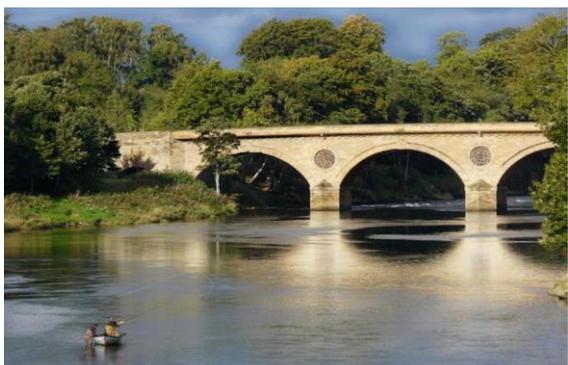




## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT REVIEW

### BORDERS LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION AND INFLUENCES



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### **Title page photographs, clockwise from top left**

Eildon Hills from Scotts view on the River Tweed. © Laurie Campbell/NatureScot

Folded cliffs at St. Abbs Head, Berwickshire. ©Laurie Campbell/NatureScot

Tinnis Farm, Yarrow Valley. © Glyn Satterley / NatureScot

Salmon Fishing on the Tweed ©Carole Anderson/NatureScot

This document provides information on how the landscape of the local authority area has evolved. It complements the Landscape Character Type descriptions of the 2019 dataset.

The original character assessment reports, part of a series of 30, mostly for a local authority area, included a “Background Chapter” on the formation of the landscape. These documents have been revised because feedback said they are useful, despite the fact that other sources of information are now readily available on the internet, unlike in the 1990’s when the first versions were produced.

The content of the chapters varied considerably between the reports, and it has been restructured into a more standard format: Introduction, Physical Influences and Human Influences for all areas; and Cultural Influences sections for the majority. Some content variation still remains as the documents have been revised rather than rewritten,

The information has been updated with input from the relevant Local Authorities. The historic and cultural aspects have been reviewed and updated by Historic Environment Scotland. Gaps in information have been filled where possible. Some reports have been combined where original LCA area coverage was very small.

The new documents include photographs. They do not include the maps or sketches from the original LCAs, but these are still available from the [NatureScot Information Library](#). Additional information can be obtained from the websites of;

- [British Geological Survey](#) [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)
- [Historic Environment Scotland](#) (Historic Land use Assessment, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, historic features and their designations, etc). [www.historicenvironment.scot](http://www.historicenvironment.scot)
- NatureScot website especially [Landforms and Geology](#) (more specifically the “Landscape Fashioned by Geology” series) and [About Scotland’s Landscapes](#) soils; wild land; landscape character; designations etc.) [www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)
- The relevant local authority, which will have information on landscape policies, etc.

The content of this document was drawn from the background chapter information in “NatureScot Review 112 – The Borders landscape character assessment” 1998, ASH Consulting Group”.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW



*The Borders area covered by this report*

The Scottish Borders – commonly referred to as the Borders – extend across southern Scotland, from the North Sea coast between Cockburnspath and Lamberton (just to the north of Berwick upon Tweed) to its western boundary which is demarcated along a series of high summits in the central Southern Uplands. The latter boundary divides The Scottish Borders local authority from Dumfries & Galloway. To the north the Borders stretches from the Pentland, Moorfoot and Lammermuir Hills, marking the boundary with the Lothians. Its southernmost extent reaches the Cheviot Hills, with the River Tweed marking the border with England. At a broad scale, the whole Borders landscape resembles a central basin bounded on the north, west and south by an upland rim.

The Scottish Borders have a distinct cultural identity and geographical character. Long disputed between the English and Scottish nations, and between local cross-border families, the boundary from Solway to Berwick, while set at the Treaty of York in 1237, was not fully settled until the Act of Union of 1707. Prior to this, for centuries the Borders area was an unstable ‘frontier’ society, with pockets of disputed lands (‘thrap’).

The Borders is a true geographical region, centred on the catchment area of one major river system, the Tweed, 156 km (97 miles) in length which drains a major proportion of southern Scotland and northern Northumberland. It is internationally famous for its fishing, with more Atlantic salmon caught there than any other river in the European Union. The River Tweed flows eastwards through the entire Borders, from high in the Lowther Hills at Tweed's Well, to issue into the North Sea at Berwick upon Tweed.

There is no one single, large town. Steeped in history, with human activity and settlement focussed on the Tweed itself, four of the main Borders settlements are closely associated and identified with the four great Borders Abbeys, many founded by David I, but Dryburgh was founded by Hugh de Morville:

- Melrose, a few miles south-east of Galashiels, is a characteristic Borders market town with a wide market square and narrow streets. It sits at the foot of the Eildon Hills with the ruins of Melrose Abbey at its centre. The Abbey was one of Scotland's wealthiest monasteries was founded in 1136 and run by the Cistercian order.
- Kelso, a post-medieval burgh, in the lower Tweed valley, is an agricultural market town, also grew up alongside an abbey. The ruins of Kelso Abbey, founded in 1138 lie to the south of the centre. The medieval town was Roxburgh, on the other side of the river has now vanished.
- Dryburgh village, smaller than the other settlements associated with monastic sites, sits alongside the ruins of Dryburgh Abbey, founded in 1150. It is the burial place of Sir Walter Scott.
- Jedburgh's Abbey dates from the 1150s, the town is a gateway town, situated on the main A68 that crosses the national border at Carter Bar before descending into the town.

Hawick, Selkirk and Galashiels, the largest towns, had a major, flourishing textile industry, with the Gala water and River Teviot powering the wool mills. The Scottish Borders has a population of around 113,870.

The trunk road network (A7, A68 and A1) and the east coast mainline and newer Borders railway enable easy travel from the Scottish Borders to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle and Carlisle.

Borders landscapes broadly fall into upland, lowland and coastal types:

### ***Uplands***

The *Lammermuir and Moorfoot Hills* form the northern, outer arc of uplands, which surround the low-lying Tweed Basin. Geologically, they are formed of old, resistant sedimentary rocks, dominated by greywackes and sandstones of Ordovician and Silurian age. The landform characteristically comprises relatively smooth plateaux interrupted by deeply dissected, steep-sided valleys. The plateaux tops are exposed, open and frequently remote, characterised by peaty soils, moorland, and unimproved grassland. Permanent pastures predominate on the better-drained valley slopes; major forestry is scattered across some valley sides, particularly in the southern Moorfoots adjacent to the Tweed valley.

There is widespread and abundant evidence of pre-Roman settlement on plateau edges, probably reflecting in part a somewhat drier, and warmer climate. Whereas today the settlement pattern is more restricted, being mainly confined to scattered farm building groups within the sheltered valleys which were important agricultural and industrial centres.

The *Central and Southern Uplands* form a major belt of high ground extending south along the main watershed of the Clyde and Solway, to merge with the western extremity of the Cheviot ridge. The north boundary of these Uplands is defined by the line of the Southern Uplands fault, and they are separated from the Moorfoots by the deep valley of the middle Tweed. This is the heart of the Southern Uplands, a major geological region consisting of the same strata of Silurian and Ordovician sedimentary rocks which underlie the adjoining Moorfoots and Lammernmuirs. The landform is similar, with characteristic smooth slopes and subdued, rolling hills except for the highest land in the Tweedsmuir massif. The Tweedsmuir hills differ, having more ‘sculpted’ shapes of corries, ridges and glaciated valleys deriving from Pleistocene times, when it was an important centre of ice-gathering and dispersal.



*Tweeddale near Tweedsmuir. © Glyn Satterley / NatureScot*

The climate is harsh, wet, generally cool and quite cold on the highest summits; they have the most southerly area of late snow-lie in Scotland. The hills are dominated by heather moor and rough acid grassland. There are extensive conifer plantations, particularly in the upper Tweed valley and on the gentler plateaux further south at Craik, and upper Teviotdale. Long, narrow ribbons of improved grassland penetrate into the hills bordering the major valleys of the Tweed, Yarrow, Ettrick and Teviot.

The *Cheviot Hills* extend along the English border between Kirk Yetholm and Liddesdale, and form a south-westerly trending ridge of high ground, with elevations up to 600m (2000 feet). They are distinct from the other Borders upland areas due to their distinctive geology. They are dominated in part by volcanic rocks of Devonian age, which give way southwards and westwards, to a series of sedimentary rock types, including Carboniferous limestones and sandstones.

The southern hill margins tend to merge imperceptibly with the adjoining plateaux, but where there are volcanic rocks the landform is distinguished by conical or dome-shaped summits, which throw out well-defined spurs separated by steep-sided river valleys and glacial meltwater channels. A complex mosaic of heather moor and acid grassland is characteristic of this core area, while west of Carter Bar there are more gentle landforms now covered by coniferous forest, mostly planted since the 1940s. The higher ridges have a cool, wet climate, which becomes fairly warm and rather dry further northwards on the fringes of the Tweed lowlands.

In the Cheviot Hills there are extensive and well-preserved settlement and cultivation remains ranging from prehistoric to post medieval in date. Modern rural settlement is widely dispersed, mainly scattered in valley farmsteads, although there are several large settlements. These include the small twin villages of Kirk Yetholm and Town Yetholm, with their distinctive blend of Scottish and English-style vernacular architecture.

### **Lowlands**

The *Tweed Lowlands* lie at the heart of the River Tweed Basin, long identified as a distinct regional unit centred on the rich agricultural lands of the Berwickshire Merse. This extensive low ground is largely underlain with an outcrop of Carboniferous sedimentary rocks, originally laid down in a structural basin ringed by a horseshoe of older, more resistant rocks. The modern landforms are characterised by elongated drumlins and ridges, derived from glaciation processes, complemented by thick, dominating deposits of glacial till.

At their margins, the arable lowlands merge into the higher ground, with a characteristic grassland land-cover. These margins also include a series of harder igneous rock outcrops, giving rise to diverse and rugged landforms including distinct ridges and vales, and isolated, well-defined hills.

Due to the region's low elevation and easterly location, and because it is sheltered from the prevailing weather systems, it has a generally benign climate with relatively low rainfall and high sunshine, albeit there is some exposure to colder, easterly airflows. The soils derived from the till are relatively fine-textured, and because of the low rainfall, they tend not to suffer unduly from excess moisture and gleying. The highest grades of land (classes 2 and 3) are concentrated in this zone. Arable is the dominant land use, and there is long established, rich, agricultural economy founded on a wide range of crops, complemented by livestock rearing and fattening.

Due to their geographical position and topography, the Tweed Lowlands have long been of importance as a routeway leading into Scotland's Midland valley via the coast, Lauderdale, and the western route of Clydesdale. The Tweed Lowlands were a prized area for

settlement as shown by their continuous settlement from the prehistoric period and into the Roman, Medieval, and modern industrial-age. Settlement focused on the lowlands where the Tweed and its chief tributaries debauch from the uplands. Further east, the agricultural heartland is characterised by a more dispersed pattern of scattered, large farmsteads and villages centred on prosperous farming units, which evolved from the estates supporting the great medieval abbeys, and then subsequently, the grand 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century country mansions.

In the extreme north-west of the area, centred on the area around West Linton, lies a fragment of the central lowland *Midland Valley*, isolated to the north of the Southern Uplands Fault. Geologically it consists of two separate features: one, a down-folded basin, which is followed by the broad flat valley of the River North Esk; and the Devonian sandstones and lavas which form the higher ground at the western end of the Pentland Hills. The hill slopes of this part of the Pentlands are gentle, forming an undulating plateau more akin to the neighbouring Moorfoots than the more shapely summits which occur further north, closer to Edinburgh. The characteristic land-cover of the hills is moorland with blanket bog on the highest ground, and there are also scattered conifer plantations. On low ground, arable and permanent pasture predominate, with areas of rushy pasture and isolated pockets of basin mire vegetation.

Neolithic burial mounds and other prehistoric remains testify to the ancient importance of this part of the Midland Valley, particularly as part of a route between the Lothians and Clydesdale via the Biggar Gap. The thriving small town of West Linton, which has experienced rapid growth in recent decades, dominates the present day settlement pattern.

### **Coast**

Between Cockburnspath and Lamberton Moor the landscape is influenced by the sea, to form a distinct coastal zone. The area generally coincides with the eastern extremity of the main Silurian and Ordovician sedimentary outcrops, where the Lammermuir Hills meet the North Sea. These hills are interrupted by bands of softer Carboniferous and Old Red Sandstone rocks, which underlie the lower-lying rolling topography, which is dissected by narrow, deeply-incised valleys known locally as 'deans'. For the most part, the coastline is made-up of rugged cliff-ranges which reveal strongly-folded sedimentary rocks.

Land-cover varies from heather moorland on the highest ground, to rolling pastures and arable fields enclosed by drystone dykes and wind-clipped hedgerows. Coniferous woodland blocks and shelterbelts are prominent, as are areas of gorse scrub which grow on rocky knolls, and in steeply-incised gullies and ravines. The ravines also contain dense broadleaved woodland strips. The influence of exposure to the cold onshore winds is evident throughout, from the woodlands located in sheltered areas, to the wind pruned shapes of trees and hedgerows, and the siting of buildings and settlement locations.

The area's strategic importance as the major coastal and lowland route into the Lothians since prehistoric times is reflected by the great number of fortified settlements. In the Middle Ages, Coldingham Priory was a rich centre of agricultural production, much of it exported through Eyemouth, which was the principal port for the entire Berwickshire Merse. Other important modern population centres include the fishing and tourism towns of St Abbs and Burnmouth;

while further inland, Ayton and Coldingham also serve the scatter of large farms which nestle in the sheltered folds of this essentially open landscape.

## 2. PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

### Geology

#### *Underlying geology*

Scotland's geology falls broadly into three principal structural divisions; the Highlands, the Midland Valley, and the Southern Uplands. The Scottish Borders fall almost entirely within the Southern Uplands, with only a small area of the Midland Valley in the extreme north-west, isolated by the Southern Uplands fault.

The underlying geology of the Borders comprises predominantly the Ordovician and Silurian sedimentary rocks that cover much of southern Scotland. Younger rocks, comprising Old Red Sandstone and Carboniferous strata were deposited onto these upturned and eroded harder rocks to form an easterly-tilted syncline which descends gently towards the North Sea. Thus a useful image, fundamental to understanding Borders geology, is that of a central basin bounded on the north, west and south by an upland rim.

In detail, the Borders geology is dominated by a thick sequence of greywackes, siltstones, and shales of Ordovician and Silurian age, occupying the greater part of the area from the Lammermuirs, west to the Tweedsmuir Hills and then south to Teviotdale. To the east of these rocks a band of conglomerates and sandstones of Old Red Sandstone age underlies much of the central Borders from Abbey St. Bathans, west to Lauderdale and south to the Jed water.

In the south of the area between Liddesdale and Carter Bar, the uplands are formed of Carboniferous rocks including sandstones, limestones, shales and grits, while further to the east lies a belt of Devonian volcanic rocks which form the outlying northern sector of the Cheviot massif. In the extreme east, the lowlands of the Merse are underlain for the most part by Carboniferous sandstones and limestones, with a fringe on the west composed of a curving outcrop of lavas of similar age.

Throughout the lowlands, intrusions of other igneous rocks are widespread, particularly in the older Devonian and Silurian rocks. In places these are exposed by erosion to form prominent outcrops, typified by the Eildon Hills, which are composed of trachyte and felsite.

#### *Geological Processes*

Some 400 million years ago, Scotland was subject to a period of intense folding and uplift as the continents pushed together to form mountains. In the Borders this created a fold system, which trends generally north-east to south-west. Countless minor parallel folds are superimposed on this, creating the basic 'grain' of the rock structures and their inherent resistance to erosion. This determines the structure and character of many surface landforms and topographical features. This complex folding is best seen in the exposed sequences on the coastal cliffs, for example around St. Abb's Head, which some consider to be the finest coastal scenery in southern Scotland.



*Folded cliffs at Petticit Wick near St Abbs Head © Laurie Campbell/NatureScot*

The uplifted mountain ranges of the Southern Uplands were subject to the normal processes of erosion by rivers and water. Over time these came to form the plateau surfaces distinguished at distinct elevations, which give what has been described as a 'stepped' morphology to much of the Border hill country.

The pattern of river erosion has changed over time, and the drainage systems we see today are not related in detail to the present outcrop pattern of rocks. The river valleys appear to have been superimposed from an overlying surface which has completely eroded away.

Glaciation is the most recent major geological process that has had the single greatest influence on landform. For much of the last two million years, Scotland was repeatedly covered by various ice sheets and mountain glaciers, which initially formed as discrete ice-gathering centres from where ice movements radiated outwards. In the Borders, the dominant movement was to the east and north-east away from the main upland mass, and the major erosional features such as striations, roches moutonnées, and crag-and-tail forms all show this orientation. The glaciers created typical erosional features such as corries, hanging valleys and truncated spurs only in the highest areas in the west, in the Tweedsmuir Hills. As the ice sheets retreated, glacial meltwaters cut channels, many now abandoned as dry valleys, which form characteristic landforms in several areas.

Glacial deposition formed the extensive area of till known as the Berwickshire Merse. Here oval-shaped drumlins are a distinctive landscape feature. In general, the till tends to be thickest in the valleys and to thin out against the higher ground, which suggests that prior to the onset of glaciation, the topography must have been very similar to today. Depositional

landforms were also formed by glacial outwash, including river terraces and ridges, eskers and kames (sinuous ridges and hills, made-up of sand and gravel).



*Drumlin field, N.W. of Hawick © A Macdonald/NatureScot*

During late-glacial and post-glacial times, the varying upward isostatic rise of the land and the upward eustatic sea rise, caused considerable variation in the relative sea-level around Scotland's coast. While the eastern seaboard, south of Cockburnspath is predominantly rocky and shows little evidence of these changes in sea-level, study shows that terraces at Eyemouth may have been formed or modified by marine action in this way. North of Cockburnspath, however, a raised beach is almost continuous as far as Dunbar.

### **Topography**

The major topographical features of the Region are:

- the outer crescent, or horseshoe shaped rim of high ground above 180m that surrounds the central basin of the Tweed;
- the highest ground, above 600m, located in the extreme west around the headwaters of the Tweed and Annan, with its main spine of summits trending north-east from Hart Fell to Broad Law and beyond;
- the Moorfoot plateau, above 300m in elevation, deeply dissected by river valleys, and reaches its highest point around the headwaters of the Leithen Water at Blackhope Scar;
- the Lammermuir plateau, also above 300m, but slightly lower in general elevation, has less steeply incised valleys, with the highest ground along its northern margin;

- the Cheviot foothills, forming the northern fringe of the main massif, ascend in the extreme east to the shoulder of The Cheviot itself, and extend south-westwards over Carter Bar to the Larriston Fells;
- the lowlands, below the 180m contour, corresponding with the extent of the softer, younger, sedimentary rocks, but vary markedly in character.

## **Geomorphology**

The significant types of landform are outlined below;

### ***Hill Slopes and Summits***

The highest summits are generally thought to be the remnants of a once higher plateau surface. Their form, like that of most of the hill slopes, is typically smooth, rounded and convex. Weathering of these Ordovician and Silurian rocks rarely produces boulders or scree, but instead gives rise to mainly small, flattish stones and little debris, which contributes further to their rounded appearance. Solifluction (movement downhill due to freeze and thaw action) of frost-weathered detritus has also helped to smooth-out slope irregularities.

### ***Glacial Erosion Features***

The grand, rugged, classic Highland scenery of corries, arêtes, and glaciated valleys is all but absent from the Borders. The Tweedsmuir Hills exhibit localised examples of severe frost-shattered, stone-sorted and, glacial over-steepened hill slopes, and truncation of spurs. St Mary's Loch, to the east of these hills, occupies a rock basin scoured out by ice.

### ***Lower Hill Slopes***

Slopes on the lower foothills of the main hill ranges tend to exhibit a complex morphology of terraces, mounds, hummocks, and varying slope angles. This landform assemblage is related both to solifluction deposits and to glacial deposits.

### ***Fluvioglacial Features***

Most of the valleys and landforms in lower areas are made up of sands and gravels, they were laid down in running water as the east ice sheet retreated. Particularly fine examples of these eskers, kames, and terraces are found in the Upper Tweed valley around Peebles, and in the Eddleston Water valley. Meltwater also had strong erosive powers, and there are numerous examples of channels carved by such streams, particularly where a fault provided a line of weakness. The eastern Pentlands near Carlops, the northern Lammermuirs, and the Cheviot foothills have striking examples of these.

### ***Till Plain Landforms***

The low-lying Berwickshire Merse, particularly between Coldstream, Duns and Ladykirk, is dominated by a great drumlin field. The drumlins are elongated, whale-backed ridges of boulder clay, sometimes up to 1km. long and 30 metres high, aligned along a south-west to north-east axis, parallel to the direction of the ice movement. This striking alignment is reinforced by the major road routes which were all constructed parallel to these ridges; it is only some minor roads that cut across this grain. The hollows between the drumlins are often filled with finer sediments, resulting in heavier soils and impeded drainage, so that most farms and villages sit on the drier slopes or crests of the ridges. The erosive power of this ice-stream was strong enough to grind many rock outcrops into a characteristic 'fluted'

shape; others exhibit a 'crag-and-tail' form, with a steepened upstream slope and a longer downstream 'tail' of till.

### ***Alluvial Landforms***

Postglacial rivers have re-worked the till and other sediments to form terraces and flood-plains, distinguished from related fluvio-glacial landforms as they consist of riverine alluvium, and are generally located at relatively lower levels.

### **Landcover**

The following is an overview of the vegetation patterns found in the Borders, as this is a dominant landscape characteristic. How vegetation developed due to natural forces, chiefly climate and soils, is followed by consideration of how it changed due to human activity. Short accounts of the soils, climate and hydrology are included,

### ***Postglacial Vegetation***

The history and development of a region's vegetation can be traced through pollen analysis of samples taken from successive layers of soft deposits such as peat or lake sediments. In the Borders, there are few such deposits, so there are relatively few studies of its vegetational history. The best records are those from Threepwood Moss (NT518424), Din Moss (NT806315), Beanrig Moss (NT520292) and the Bowmont Valley. The following account is what can be surmised from these.

In response to a progressively milder climate, a primary forest of species such as juniper, birch and pine colonised the postglacial tundra from the south. As the postglacial climate became increasingly mild, so this forest became more diverse, resulting in a mixed deciduous woodland cover of hazel, oak and elm, with some pine and birch. At c.5500 BC, with the establishment of a uniform woodland canopy, shade-tolerant shrub species such as hawthorn, guelder rose, dogwood, ivy and holly created a structurally diverse habitat.

From c.5500 - c3000 BC, the climate became increasingly wet and oceanic, so that hazel and pine gradually declined, and alder increased. At this point, around 3000 BC, human activity began to have profound effects on the structure, composition and distribution of the primary forest. Early Neolithic agriculture relied on frequent new land clearance because primitive techniques led to the rapid exhaustion of soil fertility. This meant there was the constant need to clear primary forest. In this way elm cover reduced, and ash became established in the oak-elm-birch woodland. The forest became a dominant mixture of oak-ash-birch, with some alder and relatively little elm. This woodland mix became increasingly the norm during the Iron Age, as the economy changed to a more established agricultural practice often demarcated by field systems and linear earthworks.

By Romano-British times there were four major woodland types, arising from the combined effect of climate and man's activities. These are largely reflected in the structure, composition and distribution of semi-natural woodland today:

- pedunculate oakwoods on heavy, lowland soils;
- sessile oakwoods on lighter, more shallow upland soils, where the altitude suppressed the regeneration of pedunculate oakwood species;

- successional ashwoods widespread on cleared calcareous soils, were replaced by seral birch woods on light, base-poor soils.
- low juniper woodland on sites at high altitude and alder woodland on wetter sites formed according to local conditions.

### **Woodland**

The National Vegetation Classification provides a detailed description and classification of woodlands. In 2014 woodland was estimated to cover some 18.5% of the Borders land, and individual woodland blocks have an average size of 30ha.

There are few surviving primary or semi-natural woodlands, today plantation woodland is the most widespread. Surviving remnants of semi-natural, mixed deciduous woodland are generally ashwoods on low-lying, free-draining, base-rich soils, with some locally abundant elm and hazel. On heavier and base-poor soils there are stands of semi-natural, oak-birch woodland and stands of pendunculate oak characteristic of humus soils, and sessile oak on lighter soils of low base status.



*Cragbank Wood NNR and plantation, near Hawick © Lorne Gill/NatureScot*

Wet and flushed sites are widespread in the Borders, and in the past they were probably covered by extensive alder woodland, which is now restricted mainly to Roxburgh. In the Tweeddale uplands there are fragments of low sub-montane, semi-natural juniper and hazel woodland, including some of the least modified wooded sites in the Borders. However, elsewhere stands that can be considered semi-natural show the effects of recent secondary influence, notably the widespread, early 20<sup>th</sup> Century oak clearance for timber, alongside the general replacement of elm and oak by sycamore.

Commercially grown conifers in large plantations are concentrated in the Craik Forest and Kielder border areas of the Cheviot Hills to the south, and in the upper Tweed and Ettrick valleys of the Southern Uplands. In the east, woodland occurs in smaller patches, scattered within an agricultural landscape; only some is ancient or semi-natural native woodland with high biodiversity value.

### ***Other Semi-Natural Vegetation Communities***

The vegetation of the Borders Region broadly falls into upland and lowland communities as follows:

#### *Upland Communities*

Four semi-natural upland communities occur; sub-montane, heaths, grasslands and peatlands.

- On the Tweedsmuir uplands, at the highest altitudes sub-montane associations rich in lichens and mosses occur on exposed summits. These are at the southern limit of their distribution in Britain and thereby of national importance.
- Dwarf shrub heaths tend to occur on the more remote fringes of the upland grasslands, and include a range of ericaceous species, usually dominated by bell heather, *Erica cinerea*. Nationally important examples occur in the Newcastleton Hills, the Tweedsmuir Hills, and on the Moorfoot plateau.
- Acid grasslands are the most commonplace, occurring on the upland/lowland fringe, especially in southerly locations. They arise following many centuries of intense grazing and consist mainly of grassland mosaics dominated by fescues, bents and rushes. They are of only moderate nature conservation value. Within these areas, many grasslands on drier sites have been further modified by reseeded with agricultural grass species. *Molinia/Nardus* associations are also important on extensive areas of transitional peaty soils.
- Upland peatlands are represented largely by blanket bog, generally restricted to the high plateaux where topography allows for the high water table necessary to sustain peat growth. The Moorfoot plateau holds the most important examples in the Borders.

#### *Lowland Communities*

Three main communities occur: grasslands, peatlands and agricultural.

- Semi-natural grassland communities are rare and restricted to a few sites where there are outcrops of base-rich igneous rocks, or certain Lower Silurian formations.
- Valley and basin mires are the most significant lowland peatlands and are one of the Border's most important nature conservation assets. They are distinctive and found on the corrugated 'scarp and vale' landscapes of the Lower Silurian range. Whitlaw Moss near Selkirk, one of three Border's National Nature Reserves, supports a diverse range of fen communities that are of particular importance as a northern outpost of rich-fen types known from sites in Anglesey and East Anglia, but rare in Great Britain as a whole. The fen communities include base-rich but low fertility fen dominated by slender sedges, small sedge flushes, nutrient-poor fen verging on bog, nutrient-rich reed fen and swamp, tall herb fen and willow carr.

- Lowland agricultural habitats are dominated by cultivated land and seeded grassland leys. Nevertheless, some fragments of important semi-natural communities remain, associated with areas such as hedges, shelterbelts, watercourses, disused quarries and railway lines. Rivers and streams represent a particularly significant refuge for semi-natural woodland and scrub.



*Whitlaw Mosses NNR, Forth and Borders Area. ©Lorne Gill/NatureScot*

### **Soils**

In upland areas, the soil development processes acting on generally homogeneous geological parent materials result in different soil types according to altitude and slope. Below some 250-300 metres, brown forest soils predominate on steeper, free-draining land. These give way to humus iron podzols on the mid-slopes, with peaty podzols, peaty gleys, and blanket peats on the upper plateau summits and slopes. The highest ground and the steep slopes of the hills of intrusive rocks, may also carry thin immature or skeletal soils.

In the lowlands, the soil types relate mainly to variations in leaching intensity, and the form and type of organic matter present. They are generally alluvial and brown forest soils, moderately-fine to fine in texture, and only slowly permeable to excess moisture. Alluvial material, generally smaller in particle size have accumulated in the hollows to produce heavy, gleyed soils. On the tops and slopes of drumlins, brown earths derived from the more gravelly parent material predominate. The eastern lowlands have the best soil, with rich arable farming a feature of the Merse and similar areas of class 1, 2, and 3.1 soils to the east. Over 80% of Borders land is agricultural with large areas of soil classes 4, 5, and 6 used for grazing, particularly sheep;

## **Climate**

The Borders climate is broadly similar to that of the rest of south-east Scotland, it is characterised by a moderate to high rainfall, more or less evenly distributed throughout the year, and a relatively low temperature range. However, there are distinct local variations due to altitude and topography, between low and high ground, and between the eastern and western Borders. The prevailing air flows are westerly, so that annual rainfall varies from over 2000mm in the western uplands to around 600mm in the sheltered eastern lowlands.

In eastern areas, peak rainfall occurs in late summer, while spring and early summer are the driest seasons. Westwards in the uplands however, autumn and early summer are the wettest seasons, while April is generally the driest month.

Mean annual temperatures in the lowlands are generally in the range 8-9°C, but with altitude there is a particularly steep decline in temperature to around 4°C at 700 metres. The length of the growing season falls from around 220 days at Kelso on the edge of the Merse, to 190 days in the Lammermuirs at 300 metres, and only 150 days in the highest upland areas.

The eastern lowlands are relatively sunny, averaging around 1300 hours, but this declines westward and with rising altitude to just over half that figure in the high plateaux. The coastal areas and most upland areas suffer from exposure to higher than average wind speeds, the high summits in particular are extremely exposed. In contrast many Border valleys enjoy generally benign and sheltered conditions.

## **Hydrology**

The drainage pattern is dominated by the River Tweed system, which covers the entire Borders with the exception of the Liddel Water valley, draining to the Solway, and minor burns in the north-west which form the headwaters of the Clyde and Forth systems.

The Tweed and its tributaries are of major importance as they form a distinctive catchment coursing through the entire Borders landscape from its headwaters to the coast. They have had, and continue to have, an enormous formative influence on human activity from ancient times to the present day, determining the communication and transport routes, settlement location, trade and industrial activity. In addition, they are a valuable source of income from angling and fishing, are important for recreation and tourism, and are a valuable nature conservation habitat. The entire system is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

In all, freshwater bodies cover an area of just over 19 km<sup>2</sup>, or about 0.4% of the area. There are several lochs, of which St. Mary's in the Yarrow valley is the largest and best known. Others include Alemoor, Hoselaw, Hellmoor, Akermoor and Portmore lochs. There are large, man-made reservoirs in the steep-sided valleys of the wettest, western districts at Fruid, Talla and Megget.



*Norsham Bridge, River Tweed © NatureScot*

### **3. HUMAN INFLUENCES**

The Scottish Borders is rich in surviving archaeological sites and monuments. Their distribution and topographical location can tell us something about past settlement patterns and Borders landscapes. Older settlement and land routes kept to higher ground flanking the uplands, or to the eastern coastal strip to avoid the dense forest and swamps on the flatter ground along the Tweed and its tributaries.

#### ***Neolithic/early Bronze Age (c.4000- 1200BC)***

Some of the area's earliest activity and settlement focused eastwards on the broad and fertile, once-marshy Merse, around Berwick and along the Tweed valley, which is in effect a northwards extension of the Northumbrian plain. This extends far inland, right to the foot of the Lammermuirs and Eildon Hills, with sites such as the Rink near Selkirk. The earliest, unchambered long cairns and later Bronze Age round cairns and beaker burials, their distribution extends across this area from the east coast, along the rivers. Such long cairns, probably communal burial sites, are the Mutiny Stones long cairn, near Longformacus, Duns, overlooking the Dye Water; Harlaw Muir, east of Carlops in Tweeddale; Langknowe, Castleton, Roxburgh and Broughton Knowes, east of Biggar. All are situated high on moorland, but this probably reflects a survival bias as they are unlikely to survive in areas of intense cultivation.

#### ***Late Bronze Age/Iron Age (c.1200BC- AD400)***

Evidence of pre-Roman 'British' settlement is found in the traces of undefended settlements and associated field systems, and in the extensive distribution of enclosed sites, the most impressive survivals are upland defended hillforts. Evidence shows that farming systems became increasingly complex with substantial lowland enclosures and intense settlement. Fortified sites occupied strong positions, often hilltop sites commanding communication routes. These include by far the largest on Eildon Hill North. During this period the use of stone for buildings and defenses increased, which may indicate that timber was less readily available. Typical of this period are Iron Age field systems that include swathes of "cord rig" (narrow cultivation ridges) as seen in the Bowmont Valley in the northern Cheviots. The field systems are often associated with the sites of timber round houses as at Woden Law and Howdnam Law, Stanhope, Meldon Burn and Whitcastle Hill. During this period votive deposits of metal work were made at natural sites - bronze shields from a former loch at Yetholm; a decorative collar from a bog at Stichill. The Borders saw a significant Roman military presence during their successive occupations, the best preserved of these outposts are at the camps at Pennymuir and the Roman fort at Lyne, although the most important and famous concentration of Roman forts and camps is at Newstead, outside Melrose. Newstead is famed for the large number of objects from the pits and wells found and excavated within the forts and its annexes. Some have suggested that this indicates a strong veneration for watery places, though it more likely relates the abandonment phases of the forts at Newstead. The Roman period also saw the creation of long distance planned routeway in the Borders, the most famous example being Dere Street. These transportation networks connected the relatively evenly distributed forts, which were often positioned near important river crossings.

#### ***Early Medieval period (c.AD400-1000)***

The Roman road Dere Street continued to provide a major artery through the Borders and

linked it with areas to the north and south. A number of hillforts, occupying dramatic locations, were re-fortified by the Brittonic speaking inhabitants, possibly as result of political instability after Rome's influence receded and because of the incoming Anglians. Place name evidence indicates Anglian settlement extending up the coastal plain into East Lothian and up the valleys of the lower Tweed and Teviot, whilst monasteries were established at Coldingham, Old Melrose and later at Jedburgh. The presence of the powerful Kingdom of Strathclyde may have checked any further westward movement. Many place names in the Borders are evidence of early medieval settlement by a new people and the introduction of Christianity. On the good quality land of the lower Tweed basin, which was settled by the Angles, there are contrasts with the uplands in the west, where the British persisted. Names from this period, such as Cardrona, Carfrae (Old Welsh *caer*, *forr*) Bonchester, Rowchester (Old English *chester*, *fort*) are associated with iron age fortifications. The founding of the monastic sites of Old Melrose, connected with St Cuthbert, and the Hirsell occurred during this period. Funerary or ceremonial remains include inscribed monuments such as the Yarrow Stone and monastic or manorial settlements such as Old Melrose and Sprouston.

### ***Later Medieval period (c.1000-1600)***

The Southern Uplands form a most obvious natural frontier within Britain. The Tweed was not confirmed as a national boundary until the Treaty of York in 1237, and for much of the time until the Act of Union of 1707 the Borders was a frontier region, a fluid boundary of varying allegiances, constantly disputed between the Scottish and English states. A treaty of 1249 between Henry III of England and Alexander III of Scotland was an attempt to control this Anglo-Scottish border by providing a buffer zone whereby there were three administrative Scottish 'Marches' corresponding to another three on the English side. Each March had a Warden – a governing officer appointed by their respective governments. The Wardens' duty was to defend the frontier against invasion from the opposite kingdom in war time, and in peace to regulate crime, maintain law and order.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Century saw the beginnings of a unified Scottish state replacing the semi-independent lordships which made up the area we now recognize as Scotland. The process of creating a feudal state was effectively begun by David I and continued by his successors, Malcolm IV and William I ('The Lion'). This resulted in the arrival of many Anglo-Norman settlers, but not the wholesale dispossession of the native aristocracy as occurred in England. Consequently, private timber castles are relatively few in the Borders, and the principal castles were those royal castles with their attendant burghs at Roxburgh, Peebles, Jedburgh and Selkirk. The establishment of monasteries belonging to the reformed religious orders were a part of the same process and the border abbeys became great landowners.

Much of the uplands were given over to royal forests governed by forest laws enacted to preserve the valuable assets of timber and deer. Hunting, felling, grazing and cultivation were prohibited unless granted by licence. Ettrick Forest, which took in the upper Tweed Valley and the valleys of Ettrick and Yarrow, was the largest of these. It was a Royal Forest, also a facet of the established feudal system, which covered an area of 43,000 acres across the lands of the Tweed, Yarrow and the Ettrick. It is well documented and place name evidence indicates that the area may have been settled by the Northumbrian Angles. The forest was divided into three 'wards' corresponding to the main river catchments, each of which was sub-divided into individual 'stedes' or holdings, of which there were about 85 in total. In addition to its sporting

and hunting value, Ettrick Forest produced rental income, both in cash and in kind, from the tenants of each of these holdings. From the time of Earl David (who became David I), early in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, many grants were made, chiefly to the abbeys of Selkirk, Melrose, and Kelso, of various 'easements' within the wide range of the forest. Grazing of the forest began to be of increasing importance towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, with perhaps as many as 20,000 sheep present by the time of James IV.

From the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century the Border abbeys became major landholders, particularly in the uplands. Melrose, for example, held much of the hill ground between the Gala Water and the Leader Water, and both Melrose and Kelso had large holdings in the Cheviots. Here they grazed not only large flocks of sheep but significant herds of cattle as well. Flock sizes probably varied over time, but around 1300 it has been estimated that Melrose may have had 12500 sheep and Kelso 7700. The pastures were managed from granges such as Hownam in the Cheviots, Spertildon in the Lammermuirs and Buckholm in the valley of the Gala Water. There may also have been outlying sheep stations (bercaries) and cattle stations (vaccaries). Fleeces and hides were exported from Berwick to Flanders.

The Golden Age of monastic farming was the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Centuries, thereafter it became increasingly common to lease lands to secular tenants. The greatest change, however, came at the Reformation in 1560 with the wholesale secularisation of church lands. Large numbers of new proprietors, often referred to as 'bonnet lairds,' were created as under the system of feu-ferme property became heritable. The security afforded by feu-ferme led to the construction of many small tower houses or in some cases defensible stone farm houses known as bastle or pele houses. At Southdean in Roxburghshire, and close to the English border, a group of pele houses is to be found in a remarkable fossilised farming landscape. The construction of these buildings is frequently interpreted as a reflection of the unstable conditions that afflicted the Borders.



*Smailholm Tower, Kelso ©Laurie Campbell/NatureScot*

Although the feudal system aimed to strengthen royal power, three centuries of border and national warfare had a lasting impact on the local community. Settlements of all sizes were fortified, from hamlets centred on stone towers, to villages and towns: a length of Peebles town wall still survives. Fortified tower houses such as Smailholm were a common feature of the Scottish Borders, but the tendency to fortify settlement even extended to lower status farms and the area is well known for these smaller fortified bastle houses. At Southdean, an upland parish in Roxburghshire near the English Border, there is a good example of a 15<sup>th</sup> Century upland settlement pattern with houses overlaid on an earlier prehistoric landscape, where, open fields of rig and furrow indicate the extent of the cultivated land. It is not uncommon to find medieval buildings inside late-prehistoric enclosures like the example at Tinnis Castle. There is a particularly good example at Lour, Drumelzier, Peebleshire. A tower at the latter site was inhabited until the late 16<sup>th</sup>/ early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Traces of ridged fields and cultivation terraces occur throughout the Borders, but are best preserved in the grazed uplands.

The reformation brought about a reorganisation of land tenure, as many church lands came into individual private ownership which increased the size of holdings and control transferred to the dominant agricultural interests. This undermined the long-established Forest Law. Conditions became increasingly settled after the union of the crowns in 1603. The drive to improve land included the substantial planting of new woodlands, especially in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century onwards. Enlightened landowners began to enrich their 'policies' (enclosed grounds managed for pleasure) with woodlands, including shelterbelts and ornamental plantations. New tree species were also introduced and by this period now native woodland in the Borders had been largely reduced to the remnant 'hag woods', confined to the steepest slopes on valley sides, and in the narrow deans, cleuchs and gullies inaccessible to man and grazing pressure.

### ***18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Agricultural improvement***

Agricultural improvement gathered momentum following the Parliamentary Union of 1707. In effect, the foundations of the modern agriculture landscape were laid. Advances in science, combined with a new spirit of enterprise, drove agricultural innovation throughout the Borders, from arable lands to the uplands. Experiments with new cropping systems and the invention of labour-saving devices, such as James Small's plough in Berwickshire (c.1767), revolutionised agriculture and contributed to the drift of rural people into the burgeoning industrial towns. Rural architecture preserves many features of the agricultural revolution; farm labourers' cottages, horse gins, water and wind mills, engine houses and chimneys.

Sir John "Dyker" Murray of Eddleston was one of the principal exponents of the process of land enclosure in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In many areas the enclosure of large farm units seemed to create a 'new' landscape. In the Merse farms averaged around 400-600 acres, with many greater than 1000 acres (400 ha). In the lowlands, hedges (mainly beech and hawthorn) and dykes were used, while in the uplands, "march" dykes predominated. Building stone tended to come from the fields themselves, and where there was an excess "clearance cairns", such those in the Yarrow valley, were built. Where insufficient stone was available, small quarry pits were dug; these are still found throughout the Scottish Borders. Many "ferm-touns", pre-improvement farm buildings including workers housing, were gradually transformed into the single large farmsteads which prevail today. Agricultural Improvement Societies were founded

to disseminate the wide range of improved techniques that correspondingly changed the rural landscape. These included:

- grassland improvement through cultivating and reseeded, using new grass species and clovers;
- the establishment of main-crop rotations on arable ground, and mixed arable and livestock rearing systems;
- the introduction of new livestock breeds, many which became distinctive to the Borders, including sheep breeds such as the Border Leicester (introduced by Robertson of Ladykirk) and the Cheviot (introduced by Robson of Bowmont);
- the invention of new machinery, such as the swing plough and the threshing drum.



*Lowther Hills and farmland © Glyn Satterley / NatureScot*

By the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and into the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the basis of the modern farming pattern was largely in place. Forestry using species which could withstand hostile conditions, such as Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine, increasingly became accepted practice.

Generally, the Borders is poor in mineral resources although there was past small-scale exploitation of minerals, such as copper near Duns, lime, lead, silver, iron and coal at West Linton, and gold in Yarrow. Industrial development concentrated on textiles. The 18<sup>th</sup> Century saw a shift from rural cottage industries, such as cotton spinning at Carlops, a planned village, where the houses still survive, to the towns where water power was harnessed for industrial production. The construction of Caerlee Mill at Innerleithen in c.1788-90 provided the Borders with its first modern textile mill, and this was soon followed by mills at Hawick, Galashiels, Selkirk and Walkerburn.

Increasing manufacture and trade meant necessary improvements to the communications network through the construction of turnpike roads and railways. These have left their mark on Borders architecture, particularly the bridges, such as Union Bridge (also known as the Chain Bridge) at Hutton, Kelso bridge, and Leaderfoot viaduct.

### **20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century change**

#### **Forestry**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, especially due to the 1st World War, the huge demands for home-grown timber seriously depleted woodland resources. Britain's lack of an adequate independent timber reserve, instigated the founding of the Forestry Commission to reverse the decline in forest cover. The Borders were selected for some of the earliest Commission planting projects, at Newcastleton, Glentress, and elsewhere in the mid-Tweed valley. A Dedicated Woodlands Scheme was established to encourage strong private sector forestry to meet planting targets. From the 1950s onwards, helped by tax relief for forestry investment, private forestry management companies played a vital role in establishing new large-scale forests across the Borders. Areas of woodland and forest cover in the Borders increased from just over 3% of the land area in 1945, to 17% in 1999. Nevertheless, despite this proportion of plantation woodland, there is only a very small proportion of native woodland (estimated at 1355 ha - 0.3% of the land area), "...a figure which compares closely to that of Caithness, surely the bleakest place in Scotland..." (Badenoch, 1994).

At the baseline date of 1995 (FC National Inventory of Woodland 1999), there were an estimated 2,750 individual woodland blocks (greater than 2 ha in size) located throughout the area. Three percent of these blocks account for almost 80% of the total woodland cover; the majority comprises small woodlands of less than 100 ha. The overall average woodland size in Scottish Borders is 30 ha.

The pattern of woodland cover falls broadly within two key geographical areas. The western sector - bounded to the east by the A7 trunk road to Hawick and thereafter by the A6088 to Carter Bar - is characterised by large-scale upland commercial conifer plantations. These can be subdivided into:

- the forests of the Tweed Valley and Peeblesshire stretching towards the area's north west boundary;
- the major forest blocks bounded by the Ettrick and Teviot Rivers which extend westwards from Selkirk and Hawick towards the regional boundary contiguous with the Eskdalemuir forest complex;
- the forests of Wauchope and Newcastleton adjoining Kielder Forest along the southernmost boundaries.

In marked contrast, woodland cover in the eastern sector of Scottish Borders is characterised predominantly by many hundreds of scattered, small-scale woodlands within a matrix of agricultural land, much of it being prime quality and arable. These stretch from the Cheviots in the south, across the central and eastern agricultural heartland of the Merse to the foothills of the Lammermuir Hills in the north.

The relative proportions of broadleaved and coniferous woodlands are similar to those for the

rest of Scotland. The predominance of conifers reflects, to a large degree, the intensive post-war afforestation programmes that focused on the use of fast growing conifers to replace the severely depleted woodland resource. As in other areas of Scotland, much of this afforestation is characterised by large-scale plantations on the poorer, more exposed upland sites. The main commercial conifer species are Sitka and Norway spruce, accounting for 76% of all conifers.

### **Tourism, Recreation and Access**

Tourism is important to the local economy. In 2011, almost 0.5 million tourists visited the Scottish Borders, spending some £150 million. While tourism across Scotland has increased by only 4% since 2006, in the Borders it has increased by 17.5%. The main “Gateway” towns of Coldstream, Jedburgh and Hawick are popular tourism centres, followed by the smaller towns of Eyemouth and Peebles. Car and coach-based tourism draws a large proportion of the current market, reinforcing the sensitivity of the major road corridors, and their associated popular view points and historic sites.

Outdoor sports are particularly popular and well-catered for, especially angling which has a long history, and offers internationally renowned salmon fishing. Grouse shooting, horse riding and golf also continue to be popular.

The Forestry Commission's Border Forest Park, which straddles the border with England, includes over 250 square miles in total. It provides facilities for cycling, camping, walking and orienteering as well as the more traditional informal activities such as forest drives, picnicking, car parks and nature trails. The Tweed Valley Forest Park is a top tourist attraction, receiving over 344,000 visits (2015) to its seven forests including Glentress, and the 7 Stanes centres, of which three are in The Borders (at Innerleithen, Glentress and Innerleithen), provide a renowned complex of graded mountain bike trails.

Long distance walking routes include the Southern Upland Way (344km starting in Portpatrick on the south west coast, traversing across to Cockburnspath in the east), the Borders Abbey Way (109km starting and finishing in Jedburgh), the Berwickshire Coastal Path starting in Cockburnspath and leading over the border to Berwick on Tweed, and the St Cuthbert's Way (extending from Melrose to the island of Lindisfarne) covering a variety of low lying areas including the Tweed valley, the small but beautifully formed Eildon Hills, the rolling Cheviot Hills and the Northumberland coast.

### **Wind Energy Development**

Parts of the Scottish Borders, particularly the upland area where the landscape offers better wind speeds, have enabled a number of wind farm approvals. There have been over 500 turbines of over 15 metres in height approved. Many of the larger scale commercial schemes are located in the Lammermuir Hills in the north of the area. These are, predominantly Crystal Rig, Aitkengal, Fallago Rig and Dun Law wind farms which form noticeable features on the skyline from the north and as one travels from the south on the main A1, A68 and the east coast mainline railway. In the western part of the Lammermuirs there are a number of built or consented schemes, including Glenkerie and Whitelaw Brae to the north and south of Tweedsmuir respectively and Cloich to the west of Eddleston. There have also been wind farms built within the Moorfoot Hills: at the western end at Bowbeat, and Longpark windfarm

in an area to the south of Lauder Common. A number of wind farms are also located in the upland areas in the south central Borders, including Langhope Rig to the west of Hawick and Windyedge and Pinesburn to the south. A coastal wind farm at Penmanshiel Moor has also been constructed on the coastal moorland north of Eyemouth which is highly visible from the A1107 coast road. There have been a number of smaller scale proposals for single and small groups of turbines, particularly in Berwickshire.

## 4. CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND PERCEPTION

Early accounts of the Borders landscape describe it as being bare and bleak, which was the general perception well into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. No doubt this opinion was associated with the political and historical legacy of a troubled Border area, rent for so many centuries by warfare, struggle, and violence of the Border ‘reivers’ – the raiding families who occupied the Border lands between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Noted 18<sup>th</sup> Century travellers – Daniel Defoe, Thomas Grey, Thomas Pennant and the Rev. William Gilpin – visited, and their accounts were also strongly coloured by the difficulties in travelling through this large expanse of relatively sparsely populated country. Gilpin, an enthusiast for the picturesque style in landscape and art, wrote about Selkirkshire: *‘In general the mountains formed beautiful lines; but...naked mountains form a poor composition. They require the drapery of a little wood to break the simplicity of their shapes, to produce contrasts, to connect one part with another; and to give that richness in landscape which is one of its greatest ornaments’*<sup>1</sup>.

Again, this lack of woodland was stressed by Washington Irvine when, in 1817, he was introduced by Sir Walter Scott, to Scott’s favourite view of the Tweed. Irvine commented *‘beheld, a mere succession of grey waving hills, line beyond line ... monotonous in their aspect and so destitute of trees, that one could almost see a stout fly walking along their profile; and the far famed Tweed appeared a naked stream flowing between bare hills, without a tree or thicket on its banks.’*<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, in 1817 Queen Victoria said of the Eildon and Leaderfoot area *“The country is extremely picturesque, valleys with fine trees and streams; intermingled with great cultivation’*. A more modern opinion of the Eildon Hills was provided by Whittow in 1977, who said *‘The Eildon Hills cannot be equalled as a viewpoint in the Border Country for, although their highest point is only 1,385 feet (422 metres), their central location and their isolation give them an advantage over some of their loftier neighbours.’*

The picturesque scenery around Melrose, Dryburgh and the Tweed in particular (now the Eildon and Leaderfoot NSA) has long been an inspiration to writers, poets, dramatists and artists, and contributed to the discovery of ‘Nature’ and its appreciation as a major subject in literature and the arts. The major influence in establishing its distinctive image and identity internationally in literature was Sir Walter Scott who lived at Abbotsford. An example is his use of Melrose Abbey in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Scott said *‘I can stand on the Eildon Hill and point out forty-three places famous in war and verse.’* He in turn introduced and enthused the renowned painter J.M.W. Turner, whose sketches and watercolours of the area were widely circulated as engravings in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Turner visited Scott in 1831 and his illustrations portray the area, including “View of the Tweed with Melrose and the Eildon Hills” and “A View of the River Tweed and Dryburgh Abbey”. There are also strong associations with the landscape poet James Thomson, a Borderer born in Kelso, and through him Robert Burns. Thomson is commemorated by the Temple of the Muses, erected in 1817 on the banks of the Tweed within the NSA. Robert Burns wrote a poem “Address to the Shade of Thomson” for

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<sup>1</sup> W. Gilpin, 1789 *Observations on the Highlands of Scotland*. R . Blamire, London

<sup>2</sup> W. Irving, 1817 *A Tour in Scotland and other manuscripts*. Yale University Press, Newhaven (1927).

the opening of the temple. David Erskine, the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Buchan, commissioned the temple, as well as many other features on his estate. He founded the Society of Antiquaries in Scotland, alongside Sir Walter Scott, and resided in Dryburgh, developing his estate into what is now regarded as one of the most important designed landscapes in the Borders.

Sir Walter Scott had collected poems, ballads and stories throughout the Scottish Borders, directly from local people. He published these in 1802 as *'The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, collected in the Southern counties of Scotland, with a few of modern date founded upon local tradition'* and sought to place them in their historical and regional contexts. A large number of them were accounts of the Border 'reivers' clan feuds, cross-border skirmishes and cattle raids. Scott's writing explored people and place, marking places that were distinguished by 'remarkable historical events'.<sup>3</sup> Scott is the dominating influence in shaping an enduring image and identity of the Borders landscapes. He was not the first to romanticise the Border countryside, but the widespread popularity of his writings did much to spread knowledge of it internationally, far and wide, and firmly root a sense of the Border identity and tradition in both the place and people.



*Eildon Hills from Scott's view © Laurie Campbell/NatureScot*

His readers were *'taught to place a value upon these very aspects in the landscape which had once appeared matters of shame.'*<sup>4</sup> Scott's writings explored the historical circumstances which had helped to form the society in which he lived. The power of historical association of

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<sup>3</sup> L. Macraev 'Local explanations: Editing a Sense of Place in Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*'. FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture and the Arts, Winter 2014, Special issue 03.

<sup>4</sup> Holloway and Errington, 1978. *The discovery of Scotland*. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

settings, both real and imaginary, was explored in his literature, which became popular not just in Scotland, but throughout Europe. Many of the places such as Melrose Abbey (in 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'), the valleys of Ettrick, Teviot, Yarrow and Tweed (where many of his novels are set) and Fast Castle (Wolf's Crag in the 'Bride of Lammermuir') became not only famous through these associations but they themselves became tourist attractions.

Many artists turned to Borders scenery, also creating romantic images that became widespread. These included Thomas Girtin and James Ward, who both painted famous views of Melrose and the Eildons; John Thomson took Fast Castle as his subject. But Scott's collaboration with Turner was especially powerful, for Turner's work illustrating the *Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland*, published in 1844, visually reinforced Scott's prose and romantic settings and gave readers located far from the Borders a strong, emotive vision of places.<sup>5</sup> In October 1818, such a tour as Turner's, involved a journey by coach from London that took 60 hours.

Dorothy and William Wordsworth visited the Borders on their way back to Cumbria (on their Scottish Tour in 1894), where they were met and accompanied by Scott. By this time, mainly due to Scott's approach and writings '*The idea promoted by the Rev William Gipin and accepted by Dorothy Wordsworth that a natural beauty spot could be enhanced by association with the historical or literary past had gained general acceptance*'.<sup>6</sup>

## **BALLADS AND SONGS**

The Borders tradition of ballad and song played an important role in building the romantic Borders image. Many of the legends and the original versions of songs dated from earlier centuries but it was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> Century that they were widely collected and popularised. Scott played a major role in this also, publishing his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, in 1802. Other notable collectors included Hogg, Child and Percy. The Cheviots are indirectly associated with the old song of Chevy Chase, believed by Addison, writing as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, to be the '*favourite Ballad of the common People of England*'.<sup>7</sup>

Writing towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century James Beattie commented: '*Several of the old Scotch songs take their names from the rivulets, villages and hills, adjoining to the Tweed near Melrose; a region distinguished by many charming varieties of rural scenery, and which, whether we consider the face of the country, or the genius of the people, may properly enough be termed the Arcadia of Scotland. And all these songs are sweetly and powerfully expressive of love and tenderness, and other emotions suited to the tranquillity of pastoral life.*'

There are long-established traditional oral and historical ties to the Eildon Hills area. The legend of Thomas the Rhymer is especially connected with this area and Rhymer's Glen was created by Sir Walter Scott at his home in Abbotsford. The legend includes Huntly Banks and Bogle Burn. The Rhymer met with the Queen of Elfland on the Eildon Hills, and the ballad tells

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<sup>5</sup> See [Thomas Ardiff, Tour of Scotland for Scotts poetical works 1831, August 2010](#), in David Blayney Brown (ed.), *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, Tate Research Publication, December 2012, accessed 13 September 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Holloway and Errington, 1978. *The discovery of Scotland*. National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

<sup>7</sup> P Clack and JJ Ivy (eds), 1983. *The Borders*. Department of Archaeology, University of Durham.

of the Eildon Tree. The Eildon Tree Stone, sometimes known as the Rhymer's Stone, is a large moss-covered boulder which lies on the road a mile east-south-east of Melrose. It marks the spot where the Fairy Queen led the Rhymer into the heart of the hills. The symbol of the Eildon Tree has persisted as inspiration in Scottish modern poetry through the work of Sydney Goodsir Smith and through the Eildon Tree poetry magazine.