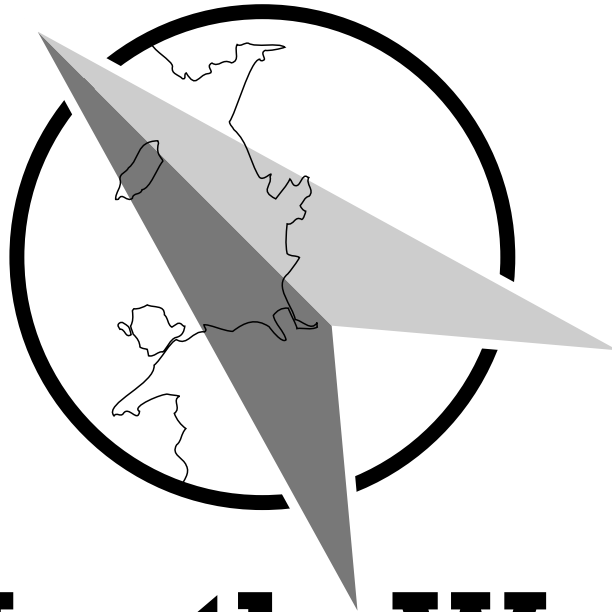


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Whose Lake District?

Contested landscapes and changing sense of place

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Abstract

The landscape of the Lake District is world famous, highly distinctive and widely cherished but it often tends to be taken for granted. This article develops the idea that landscapes, as cultural constructs, are frequently contested between dominant and more marginalised groups, to consider the wide range of tensions and conflicts which have helped to shape the landscape of the Lake District in the past and are still active at the present day.

Keywords

Lake District, landscape, cultural geography, contested landscapes.



Figure 1: The Langdale Pikes; an iconic landscape?

The landscape of the Lake District is iconic and world famous. It is currently being put forward for World Heritage status as a cultural landscape of international importance. It contains the largest national park in England and Wales, with England's highest mountain. Its scenic qualities began to be appreciated from the mid-eighteenth century. In the late eighteenth century it became one of the most important foci for Picturesque tourism (Andrews 1989). In the early nineteenth century it was the pre-eminent region in Britain

for Romantic tourism (Nicholson 1955, Squire 1993a). William Wordsworth, in his *Guide to the Lakes*, first published in 1810 but reaching its final form in the fifth edition of 1835, called the area 'a sort of national property' and debates over the conservation of its distinctive scenery were of major importance in influencing the national conservation debate in Britain in the later nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries (Bate 1991, Bicknell 1984).

But do we perhaps take the Lake District landscape for granted, failing to acknowledge the multitude of tensions and conflicts which have occurred, and still are occurring, over the character of its landscape? This article focuses on some of these conflicts and how they have helped to shape the landscape.

Cultural geographies and contested landscapes

Historical geographers have traditionally looked at landscape in an objective manner as something that can be studied in a rational, unbiased way (Muir 1999). The continuing importance of this approach is seen in the work of landscape historians and archaeologists though even here alternative approaches such as the study of the phenomenology of landscape have been developing in recent years (Tilley 1994).

Yet such approaches to landscape tend to emphasise the products of human activity rather than the people who created the landscape or how they perceived and experienced place. Modern cultural geography has developed more subjective approaches to the study of landscape, something which has sometimes been described as part of a 'cultural turn' in geography (Crang 1998, Dennis, 2001).

This approach suggests that no one looks at landscape completely objectively without preconceptions and biases. From this approach, W. G. Hoskins' famous book *The Making of the English Landscape*, might in many ways have been better entitled *W. G. Hoskins' English Landscape* because of the striking geographical and temporal biases he exhibits in his writing – almost hysterically anti-modernist, conservative, traditionalist, favouring the Tudor, Stuart and Georgian eras against earlier and later periods, with a marked geographical focus on S. W. England and the Midlands, ignoring northern England almost entirely (Bender 1993a).

So landscape, from this perspective, is not a concrete reality but a cultural construct. In post-modernist terms landscapes can be treated as complex, multi-layered texts with multiple meanings. They can be deconstructed to reveal unconscious, hidden meanings. This approach (Bender 2001) suggests that landscape and place are:

- culturally constructed
- historically contingent
- constantly contested
- in a constant state of flux.

We do not encounter places cold even when we visit them for the first time: we already know something about them, or at least we think we do, before we experience them.

Landscape is always embedded in personal and cultural narratives, memories, and associations. Our encounters with, and experience of, place depend on whether we are insiders or outsiders – the meanings of places differ depending on whether we live, work and socialise there as insiders or merely visit it as outsiders (Buttimer 1980).

This article develops the idea that landscapes are usually contested between different groups. Contested landscapes are about unequal distributions of power in which the views of some groups relating to landscape are seen as appropriate – they are authorised, legitimated – while the views of other groups are marginalised and ignored. Thus there are dominant and silent voices regarding landscape.

The Lake District landscape is seen today as peaceful and serene but it has been vigorously contested in the past, and is still contested today. In an area that is under pressure in many ways there are deeply entrenched divisions in the attitudes of different groups who live in and use the area. These divisions have been a strong influence on the landscape we see today.

The Lake District as a contested landscape: before the tourists

Conflicts relating to landscape go far back in time. The Lake District landscape, often portrayed as the product of a stable agricultural society, Wordsworth's famous 'republic of shepherds and statesmen farmers', was contested even before the development of tourism (Winchester 1998). There were conflicts between the lords of various manors and their tenants over common rights, particularly with regard to access to resources such as grazing, peat or timber. Disputes of this kind are evident in manorial court records and continued to occur into quite modern times – for example in the manor of Rydal as late as the nineteenth century (Winchester 2000, 39-40).

At a broader scale there were geographical and social contrasts between the peripheral large estates of the nobility and, in the central Lake District, a core of smaller owner-occupiers or statesmen. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries customary tenants in the Lake District were able to fight off attempts by proprietors to downgrade their distinctive systems of tenure to ordinary leasehold (Winchester 2000, 16) but by the later eighteenth century economic conditions were turning more against the smaller statesmen and many of them were being bought out by larger landowners, a fate which befell Wordsworth's archetypical independent statesman/shepherd, Michael (Denyer 1991, 192-3). Conflicts within Lake District society



Figure 2: The regular, rational landscape of parliamentary enclosure near Orton.

are also evident in Wordsworth's poetry. His direct criticisms of the powerful elites are muted, but his vivid description of the poorer people in society – often drawn from those who passed by Dove Cottage – indicate where the sympathies of the still-young revolutionary lay (Barker 2001, 191-214).

One major contrast in landscapes within the Lake District resulted in part from the inability of manorial lords to increase their incomes from customary tenants. This was the enclosure of many commons under parliamentary act in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Manorial lords received a share - often as much as a twelfth - of the commons in return for giving up their traditional rights to the soil. This often gave them big enough blocks of land to create new leasehold farms set at higher rents per acre. It has been suggested that enclosure was favoured by both the larger proprietors and the farmers in this region because the commons were under pressure from the demands of the droving trade (Searle 1995). By the later eighteenth century they were usually overstocked and deteriorating in quality, with manorial courts no longer capable of regulating them and preventing abuses. If the proprietors and larger farmers were in accord there was probably greater tension between the larger farmers and the smallholders/cottagers whose allotments after enclosure may not have been as valuable as their rights on the former commons.

Enclosure here was undoubtedly less oppressive than in southern and Midland England. It did not cause depopulation on the same scale, but there was some opposition to it in Cumbria nevertheless, particularly from, or on behalf of, the smaller tenants (Whyte 2003). While some eighteenth and nineteenth-century writers considered that enclosure benefited the poor by increasing

both local food supplies and the demand of labour others were more critical, notably Stockdale, the historian of Cartmel, who saw enclosure as detrimental to cottagers and smallholders (Stockdale 1872). That different balances were struck in different communities, depending in part on variations in the structure of landholding and the power relations within society, is shown by instances where one community took the decision to enclose its commons while neighbouring ones did not.

Enclosure involved the imposition of an Enlightenment landscape – regular, planned, rational, on many parts of the Lake District, with a geometric grid of fields, walls, access roads, planting and, in some cases, new farmsteads. The boundary between the organic landscape of ancient enclosures which had evolved gradually over many centuries, and the revolutionary landscape of parliamentary enclosure is often a very sharp one.

Contested landscape aesthetics and the Lake District

So insiders were already contesting the Lake District landscape in the period leading up to the rise of tourism in the later eighteenth century. However, much of the debate over the landscape of the Lake District has resulted from different landscape aesthetics held by outsiders and how these have impacted on communities of insiders living within the area.

Early visitors had widely differing impressions of the region. Celia Fiennes, a seventeenth-century 'foodie' was mainly interested in local produce and recipes (Morris 1982). Daniel Defoe, looking for commercial agriculture and evidence of trade found the area 'wild barren and frightful' (Defoe 1971, 550). From the later eighteenth century



Figure 3: Dr Syntax sketching the lake; Rowlandson caricatures Gilpin's view of Nature.

onwards the inhabitants of the Lake District had to adjust to increasing floods of incomers who brought money to the area, certainly, but whose tastes and attitudes were rather strange. One of Thomas Rowlandson's illustrations for William Combe's satirical *Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* shows the worthy clergyman sketching the lake, watched in puzzlement by a rather slack-jawed local yokel (Combe 1868).

Rowlandson's illustration emphasises that early visitors came to see the lakes, not the fells, and most of them came in search of the Picturesque. This landscape aesthetic reached its peak of popularity in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, publicised by the prolific writer William Gilpin whose published tours were really manuals of how to see landscape in terms of Picturesque beauty (Gilpin 1786). The Picturesque was a very formulaic and limited way of viewing landscape. It required the visitor to look at the landscape in terms of views which would look good in a picture. But specifically a picture painted by one of a small group of neo-classical artists who worked in and around Rome in the mid-seventeenth century, the best known of whom was Claude Lorraine. Visitors, directed by Gilpin's tour or Thomas West's guidebook, moved from one classic viewpoint or 'station' to another. At each point they compared the view with the idealised landscapes of Claude and his contemporaries and decided by just how much nature fell short of art. Then they viewed, described, sketched or painted the landscape improving on nature where reality failed to meet expectations (Bicknell 1984, 12-13).

To do this they used an instrument called a Claude Glass, a small convex oval mirror which could be suspended by a ribbon. The shape of the mirror expanded the foreground and reduced the background of fells to less threatening distant hills. Coloured overlays could convert



Figure 4: The view from Thomas West's first 'Station'; overlooking Belle Isle, Windermere.



Figure 5: J. M. W. Turner; *Buttermere* (1798).

the scene to winter or night, sunset or autumn. The parallels with the modern fashion for driving from one lay-by to another taking photographs of beauty spots with an SLR camera and coloured filters serves to emphasise that elements of the Picturesque – and picturesque composition – are still with us. Gilpin established rules by which scenic features, such as the shapes of mountains, could be classified as Picturesque or non-Picturesque.

The Picturesque aesthetic strongly emphasised the form and composition of landscape rather than its detail and meaning. In itself it reflected a broader process of contention within the contemporary English landscape whereby as parliamentary enclosure extinguished lowland commons and removed all traces of wildness in the landscape, travellers increasingly turned to more peripheral areas of the country like the Lakes, which were still unimproved and wild, in search of less commercialised landscapes (Andrews 1989).

By the 1790s, however, some writers and artists were starting to find the Picturesque aesthetic limiting and unsatisfactory. Wordsworth, in his famous Tintern Abbey poem of 1798, specifically rejected it in favour of an approach to nature and landscape which was personal, and which looked at them as they really were rather than how they ought to have been in a Claudean world. In the same year Turner's paintings of *Buttermere* and the *Coniston fells* demonstrates a similar rejection: instead of showing clearly the forms of the fells they rise imperceptibly into mist and cloud stressing atmosphere rather than form.

Thus was born the Romantic movement. Modern views of the Lake District landscape incorporate strong influences from Wordsworth, underlain by elements of the Picturesque, and modified by nineteenth-century literary tourism which turned the region into a literary shrine as well as one to nature.

Landscape and the rise of conservation

Wordsworth returned to the Lake District, to live at Dove Cottage, in 1799. His ideas about the Lake District landscape, articulated most famously in the various editions of his *Guide to the Lakes*, stem from his careful, detailed observation of the area. In his Guide he highlighted a range of conservation issues relating to the Lake District landscape, formulating rules of good taste for reducing the impact of undesirable changes. Some of these, such as the siting of new property, its materials and design, or the impact of the plantation of large blocks of alien conifer species, are as relevant today as they were then. There were clear conflicts over the nature of contemporary landscape changes in the Lake District: over absurdities like the follies on Pocklington's island in Derwentwater for instance. Later in life Wordsworth was also concerned that the railway branch line from Kendal to Windermere would be a mass influx of visitors who would swamp the area (Bicknell 1984, 187-98).

The railway was built despite Wordsworth's protests but his arguments provided ready ammunition for a generation of later nineteenth-century conservationists, one of the most prominent of whom was Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, one of the founders of the National Trust. They campaigned about the building of further branch railways into the heart of the Lake District, the development of extractive industries, and the damming of valleys to create reservoirs. Groups like the Lake District Defence Association had memberships dominated by people living outside the region – particularly in London, often with influence in government. Local organisers, like Rawnsley himself, were mostly off-comers (Dowthwaite 1991). There was growing conflict between them, with their desire to preserve the



Figure 6: *The Lake District as an industrial area: Stott Park bobbin mill; closed as recently as 1962, now reopened as an industrial museum.*



Figure 7: *Brantwood: John Ruskin's rural retreat on Coniston Water.*



Figure 8: *Across Coniston Water was the industrial landscape of the Coniston Copper mines.*

area from development, and local people who might benefit from jobs and trade created by such activities. Hoteliers and other businesses set up the English Lake District Association with aims which frequently opposed the LDDA, such as surfacing the tracks over the main passes, foreshadowing later conflicts between the National Park authorities and the Cumbria Tourist Board.

It is also worth remembering that in the nineteenth century the Lake District was still an industrial area, a busy landscape, with charcoal pitsteads, iron forges, textile and bobbin mills, mines and quarries. John Ruskin may have viewed Coniston as a retreat from the evils of urbanisation and industrialisation yet he looked across from Brantwood at the Coniston copper mines at the peak of their production.

Conflicts over land use, recreational activities and their impact on the Lake District landscape continued throughout the twentieth century. There were early disagreements over the operation of seaplanes on Windermere, and the unsightly effects of telegraph poles



Figure 9: Larch plantations, so disliked by Wordsworth, are now a familiar element in the Lakeland landscape: these are on National land in Langdale.



Figure 11: Villa and exotic planting: Red Bank, Coniston.

which echoed more recent issues (Berry and Beard 1980). The Lake District Defence Association lives on in its later incarnation as the Friends of the Lake District. In the 1930s the Friends of the Lake District and, at a wider scale, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England were in conflict with the Forestry Commission over their proposed afforestation of Eskdale and Dunnerdale. The Commission's work in Ennerdale in particular had already demonstrated the visual impact of conifers (Symonds 1936). In 1936 the CPRE and the Forestry Commission came to an agreement that the central area of the Lake District fells should not be subject to any further large-scale block planting, a major achievement in upland landscape planning which still holds good.



Figure 10: Whinlatter Forest was the Forestry Commission's first large-scale planting in the 1920s.

Lake District tourism in Wordsworth's day was elitist and continued to be so in the later nineteenth century. Wordsworth, and then Ruskin, opposed the coming of mass tourism via the railways. Ruskin famously wrote of working class visitors that 'I don't want them to see Helvellyn when they are drunk' (Barringer 1984, 78). The working class excursionists who did come by train to Windermere on day trips seem to have behaved themselves remarkably well but careful efforts were made to exclude the provision of the kinds of facilities for them which might have turned Bowness into Blackpool on Windermere (Dowthwaite 1991).

The region was elitist too in the way that wealthy incomers bought up small estates around the main lakes in order to build retirement homes or summer villas.

The art-deco house of Blackwell, built around 1900 as the summer residence of a Manchester brewer and his family, recently opened to the public, is a good example. In the late nineteenth century the development of rock climbing was highly elitist, undertaken by reading parties of students and dons from Oxbridge (Bragg 1983, 102-14).

Rawnsley had led some high-profile campaigns in the late nineteenth century about the blocking by landowners of access to well-known viewpoints like Latrigg above Keswick. Perhaps because of this and the area's abundance of commons (where there was a *de facto* rather than a *de jure* right of access), the dense network of rights of way, and the relative lack of good grouse shooting terrain, the Lake District largely avoided conflicts over access which characterised the Peak District in the 1930s with tensions between ramblers and gamekeepers (Hill 1980).

Contested landscapes and modern tourism

Arguably tourism in the Lake District has remained elitist to a greater degree than in other scenic rural areas in Britain. The area is still interpreted through a romantic gaze with an underlying, though often indirect, emphasis on literary heritage. The visitors who come today are overwhelmingly middle-aged, middle class, white, car-owning, coming as individuals or families rather than in large groups to pursue quiet recreation. A high proportion of them are National Trust members and enjoy good food. Relatively few of them are attracted directly by the Lake District's literary tradition but Wordsworth still casts a long, sometimes disapproving, shadow.

The place myth of the Lake District to which most visitors subscribe today is one which continues to be created largely by outsiders. Lying behind individual perceptions of the Lake District are more systematic discourses of scenery and countryside which have authorised and legitimated particular activities and ways of seeing, especially walking and quiet recreation. The relative lack of indoor, wet weather activities is evident today as in the past and the development of many such facilities has been turned down by the planning board as unseemly.

Wordsworth's, and Ruskin's views about working-class visitors are still echoed by some of the modern voluntary National Trust and National Park wardens, many of them off-comers. They are quite open about not wanting 'the wrong sort of visitor' coming to the area. Equally interesting have been some of the shocked reactions to the recent television drama series *The Lakes* about the activities of young people working in the hotel and catering trades. There seems to be a widespread view that sex is not an appropriate kind of 'quiet recreation' in the Lake District.

Many aspects of contention in the modern landscape are tied in with the development and role of the National Park. The very aims of the park - to protect scenic beauty, to promote recreation and to support the economic and social development of communities within the park - were in conflict with each other from the start. Pressure for a national park again came largely from outside but between the 1950s and 1970s living in a national park probably made relatively little difference to most people because of the limited powers and finances of the park planners and managers. Nevertheless, from the 1960s, as visitor numbers increased, especially with the completion of the M6 motorway in 1971, a range of tensions relating to the landscape became evident.

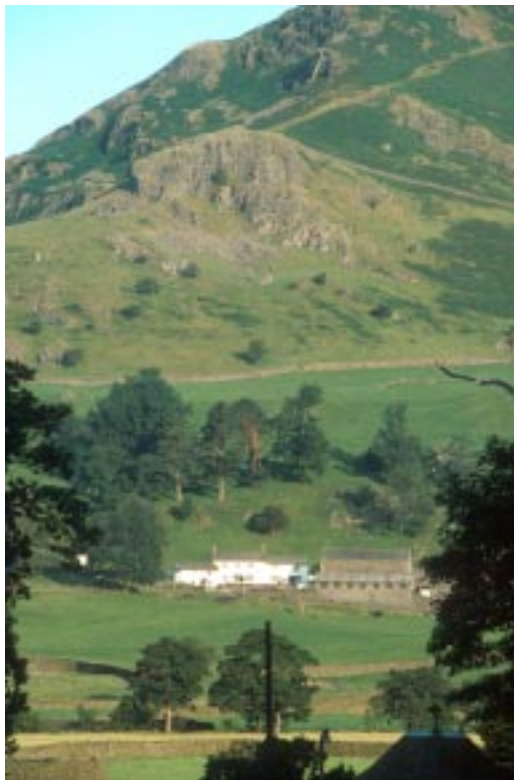
Housing has been one of the most contentious issues between insiders and outsiders within the Lake District

National Park. The purchase of property for holiday, weekend and retirement use has pushed prices well above what many local people, especially first-time buyers, can afford. In 2002 there were initiatives to restrict the sale of property in Exmoor and the New Forest, but it is often forgotten that a similar scheme was actually operated in the Lake District for a short time during the early 1980s, only to be stopped by the intervention of the Tory government as an unwarranted interference with the normal workings of the housing market (Clark 1982). Once again outside involvement and intervention was working to the detriment of local people.

Some issues over landscape have not involved a split between insiders and outsiders so much as between both and central government. The upgrading of the A66 between Penrith and Keswick during the 1970s through the northern part of the national park is an example. It arose from the demand of firms in the declining industrial area of west Cumbria for faster access to the M6. The upgrading of an alternative route, only a few miles longer, around the northern edge of the park was rejected and the A66 was improved (Berry and Beard 1980, Hindle 1998). Widespread opposition from the National Park Authority, the National Trust, the Friends of the Lake District and a range of conservation groups was successfully marginalised by the government as a fringe movement of cranks. The National Park's aim of encouraging access for visitors was also cynically manipulated in favour of the scheme. Here the agenda was being driven by people in a declining industrial within the region but outside the Lake District. The visual and social contrasts between the Lake District and the depressed former mining villages like Cleator Moor on their western fringe are clear.

Much of the character of the Lake District landscape is due to the management policies of the National Trust, an organization which owns a quarter of the area within the National Park but a much higher proportion of the central fells and dales. The National Trust's attitude to the Lake District landscape seems to be one of promoting little change, almost fossilising it, in something like the landscape of Wordsworth's day with the addition of suitably screened car parks and modern conveniences. In pursuit of these aims the National Trust can sometimes exhibit inflexibility and lack of imagination, ignoring broader conservation objectives in favour of rigid local-scale preservation, leading to further conflict.

The National Trust does not always have a good reputation with its tenants but the opposite has sometimes been the case as the fate of the archaeological site at Fell



Figures 12 & 13: *The kind of carefully managed, almost fossilised landscape seemingly favoured by the National Trust (Grasmere & Rydal).*

Foot in Little Langdale shows. The square, terraced mound close to the farmstead was thought, purely on the basis of its surface form, to possibly be the site of a Viking-period thingmount or assembly site like Tynwald in the Isle of Man (Whyte 1989, 66). If so, it was unique in England, though other interpretations of the site were possible; a seventeenth-century terraced orchard for example. The local tenant farmer, fearing that the working of his farm might be adversely affected by the preservation or even the excavation of the site, took steps to destroy it by driving a heavy tracked vehicle round and round it, completely obliterating the terraces. A preservation order was then put

on the site and the National Trust was left extremely embarrassed.

On a lesser scale, in Mickleden, at the head of Langdale, a set of foundations just beyond the modern limit of improvement may, possibly, be a Viking-period settlement, but it currently serves as a dump for gravel dredged from the river and used to fill in potholes in the nearby track.

As well as conflicts among people living in the area, there have been conflicts between different groups of visitors – notably walkers and mountain bikers – and both of these groups together against motorcyclists and users of four-wheel drive vehicles on routes like the Garburn Pass between Kentmere and Troutbeck. The debate over the introduction of a 10mph speed limit on Windermere has highlighted a major aspect of contention in the Lake District landscape. The use of speedboats, especially for water-skiing, and the increasing use of jet-skis was affecting other water-based recreation, sometimes dangerously, and went against the presumption of a focus on ‘quiet recreation’ in the National Park (Lake District National Park Authority 1989, 44).

Attempts by the National Park Authority to bring in a 10mph speed limit – which would effectively end the use of power boats – were overturned by the then Tory



Figure 14: *The now destroyed thingmount at Fell Foot, Little Langdale (Photo: W. Rollinson).*

government following a strong campaign by the power-boat lobby which suggested that the direct and indirect effects of a ban would have serious effects on jobs. The ban was overturned by the Labour government in 2000, and the speed limit was reinstated with a five-year adjustment period. However, a strong opposition movement is still campaigning for a zoning system instead. It is easy to criticise the power boaters but it is worth reflecting that it is no more natural to walk up a Lake District fell for the sake of it than it is to drive a power boat on Windermere.

The foot and mouth disease outbreak of 2001 also brought to the surface other deep-seated conflicts over the Lake District and its landscape. The speed with which the National Park Authority closed all footpaths, and effectively gave the impression that the entire Lake District was closed to visitors, angered owners of hotels and other businesses who saw this as an unnecessary threat to their livelihoods. Part of the debate centred on the fact that the National Park Board is not an elected body and was thought by many not to reflect or represent local feelings and interests. The rights of the insiders had become hijacked yet again by external interests. As with the speed limit on Windermere, this feeling was expressed in an advertisement campaign in local newspapers.

Subversive views concerning the Lake District also emerge in various websites which take a very different line from the official National Park one. One, relating to the western Lake District presents a statement of the World Heritage Site bid against a photograph of a recently-felled conifer plantation (www.glowingcoast.co.uk/lakedist/whs).

It also takes the National Park Authority to task for its poor record in providing paths suitable for disabled access.

There were also tensions between farmers and local people in the tourist industry as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak. In an economy where income from tourism greatly outweighed that from hill farming, the farmers received compensation for slaughtered animals while owners of tourist businesses which lost trade, and even went bankrupt, as a result of the epidemic, received only derisory sums. The Lake District has shifted from economy dependent on farming to one based on tourism, yet farming is still needed to maintain the landscape.

Farmers have, of course, been behind much recent landscape change in the Lake District, including the reduction in the area of heather moorland, particularly in the northern fells, the decline in the maintenance of traditional field boundaries, the use of black bag silage and possibly, though farmers strenuously deny it, widespread erosion in several parts of the region due to over-grazing.

The potential indirect effects of foot and mouth disease on the character of the Lake District landscape have also caused a lot of comment (Potter *et al.* 2001). It was suggested that the direct culling of sheep and the longer term impact on hill farmers with farmers selling up might lead to a significant cut in stocking densities. This in turn would start to alter the character of the vegetation by allowing the invasion of scrub on to hillside pastures. Some dire forecasts suggested that within a couple of years fell walkers might almost need machetes to negotiate once-accessible paths. Such a prospect filled many people with



Figure 15: Recent large-scale erosion on Grasmoor.

horror although this was the longer-term outcome of reductions in stocking densities recommended by conservationists as part of a programme for increasing biodiversity and the logical extension of some existing Environmentally Sensitive Area agreements.

There is a widespread view that hill farming in the Lake District needs to be supported in order to keep in being a landscape which was in many ways the accidental outcome of only one particular style and intensity of land management. The idea of recreating wilderness areas in the Lake District by 'letting go' the landscape is an interesting yet problematic one. It does not equal a return to the landscape that existed before man: this is physically impossible given the scale of erosion over the thousands of years of human activity since the Bronze Age - but it would nevertheless still be 'natural' in aesthetic if not in ecological terms.

Conclusion: cultural geographies of the Lake District today

This article has tried to show how the landscape of the Lake District, as we see it today, as it has been in the past, and how it is may appear in the future, is the result of complex processes of contention between different groups. These groups change through time, but have common threads; especially the differences between insiders and outsiders, the latter a privileged group or set of groups which have created the dominant place myth of the landscape

Despite some of the underlying continuities which have been emphasised, one might pose the question: does every generation re-invent the Lake District, getting in the process the Lake District that it deserves and desires? Jacquetta Hawkes has claimed this for Stonehenge (Bender 1993b, 266). It is also worth pondering how many cultural geographies of the Lake District exist simultaneously. There is still a major contrast between the views of insiders and outsiders, local people and tourists. This comes out in letters to newspapers such as the *Westmorland Gazette* which, economics notwithstanding, often consist of diatribes against the visitors who, for example, prevent residents from parking outside their homes and enjoying some peace in their local pubs. This attitude can also be seen in comic postcards where the insider strikes back at the visitors, not overtly, but through images of delinquent sheep, bad weather and a harsh environment. This contrast can even come out in how people dress for the great outdoors; Barbour jackets versus Gore-tex.

Even within the local community there are various cultural geographies, one of the most significant being a division between the northern Lakes, looking towards Carlisle and Scotland, and the southern Lakes oriented towards Kendal and Lancaster. People from Borrowdale will tell you that nothing good ever came over Dunmail Raise – a view which includes south Cumbria as alien territory as much as London.

Among outsiders, too, there are many cultural geographies of this complex region. There are the romantic landscape views of people like Wordsworth and Ruskin. But there are other cultural geographies of the Lake District. To Japanese visitors who come to Beatrix Potter's house at Hill Top as a shrine, the Lake District is 'Peter Rabbit Country' (Squire 1993b). To people who grew up with the stories of Arthur Ransome, like *Swallows and Amazons*, the Lake District can appear as a kind of huge adventure playground for middle-class outsiders. A younger generation of children have grown up to see the Lake District as Postman Pat's Greendale, filled with quirky, yet good-natured, characters.

In particular, perceptions of the Lake District as an area for walking have been strongly influenced by Alfred Wainwright (another outsider) and his guidebooks. At a time when high-quality coloured illustrations are so widely available, the images of the fells which many people preserve are taken from his pen-and-ink drawings. Consciously old fashioned in approach and now decades out of date in their detail, his guidebooks are the bible for many walkers; yet they are heartily disliked by others for opening up the fells and making them accessible to other visitors, leading to crowding and erosion.

It is also interesting to ponder on the region's significance to British people of Afro-Caribbean or Asian descent and to consider the gendered character of traditional perceptions of the Lake District landscape (Gilroy 1987). Most of the writers who influenced place images of the area were men. Until quite recently walking, and even more so rock climbing, were male and macho activities.

So, in perceptual terms, there are really many Lake District landscapes rather than one, and these perceptions have been, and still are, contested, often vigorously so. Which leads one to speculate on what attitudes to the Lake District landscape may develop in the future, on what kinds of contention will they be based, and how will this affect this iconic yet complex landscape?

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