evolved across a township/manor, related to other settlements and accessed the exploitable resources of their environs. A range of techniques, particularly palaeo-environmental sampling of landscapes and selective excavation, should be encouraged.
 - ❖ Examination of individual dispersed settlements, especially those with hey, ridding, stubbing, thwaite or other names possibly associated with medieval settlement expansion. Excavation will be necessary in order to explore the possibility of settlement continuity from the early medieval period.
 - ❖ Local studies based on HLC should be undertaken to attempt to recreate the medieval land use pattern within townships.
 - ❖ Landscape-based surveys should be undertaken at various levels of historic land holdings and divisions such as the honour, manor and township, to test the underlying hypothesis of both county based HLCs and Roberts and Wrathmell's (2002) national analysis of settlement patterns.
 - ❖ Studies of the relationships between rural settlement and landscape in the region and in southern Scotland, either by cross-border projects or by testing the applicability of Scottish research concepts within the region, and vice versa.

³⁴ Newman and Newman 2007