8. RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Having completed the first survey of landscape quality of the Lake District and analysed the results, it might be asked, “What does it all mean?”

In a nutshell the survey quantified what many already know, that the Lake District is an outstanding area of high landscape quality. The Lake District is one of a handful of regions around the world that combine mountains and lakes. Others include the Italian lakes with the Dolomites, the Swiss lakes and Alps, the Salzkammergut in Austria, the Banff – Jasper region in Canada, and Torres del Paine in Patagonia. Some of these have a substantial cultural component as well. But all of them, the Lake District included, resonate with people in a way not apparent with either lakes or mountains singularly. Their popularity over centuries indicates that this unique combination of lakes and mountains are found very attractive and appealing.

However this was not always so. Before examining the unique qualities of the Lake District’s landscapes, this section examines the revolution in the human perception of such landscapes.

8.1 A REVOLUTION IN HUMAN THOUGHT

Through a revolution in ideas which occurred over the space of 50 years in the late 17th - early 18th century mountains came to be appreciated in what Marjorie Hope Nicolson described in her book, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory (1959) as “one of the most profound revolutions in thought that has ever occurred.”

Western cultural attitudes to mountains derived originally from classical and scriptural origins, defining what was acceptable and which, from a scriptural view, established what was “good” and hence of Divine origin, it being axiomatic that God would not create anything that was not good. Because mountains did not fit into the classical definition of beauty, being irregular, asymmetric and without due restraint, it followed that they were loathsome and to be despised. Based on human analogy, mountains were regarded as excrescences and blisters, marring the earth’s beauty. To cap it off they were also regarded as largely useless, unproductive and barren. Many accounts of mountains by travellers over the centuries spoke of them as monstrosities and terror-filled places.

In 1401, Adam of Usk had himself blindfolded and carried across the St Gothard Pass rather than view the horrid peaks. In 1644 when John Evelyn described the Alps: “which now rise as it were suddainly ... as if nature had here swept up the rubbish of the Earth in the Alps, to forme and cleare the Plaines of Lombardy”, Dr Johnson described the Pyrenees as “uncouth, huge, monstrous excrescences of Nature, being nothing but craggly stones.” Recoiling from the Scottish mountains he penned: “An eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvest is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility.”

In the 1690s, the intrepid Celia Fiennes (1662-1741) rode about England on horseback; her diary comments reflected the prevailing standards of taste. Travelling through the Lake District she had no sense of an aesthetic experience:

“Looking upward I was as farre from the top which was all Rocks, and something more barren, tho’ there was some trees and woods growing in ye Rocks and hanging over all down ye Brow of some of the hills. From these great ffells there are several springs out of ye Rocks in the way, when something obstructs their passage and so they come with more

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1. This section is a brief extract from a far longer examination of how our perception of mountains has changed over centuries - from my PhD thesis, Chapter 6, pp 97 – 111.
violence, that gives a pleasing (sic) sound and murmuring noise."

It was only later that the awe with which vast objects – the cosmos, oceans, mountains, cliffs and waterfalls – could be appreciated, became what Nicolson described as the Aesthetics of the Infinite. "Awe, compounded by mingled terror and exultation, once reserved for God, passed over in the seventeenth century first to an expanded cosmos, then from the macrocosm to the greatest objects in the geocosm - mountains, ocean, desert." (Nicolson, 1959).

During the latter half of the 18th century travellers started to experience for themselves the awe and sublimity of the Alps, and strived to reconcile their cultural upbringing in the classics, the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers with their experiences on the ground. Similar experiences were to be had closer to home, in Britain’s rugged mountains. In 1765, Horace Walpole wrote of his visit to the Scottish highlands (in contrast to Dr Johnson):

"I am returned from Scotland, charmed with my expedition; it is of the Highlands, I speak; the Lowlands are worth seeing once, but the mountains are ecstatic, and ought to be visited in pilgrimage once a year. None but those monstrous creatures of God know how to join so much beauty with so much horror."

(Letter to Rev W. Mason, 1765)

John Dennis set off to see the Alps in 1688 and writing to a friend of his journey he used phrases such as "wonders", "astounding prospects", "horrid, hideous ghastly Ruins", "monstrous heaps", "horror" (sic) joined with harmony", "a view (that) was altogether new and amazing", "a delightful Horrour", "a terrible Joy" (Thorpe, 1935). Dennis's words indicate a mixture of horror and joy, feelings that he considered were inconsistent with reason but were the foundations of the sublime.

During the 18th century, notions of the picturesque led to a growing appreciation of the Lake District in England in the later quarter of the 18th century by painters, poets and tourists. “There is a Rage for the Lakes, we travel to them, we row upon them, we write about them, and about them” wrote Hester Piozzi in 1789. “Picturesque travel” was aided by guidebooks, such as Thomas West’s Guide to the Lakes in 1778 (which went through seven editions in 20 years), and the identification in these books of stations from which to view picturesque scenes. At Station III, West described the view over Derwentwater:

“Here is all that is great and pleasing on the lake, all that is grand and sublime in the environs, lie before you in a beautiful order, and natural disposition."

Thomas Gray, an eminent poet and classicist, viewed the landscape as more than a picture, it “had sentiment, character, meaning, almost personality”. His descriptions of the Lakes helped make it a fashionable place to visit:

“...the most delicious view, that my eyes ever beheld. Behind you are the magnificent heights of Walla-crag; opposite lie the thick hanging woods of Ld (sic) Egremont, and Newland Valley, with green & smiling fields embosom’d in the dark cliffs ... to the left the turbulent chaos of mountain behind mountain roll’d in confusion; beneath you ... the shining purity of the Lake, just ruffled by the breeze enough to shew it alive, reflecting rocks, woods, fields, & inverted tops of mountains ...” (Letter to Dr. Thomas Wharton, 1769)

William Wordsworth expressed himself across the range of emotions about mountains. The Alps he found overwhelming and unstable, but the mountains of the English Lake District he found stable and permanent, a “tranquil sublimity”:

"... the brook itself, Old as the hills that feed it from afar, Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm
Where all things else are still and motionless." (Airey-Force Valley, 1842)

The ruling cultural paradigm today, at least in the West, is that mountains are spectacular, beautiful, awesome places. The abundance of picture books, calendars, paintings and articles and stories of them and the many tourists, walkers and climbers who visit them attests to this. It would be incomprehensible for someone to describe such areas in the terms used 350 years ago.

### 8.2 UNIQUE QUALITIES OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

The findings of the survey together with the comments of its participants show how far cultural attitudes towards mountains and lakes have changed. This is a loved landscape, esteemed by all for its beauty, its glorious combination of the natural and the cultural, an area which reflects human involvement with the landscape over millennia yet without losing its inherent attractiveness.

While so many landscapes have been degraded and belittled by the thoughtless actions of man, the Lake District has been able not only to accommodate the needs of humans but to benefit aesthetically from them as evidenced by the contribution of stone walls and hedgerows, farm houses, the planting of bread leaved woods, the attractive villas on lakeshores, and the quaint villages and towns.

Of course the Lake District has not been totally spared from the adverse effects of development – conifer forests blanketing the fells, quarries pock marking the mountains, and power lines marching across the landscape have all diminished landscape quality as evidenced by the survey’s results. There are also examples of poorly sited roads such as the brazen highway alongside Bassenthwaite, and of valleys being converted into reservoirs – Thirlmere and Haweswater. But these are the exceptions and somehow the Lake District has risen above these.

Based on the ten-point rating scale, the consultant’s experience is that few landscapes attain an 8 rating. Areas regarded as beautiful will have only a small proportion high rating and the rest will be middle rating. While this is broadly the case with the Lake District, the difference is that there are very extensive 6s covering some of the lakes, the major rivers and in particular the high steep fells, plus the extensive 7s covering the more significant lakes and the mountains between 700 and 850 m in altitude. Capping these off are the very significant high mountains, over 850 m altitude, which were rated 8.

Rockfaces on many of the peaks contribute to their high rating and in particular of the high fells on which they are generally located. Previous studies had found that ratings increase with the steepness and height of the rockfaces and with further research it is likely that this would be detected here.

Scenes of Buttermere, Crummock Water, Derwent Water, Grassmere, Loweswater, Ullswater and Wast Water, all lakes which are surrounded by mountains, rated in the 7s reflecting the popularity of the lakes and mountain combination. These are the iconic images of the Lake District, lakes surrounded by towering mountains much beloved by visitors, walkers and climbers.

Testing three identical scenes with and without water found that on average, the presence of water lifted ratings by 0.70 but this varied from 0.3 to as high as 1.3, a very significant increase. Research in the literature indicates that as long as the water
is not discoloured or polluted that it invariably increases landscape quality and this is certainly the case in the Lake District. Making the presence of water more visible, for example through way stops along the roads and through judicious clearings around lakes would capitalise on this asset.

The fact that Haweswater and Thirlmere are reservoirs counted against them, lowering their ratings. Thirlmere also had the extensive pine plantations which also affects ratings.

That the conifer plantations detract from the landscape quality of the Lake District was not a surprise as these are generally regarded as foreign to the area and an intrusion. Their uniform height, form and colour and their carpet-like appearance lack the diversity of the indigenous broad-leaved forests. The many adverse comments by respondents about the conifers reflected this antipathy.

Interestingly, Bassenthwaite Lake which is sited between fells and mountains would ordinarily be rated as 7 but achieved only a 6 rating, probably because of the extensive pine plantations on the adjacent fells. As I observed over 40 years ago, “the scree slopes, forested with planted softwoods above Thirlmere just do not compare with the variety of colour and form, of ‘bumpy’ fields, of farm animals, of a lakeshore of Esthwaite or Windermere or Grassmere.”

The relatively low rating of the fells may have been unexpected to those who know and love the Lake District and who esteem the special wild open character of the fells. The reason is likely to be their lack of tree cover, an area without trees or some form of land cover, even low brush, generally rates lower compared with areas with vegetative cover. Thus the generic rating of the low fells was the mid 5s whereas some may have expected them to rate at least 6 or even 7.

A surprise was the relatively low rating of stands of dense trees found in the lowlands, a rating of only 5. Such scenes in Australia would rate 6 or even 7 as they contrast with the generally scattered form of vegetation or lack of trees. In the Lake District, however, one drives through or walks through many stands of dense trees. They do reduce light levels and can be somewhat dank and gloomy areas which might explain their low rating. Because woods are a fairly common sight in England, perhaps they lack any novelty value which might enhance their rating.

Several scenes were used to insert broad leaved vegetation on the slopes of fells. This was to examine the effect that revegetation might have on landscape quality as they had originally been
vegetated. However it proved difficult to insert the trees of the required height and density on the slopes and some appeared rather contrived, a feature which was remarked on by several participants. In three of the scenes, the ratings were lower for vegetated slopes, in all cases dense stands of trees. In the one scene with scattered trees however, the ratings increased. Thus it may be the density of trees that participants were reacting against, given that they had also indicated distaste for scenes with dense trees. However scattered tree cover was acceptable. Of course, the open barren character of the fells is one of the defining attributes of the Lake District and one would not want to revegetate it, even if this was its original vegetation, without further careful research.

Further examination of the effect of tree density on landscape quality found the highest preference was for scattered trees and those between scattered and dense. The research clearly showed these were preferred over either isolated trees or dense trees. This may have management implications for the way in which farms and common lands are managed.

It was not a surprise to find the low ratings of plains. Lacking land forms which provide diversity and greater views, and often being used for monocultures of pasture or cereals, the plains lack features which enhance their rating. Although many had stone walls and hedgerows, and trees were found along roadsides and in the fields, their flatness meant that the visual benefit of these features could not be fully appreciated from ground level.

The low rating of the coast, 5, reflected its flat uninteresting appearance. Coast lines which have headlands and bays, or wide sandy beaches backed by sand dunes would rate higher. The flat beaches with virtually no higher land backing them rate fairly low. All the coastal photographs were taken at low tide which exposes the flats extending well out from the coast. Nevertheless, the rating of 5 is considered appropriate for such coasts.
naturalness, and the diversity of the landscape. Though different, the two are related.

Naturalness comprises the presence of natural objects, especially the land form and land cover and the lack of obviously human intrusions, while diversity is an expression of the variety in land form, land cover, land use, colour and other attributes, the busyness of the scene. Pines, pasture and cereals are examples of monocrops which diminish both naturalness and diversity, they are obviously artificial and diminish the natural diversity of a landscape.

Naturalness and diversity are both enhanced by streams, waterfalls and lakes, the variety of heights, colours and forms of broad leaved trees, and by the varying slopes of the fells and the rockfaces on mountains. Stone walls and hedgerows, though obviously artificial, also contribute to landscape diversity. It is also interesting that the presence of sheep lifted ratings by half a unit and all scenes of sheep enhanced diversity when compared with the equivalent scene without the sheep.

It was interesting to note that the difference in ratings between winter and summer conditions was small, only an average of 0.19 over the four sample scenes. Three of the scenes however actually rated higher in winter with snow but were offset by one summer scene of Grassmere with reflections on the lake. Thus it could be said that generally winter conditions are actually preferred for landscape quality.

The spring flowers also enhanced ratings, coinciding with the blossoming of the daffodils and other indigenous flora. The three sample scenes used flowering crops and in two of these, the difference was marked, the flower scenes rated one unit above those without flowers. In the third scene, the ratings were identical. So overall it could be expected that spring enhances landscape ratings where flowers of crops or indigenous flora are present. It is probable that similar findings would occur had scenes of autumn colours been included but this had not been possible. The autumn leaves on the broad leaved woods together with the bright orange hue
of bracken on the fells would enhance ratings. This is a possible area for future research.

#103 With flowers 5.79

#104 Without flowers 4.84

Taken overall, the changes brought about by seasons and by flowers may take a scene which in summer rates say 5.5, up to 6.5 in winter and spring and possibly also the same in autumn. It is also probable that the autumn hues of bracken on the fells may lift the rating of these areas from a mid 5 to a mid 6.

#113 With powerlines 2.92

Comparing scenes with and without certain features further elucidated landscape preferences. Among the negative influences, the presence of powerlines generated the strongest reaction, lowering preferences by 1.5 units which was very significant. While this may have been a reaction of respondents displeased by the intrusion of these features in a survey of Lake District landscapes, nevertheless it does reinforce the need to keep the area free of such infrastructure.

The one scene each of roads and of people could not be regarded as definitive. The presence of the road actually increased ratings slightly while the presence of people in a scene diminished the ratings. Both findings are counter-intuitive and need further research with larger samples.

To its many visitors, the Lake District is not just a beautiful area but an area replete with historic and cultural associations; of Wordsworth’s daffodils dancing in the breeze, of Beatrix Potter’s Peter Rabbit and Jemima Puddle Duck, of the adventures on the lakes and mountains of the Arthur Ransome’s Swallows and Amazons…

It is a place where childhood memories come alive again. It is a setting that combines beauty and imagination, recalling the Romans in their fort at Hardnott Pass or marching over High Street, of 18th century ladies and gentlemen viewing the landscape with the aid of Claude glasses recommended by William Gilpin as “they give the object of nature a soft, mellow tinge like the colouring of that Master (Claude Lorraine)”.

It is also a place of epic adventure such as the many speed records won on the lakes from the 1930s to 1960s by Henry Segrave and Malcolm and Donald Campbell culminating in Donald Campbell’s tragic crash in 1967 on Coniston Water.

But it is not only a landscape harbouring the past but also of the present and the future, with hang gliders soaring the updrafts of the passes, of wind surfers on
the lakes, of the countless walkers and cyclists pitting themselves against the elements and the landscape, of climbing Scarfell Pike on a Three Peaks Challenge, of the Ambleside games and the fells running, and of the many visitors in the towns, ferrying the lakes, and pottering about in boats. There is a special pleasure in enjoying these activities in as beautiful a setting as the Lake District.

8.3 WHAT GENERATES THE LAKE DISTRICT’S APPEAL?

How may the ratings that were derived from the project be explained? Why is it that mountains and lakes rated the highest, stands of dense trees and pine forests rated much lower, rivers rated well, and the coast, despite being flat, achieved middle ratings?

It might be believed that the Romantic influence may provide the reason, people rate highly lakes, mountains and lovely farmlands so beloved by the poets, writers and artists of the Romantic era. The Romantic influence together with the Picturesque is certainly evident in the many photographic books of the Lakes, not to mention the postcards, posters, media and other materials. However this presupposes that people understand the Romantic view of landscape and it implies that landscape preferences are merely a cultural imperative.

Most researchers of landscape preferences believe that ratings are determined by a hierarchy of influences, ranging from individualistic, through cultural, back to innate underlying influences. Individual influences are determined by one’s upbringing, whether one lived in an urban or rural environment in one’s childhood, one’s exposure to natural environments, the choice of natural or artificial environments in which to holiday, and so on. Cultural influences are important in shaping our view of landscapes, for example the Chinese view of mountains and lakes in symbolic terms, and the Australian Aboriginal’s Dreamtime ancestor creation stories which explain the origins of the landscape.

![Diagram of the hierarchy of societal landscape preferences](source: Dearden, 1989)

**Figure 8.1 Hierarchy of Societal Landscape Preferences**

Innate influences are those which derive from our human evolutionary past. Theories of landscape preferences hypothesise that human landscape preferences are shaped by the survival imperative; that humans prefer those landscapes which enhance their capacity to survive. “The central assumption of an evolutionary perspective on preference is that preference plays an adaptive role; that is, it is an aid to the survival of the individual.” (Kaplan, S. & R. 1982).

This explains the strong preference for water as it is essential for life, although it does not explain our delight in the sea which we cannot drink. And while Appleton (1975), in his famous prospect:refuge theory believes that mountains provide opportunities to see without being seen, it is difficult to see that this fully explains why mountains are survival enhancing. Thus although the evolutionary viewpoint of landscape preferences as being survival enhancing has intuitive appeal, it does not easily correlate with the facts on the ground, i.e. the ratings.

One prediction of the evolutionary landscape theory is that it would include a
preference for savannah-like woodlands of scattered trees on grasslands, the African savannah where humans evolved. This appears to be borne out in this survey as the strongest preference regarding trees was for scattered trees rather than either isolated trees or dense stands of trees. It accords with Orian’s habitat theory and although few people realise it, scattered trees on grassland also comprise the landscape of our backyards and of neighbourhood parks. It also formed the expansive idyllic landscapes created by the 18th century Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton.

Studies of African savannah trees such as the *Acacia tortulis* found the highest preferences were for highly or moderately layered canopies, lower trunks, and higher canopy width/tree height ratio (Heerwagen & Orians, 1993). Research of tree preferences in Argentina, Australia and United States found that: “respondents preferred canopies to be moderately dense and trunks that bifurcated near the ground. Trees with high trunks and skimpy or very dense canopies were considered to be least attractive by all these groups, findings considered to be consistent with the savannah hypothesis” (Sommer & Summit, 1995).

These findings are supported by the higher preferences for the scattered trees, and for wide trees with accessible canopies which describe the oak woodlands of the Lake District. Dense trees are not preferred, possibly because it is not immediately apparent that they are climbable and also that they may harbour predators. The tall dense conifers may also rate low for the same reason as being inaccessible.

There has been much research on the restorative benefits that natural environments confer on humans which may also help explain the attraction of the Lake District. The 2012 Cumbria Visitor Survey found that the top reasons for visiting the area were because of the physical scenery and landscape of the area (69%) followed by the “atmospheric character of the area being peaceful, relaxing, beautiful and so on (54%).”

Studies have shown that exposure to natural environments and trees results in people being happier, less aggressive, less fatigued and with greater attention spans. Comparing scenes of nature with scenes of urban areas, our preferences for nature are twice that of urban scenes while the restorative benefits that come from nature are at least three times that of urban exposure.

In a classic study published in *Science*, Ulrich (1984) showed that hospital patients with a view of trees had shorter stays in hospital, took fewer analgesics and received fewer negative evaluative comments in nurse’s notes than patients who faced a blank wall. Since then there have been many supportive studies from viewing trees and experiencing natural environments: reduced anger and violence among residents of Chicago apartments and reduced crime in their neighbourhood (Kuo and Sullivan (2001a and b), less fatigue and more rapid recovery from fatigue (Hartig & Staats, 2006), reduced blood pressure (Ulrich, et al, 1991), lower heart rates (Laumann, et al, 2003) and reduced stress for students swotting for exams (Herzog, et al, 2003; Staats et al, 2003). Even viewing posters of natural scenes is similarly beneficial (Kweon, et al, 2008; Felsten, 2009).

Ulrich contends that “immediate, unconsciously triggered and initiated emotional responses - not ‘controlled’ cognitive responses - play a central role in the initial level of responding to nature” (Ulrich, et al, 1991). This indicates the importance of assessing landscape preferences based on affective responses, rather than the cognitive analysis of landscape which can only describe the landscape.

The intuitive understanding of the positive benefits of viewing nature may help explain the popularity of visiting the Lake District. An area does not attract over 15 million visitors a year unless it has something outstanding to offer. The
survey found that the naturalness component correlated highly with ratings, as did land form and diversity, both contributors to naturalness. The Lake District however offers a bonus, nature with culture, a strongly cultural landscape which displays at every turn the hand of man in the planting of trees, the farming of the landscape, and the quarrying and mining of the fells and mountains. Yet the natural qualities of the landscape are dominant in the lakes and mountains, the rivers and rockfaces.

These theoretical explanations provide insights into why the Lake District appeals to people, and how it has held its appeal over many centuries. The lakes and the abundant water fulfill innate human needs for water, its broad-leafed woodlands are seen as attractive as they meet human preferences for access and protection, and as a whole, the natural environments of the area, which includes the mountains and the fells, provide substantial restorative benefits to visitors.

8.4 ECONOMIC VALUE OF THE LAKE DISTRICT LANDSCAPE

A century ago the value of Swiss scenery was well recognized: “Let it not be forgotten that Switzerland regards its scenery as a money-producing asset to the extent of some two hundred million dollars annually” said Allen Chamberlain, a New England advocate, in US Congressional hearings in 1910 (Runte, 1979). In 1915, Congressman Taylor said that Switzerland gained between $10,000 and $40,000 per square mile of scenery per year, money that he wished to see remain in America through the nation establishing its own national parks.

Visitation to the Lake District varies over the years, 2012 for example was the wettest year on record which depressed visitor numbers. The average of four years visitation, 2009 – 2012, was 22.05 million visitor days with an average expenditure of £980 million/year (LDNP Partnership, 2013). This is £44.44/visitor/day. The area of the Lake District National Park is 2219.68 km$^2$, so the annual expenditure equates to £441,505/km$^2$ or £4,415/hectare.

These figures compare with £59 m in farmgate income generated by agricultural holdings in the National Park in 2002 (LDNPA, 2005). Assuming that this had increased to say £70m by 2012, this is equivalent to £31,536/sq km or £315/ha which is only 7% of its value for visitors. However these are not alternatives as the farming activities contribute substantially to its visitor appeal. Thus it is not either/or but both farming income and visitor income. Together they total £473,041/sq km or £4,730/hectare.

The figures reflect the significant economic value that the Lake District landscape, together with its cultural assets, generates in an average year and on a continuing basis. This should not be taken for granted and requires continued careful management and innovation to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the area.

8.5 WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

The World Heritage List covers natural and cultural properties of outstanding universal value. The Lake District has been nominated as a cultural landscape which include organically evolved landscapes harmoniously combining human and natural elements, and associative landscapes which link the area with religious, artistic or cultural elements.

The natural value of the cultural landscape includes:

Enhancement of scenic beauty, that is whether the cultural landscape has outstanding scenic qualities deriving as much from the contrast and/or interaction between the works of nature and humanity as from the intrinsic quality of the natural features themselves.

There are two components to this, firstly whether the landscape has outstanding scenic qualities, and secondly whether
these derive from human intervention as from the intrinsic natural qualities.

On the first component, the Lake District has been shown to have outstanding landscape qualities, evidenced by the high ratings, 6 through to 8 on the ten point scale. The areal extent of these ratings is substantial and is a quantitative indicator of its outstanding scenic value.

The second component is more challenging as the Lake District landscape comprises both natural and cultural elements, and some of the cultural elements actually detract from the natural elements. The presence of conifer forests on the fells, the flooding of several valleys to form reservoirs, and the imposition of modern transport and power infrastructure on the landscape all detract from this component.

However these are isolated occurrences and are more than counter-balanced by the positive and widespread interventions including the workings of former mines and quarries across the fells and mountains, the barren fells created by the felling of the trees centuries ago in part to supply the mines, the establishment of broad leaved woodlands in the lowlands, the farming infrastructure of stone walls, hedgerows, farm buildings and farm-houses which create such attractive agricultural landscapes, the quaint villages that fit perfectly into their environments, the miles of walking paths and roads following ancient routes, and even the historic ferries which so clearly link the visitor to the area’s past.

The focus of the World Heritage nomination is the Lake District as a “distinctive farming landscape” which, through its terrain has “inspired fundamental and worldwide changes in the way humans view, value and conserve landscape. A fusion of mountains, valleys and lakes, each with its own specific character, it is one of the world’s most beautiful areas, and the birthplace of what landscape means to the modern world.” (Summary of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value).

It is the farming landscape, the lowlands in the valleys and the low fells and plains that provide the best evidence of human enhancement of the landscape. The survey found, for example, that the presence of stone walls and hedgerows positively increase landscape ratings by as much as 12% in some locations and 8% overall. The flowers associated with agricultural crops enhance landscape quality by 10% and even the presence of the distinctive Lake District sheep enhances landscape quality by 10%.

The landscape quality survey was not specifically oriented to establish the case for World Heritage nomination but was rather a base-line survey of the entire Lake District. For example, the survey did not cover many cultural features including farm houses, villages and towns, and the narrow winding hedged roads which all contribute to creating the cultural landscape.

Further more specific research of the farming landscape would be required covering in greater detail all the elements that the nomination focuses on. The coverage provided by the survey of some of these provide encouragement to pursue this and to carry out more detailed preference surveys of all the elements.

8.6 SURVEY LESSONS

Having completed the first ever Lake District landscape quality assessment project, what lessons may be drawn from it? What were its deficiencies and how
could it be improved? What applications may be made of the results?

The first lesson is to recognise that landscape quality can be measured and it can be mapped. It was apparent from respondent comments that they readily understood the concept of qualitative assessment of landscape. While landscape character assessment requires technical expertise, landscape quality assessment is something on which everyone can participate, no experience or qualifications are required. By reaching into respondent’s preferences, their likes and dislikes, it elicits information about how the community view the Lake District which is not easily obtainable through other means. While expertise is required in developing and implementing the survey, and in analysing the results, no expertise is required of respondents who participate in the survey.

A second lesson is the amount of work required to carry it out. A project of this nature requires the dedicated allocation of resources. It is estimated that approximately 1500 hours was spent on the project over seven months. It was undertaken by one person who has completed ten such projects involving either measuring and mapping landscape quality or assessing the visual impact of developments through surveys. This project involved both the landscape quality and of the visual impact of developments and changes such as powerlines and revegetation.

The project required considerable attention to detail through all phases – photography, selection of photographs for the survey, preparation of the Internet survey, issuing invitations to participate in the survey, compilation and analysis of results, and mapping the area’s landscape quality. Once completed however, future surveys can build on it by detailing particular areas or by assessing the visual impact of potential developments against the quantified landscape quality.

The similarity of preferences for landscape quality is also a significant finding, corroborated by previous surveys. While it is commonly believed that “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder”, suggesting great variations between individuals in what they regard as beautiful, in respect of landscape, preferences of individuals generally congregate around a common position with a few outliers - the standard bell-shaped graph of preferences. This is illustrated by Figure 8.2 showing a scene and the histogram of responses which are closely grouped around the mean. Appendix 5 shows the histograms for all 145 scenes. While some are spread more than others, or are skewed towards the high or low ratings, they all rise to a peak of common ratings. For the saying to be true, the histogram would need to be level across all ratings.

Belief in the notion that “beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder” can prevent one from every assessing the community’s landscape preferences as it may be thought that they are too variable to be analysed. Indeed the opposite is true –
landscape preferences are remarkably similar and are relatively easily analysed.

In summary, the project illustrated that landscape quality can be measured and mapped but it requires considerable effort over time to accomplish. The commonality of ratings allows for their analysis and puts the lie to the notion that “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder” – yes, but the beholders see it as surprisingly similar.

8.7 SURVEY IMPROVEMENTS

Inevitably there were deficiencies in the survey and areas for improvement. None of the deficiencies were critical in the sense of invalidating the survey or its findings. Some of them were a result of the consultant residing in Australia and not necessarily being able to travel frequently to the UK. As it was, three trips were made to undertake the photography, though two of these were not as distant as Australia (both from Israel).

Autumn colours

While photographs were taken of winter, spring and summer conditions, it was not possible to wait until autumn for further photographs of the autumn colours. This is an area for a potential follow-up survey in the future. Inclusion of the autumn colours of leaves and bracken would enable comparisons of the ratings of the same scene to quantify the effect that such colours have on landscape preferences.

Landscape quality is not static but varies over time, with the seasons and even over years as the landscape changes (see the example of changes to Tarn Hows since 1959 on p 11). While the summer conditions provide the ideal baseline conditions, landscape quality tends to be lower in winter when the trees lack leaves and the grass lacks colour (although as noted earlier landscape quality can also be higher in some localities), and is likely to be higher in some locations in spring and autumn with spring flowers and the autumn colour of leaves.

Scenes from high fells and mountains

The lack of photographs from high fells and mountains resulted from having insufficient time for photography away from the main routes through the Lake District. While it was hoped that the photographic library of the National Park Authority would help allay this deficiency, inspection of the photographs found only two suitable which were used (#144, #145). Such photographs would have been helpful in verifying the high rating given to the mountains over 850 m.

A converse view was included in Chapter 5 (p. 23) where it was remarked that the vast majority of the 15 million visitors a year probably never venture far from the roads or the lakes and towns so the views taken from the main roads reflect what is seen by most visitors.

Atmospheric and lighting effects

Many of the photographs in books on the Lake District include striking photographs taken with the strong side lighting of sunrise or sunset, stunning clouds or with the mists of winter. While ethereal and beautiful, these do not represent the scene on a typical Lake District day. The atmospheric and lighting effects of low light, sunsets and sunrises, winter mists, and rain were not included as these fell outside the criteria for photographs. The photographs aim to be standardised as far as possible so that the differences are in the landscape quality, not in the quality of the photograph. The ratings that are derived may thus represent a baseline which may be increased by lighting and atmospheric effects, or reduced by winter mists and rain.
#1127 Through St John’s Beck to Blencathra

**Landscapes missed**

Some respondents noted that favourite views were not included such as:

- Lorton Vale
- Derwentwater from King's How and Ashness Bridge
- Ennerdale from Brandreth
- Ullswater from Arnison crag.

Also it is recognised that the survey did not include:

- Waterfalls
- Villages
- Farm houses
- Tourist facilities

A respondent suggested future surveys should have “different variations of transport infrastructure. For example: road with yellow lines, white centre lines, no lines, bus stop poles and flags, car parks, junctions with multiple highway signs, junctions with simplified highway signs”!

**Length of survey**

With 27% of the respondents not completing the survey it could be inferred that the survey was too long. Consideration had been given to providing two surveys but with concerns over different response rates this was not pursued. However the drop-out rate from similar and even longer surveys in Australia has never been this high so presumably this may be a cultural difference.

In summary, improvements include the addition of scenes of autumn colours and from the tops of the mountains and fells, and some iconic landscapes.

### 8.8 SURVEY APPLICATIONS

Environmental protection has come a long way over the past 30 years or so and a great deal more is known about resources such as biodiversity, land, soils, water and vegetation. However while surveys have covered most of the biophysical aspects of the environment, the qualitative aspects tend to be overlooked. Qualities such as wilderness have been measured (in Australia) and historic and heritage qualities are also well covered. However landscape quality, the qualitative value that people ascribe to a scene, has tended to be ignored. In the UK this is largely because attempts to measure landscape quality in the 1970s were abandoned and the focus shifted to assessing and mapping landscape character (see Chapter 2). While this has been useful, it does not measure landscape quality.

Landscape quality is an environmental resource as important as the biophysical resources, indeed in economic terms it can be said to be extremely important as it underlies not only the tourism and recreational appeal of an area but also the value of land as views of attractive landscapes enhance property values significantly.

Apart from the physical fabric of the Lake District’s hills, fells, mountains and lakes, the survey quantified the significance of trees, particularly scattered trees in the area. It showed the importance of stone walls and hedgerows in enhancing the visual diversity of farming areas and thereby their visual significance. Even the presence of sheep was shown to be important in enhancing landscape quality. The natural appearance of the landscape, together with its visual diversity were shown to be important contributors to the area’s landscape quality. Both its naturalness and diversity need to be protected.
Protection, enhancement and management of an area’s landscape quality should be an important role of the planning and management authority such as the Lake District National Park Authority.

Comments by survey respondents reinforce the significance and importance of the Lake District landscape:

- An ancient area with beautiful towering ranges and contrasting rivers and lakes.
- To me the “Lakes” mean dark mountains with a fair smattering of snow in Winter/Spring and benevolent, soft coloured fells in Autumn.
- I love the lakes.
- Natural beauty - fells, lakes/rivers, woods/trees, interwoven with cultural heritage features built using local stone, with the interplay of light makes the Lake District stand out in the UK.
- The Lakes provide one of the finest scenic areas in Britain (only beaten by the Cairngorms or Loch Lomond).
- This area is a treasured part of the UK, totally different to Wales or Scotland. It epitomizes “English” I have climbed and walked there for more years than I care to remember and it never lets me down.
- I believe that the Lake District is far more important to our country than most people realise and, therefore, every effort has to be made in order to preserve its integrity.
- I consider the Lake District unequalled in the world for varied landscape in a relatively small area.
- The Lake District remains my favourite UK mountain area for the quality of the scenery. I’ve been visiting for 50 years and it still seems pretty well cared for to me.
- I love the Lake District, lived here all my life and cycle all round it too, on and off road. It is truly breathtaking still even when you wake up to it every morning.

Managing change and development was regarded as very important:

- It would be a shame to spoil such a beautiful place with such things as power lines and wind turbines. We hope our survey has helped to avoid this happening.
- Let’s not pollute it with our waste and our monstrous pieces of metal and plastic!!
- It is vitally important however that as well as enhancing the natural beauty of the Lake District, industry/business is permitted to flourish. It can't all be hidden from view and so we have to accept that there will need to be a limited amount of visual intrusion.
- The appearance of power lines is a real distraction as was the slate mine. These are blots on the landscape.
- A really beautiful place to live but it's being spoilt with electric power lines and wind farms.
- The Lake District is just too busy! It is spoilt by the amount of traffic on its roads.
- I would like fewer conifers and fewer cars. They spoil views and cars are noisy, polluting and dangerous to walkers.
- Development must be in keeping and sympathy with the historic environment.

The results of the survey may be used in:

- Incorporating landscape quality provisions in policies and planning to ensure its recognition, protection and enhancement;
- Defining scenic quality objectives for the management, protection and enhancement of landscape quality in the region;
- Assisting in the definition and substantiation of nominations of areas
for World Heritage and National Park status;

- Promoting the tourism and recreational opportunities of the region;
- Assisting in the selection of routes for transmission lines and roads and for minimizing developmental impacts, e.g. wind farms.

In addition, the availability of this report should be publicised and it be placed on the Authority’s website. The Authority may wish to use the results in exhibitions and displays. Approval is given for this providing due acknowledgement to the author is provided. The consultant should also be notified of any such use.

The author of this project hopes that the use made of its results may more than repay the time and effort that he has invested in it.
9. REFERENCES

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