

The Special Qualities of the Upper Tweeddale National Scenic Area

- Diverse scenery of great charm and soft beauty
- The historical continuity of settlement
- Green, intimate pastoral valleys
- Expansive, open hills with panoramic views
- The variety of woodlands and trees
- The large, geometric fields
- The distinctive vernacular buildings
- Tranquil riverine landscapes

Special Quality	Further Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diverse scenery of great charm and soft beauty</i> 	
<p>This is a richly diverse landscape. Its prominent landforms combine with rivers, woods and moorlands, to produce a pleasing physiography, with varied land use and scenery of great charm and soft beauty.</p>	<p>Compared to the wider, gentler, more open valleys elsewhere in this part of the Scottish Borders, the NSA is distinguished by having, the most sharply defined, densely wooded valleys; and by higher, steeper, darker rather more rugged and wilder surrounding hills, which provide greater enclosure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The historical continuity of settlement</i> 	
<p>The valleys are varied, safe, inviting, interesting, settled landscapes with innumerable remnants and reminders of the historic past scattered throughout.</p> <p>The many towers, castles, sheepfolds, stone and hut circles, standing stones, cultivation terraces, ancient settlements, cairns and forts emphasise the historical continuity of settlement and timelessness of the valleys. The forts are often located atop conspicuous promontories which offered commanding fortification sites and now the best vantage points to enjoy the scenery.</p>	<p>Significant cultural elements include Dreva Craig (one of several prominent hill forts), Neidpath Castle, Barns Tower (sitting within a designed landscape), and Castle Hill in Manor Valley. There are also designed landscapes at Stobo Castle and across the river at Dawyck.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Green, intimate pastoral valleys</i> 	
<p>The valleys have even slopes, steepening as they rise to scree-strewn ridges or rolling, rounded wooded hills with a backdrop of interlocking moorland slopes or high, rolling moorland hill</p>	<p>The valleys are green and pastoral, the profiles of the larger ones typically flat bottomed, and the smaller often narrow and 'V'-shaped. The Tweed flows smoothly down the middle of a narrow floodplain.</p>

<p>massifs.</p> <p>Sometimes there are wider, flat-bottomed, green pastoral valleys, with the river on one side of the valley floor eating away at the hillfoot, below a precipitously steep, rocky edge to the high moorland massif.</p> <p>The valleys are also invariably enclosed at each end, usually by massive humps of steep-sided, seemingly free-standing hills that block and guard the ends of the valleys. The brown moorland on these hills provides a sharp contrast with the rich pastoral fields and woods of the valleys.</p>	<p>The intimate, sheltered valleys are tightly enclosed by wooded or open moorland slopes along the flanks of the valleys, rising more steeply with elevation to either a gently undulating series of hill tops or a valley-long series of interlocking ridges, in turn often backed by a hill massif.</p> <p>The valley floors widen at the confluences of the Tweed with the Holm, Manor and Lyne Waters which run as small rivers or large burns, giving views up the tributary glens.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• <i>Expansive, open hills with panoramic views</i></p>	
<p>A relatively short, sharp, steep scramble up bracken, heather or grassy moorland slopes will lift the walker to a peak with a 360° panoramic view across the Southern Uplands. From here and other viewpoints above the valley floor and lower slopes, the sinuous line of the rivers and burns are more conspicuous.</p> <p>The tops of the hills are vast, open, windswept, inspiring, exhilarating, and rewarding landscapes. From the hill tops and ridges the view may be spectacular in its sun-lit clarity with deep summer purples, greens, browns, grey and gold, or blue and hazy, or covered in crisp, white snow, or misty, or darkly overcast, depending on season and weather.</p>	<p>The enclosing hills appear as great guardians of the valleys, their height and mass often appearing greater than they actually are because of the contrast with the valleys.</p> <p>From the tops of the hills and ridges, and especially from the few landmark summits such as Black Meldon, the views are panoramic across a vast rolling hill mass covered in grass and heather moorland. Occasional bare rock and scree add variety to the colours and textures of the varied hills which appear to recede endlessly to the horizon, way beyond the boundaries of the NSA.</p> <p>The hills are varied in their landform; there are interlocking lines of steep-sided ridges sweeping from the surrounding hill mass into the valleys; and gently undulating or rolling, smooth, rounded, massive, bulky, steep-sided hills with stone-piled cairns visible from far away and mysterious. They have evocative names such as Hammer Knowe, Horse Hope Hill, Hundleshope Heights, Stob Law, Trahenna Hill and White Meldon.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">• <i>The variety of woodlands and trees</i></p>	
<p>Everywhere across the valleys are coniferous or mixed plantations, mature broadleaved trees, groups of trees around steadings and houses; and large billowing crowns of trees marking the sinuous line of the otherwise often inconspicuous rivers and burns crossed by distinctive but disused railway bridges and old stone arched or modern flat road bridges.</p>	<p>Dawyck is an outstanding designed landscape of 430ha dating from the 18th century. It comprises an important and attractive Botanic Garden, scenically impressive parkland and woodland, interesting architectural features and a well documented history with which the development of the design can be traced.</p> <p>The magnificent parkland and water gardens of Stobo Castle are an outstanding work of art and the designed landscape as a whole provides an impressive setting for the category A listed Castle. The designed landscape again dates from the 18th century and comprises 320ha.</p>

<p>In several places, small designed landscapes with a strong parkland ambience enrich the variety of woodlands and trees.</p>	
<p>• <i>The large, geometric fields</i></p>	
<p>In contrast to the sinuous line of the river, picked out by mature riparian trees, the improved grasslands are laid out in large, regular, geometrically-shaped, flat or gently sloping fields, divided by straight stone dykes or occasional fences and hedges. The field pattern is locally emphasised by mature shelterbelts.</p>	<p>The steadings and large fields are typical of the period of agricultural improvement to which they belong.</p>
<p>• <i>The distinctive vernacular buildings</i></p>	
<p>Buildings comprise steadings, most of which are compact and traditional in style, splendid houses of Victorian 'baronial' architecture, lodges and cottages strung along the roads as they wind through the valleys. The predominant building materials are a distinctive, mellow grey stone and slate, or contrasting, white rendering with slate.</p>	
<p>• <i>Tranquil riverine landscapes</i></p>	
<p>There are no lakes, ponds or waterfalls but the rivers and burns are clean and fast-flowing over pebbly, boulder-strewn or sandy and gravelly beds with natural weirs and riffles. The Tweed, famed for its salmon, is central to this landscape and is wider, flowing more sedately with a smooth surface that reflects the sky or clouds, and trees and buildings close by.</p> <p>The sounds of the river are complemented by those of grazing animals, insects and wading birds; birdsong is seasonally ubiquitous in the valleys. Apart from the sounds and movement of traffic on the roads that pass down the dales, the valleys are calm, quiet, still, tranquil landscapes with occasional agricultural activity and sometimes an angler or walker.</p>	<p>These valleys and hills were the chosen home of John Buchan, author of <i>The Thirty-Nine steps</i>, who used this landscape in many of his books and stories.</p> <p>The valleys have been photographed and painted by innumerable artists but perhaps the most enduring fame of Upper Tweeddale is that of its history as a great salmon river, epitomised today by the sight of an angler casting over the river from its grassy banks.</p>

<p>While the angler keeps to the rivers, the walker may choose between the intimate shelter of the quiet, tranquil, wooded pastoral valleys and the short rewarding climb up the slopes to the welcoming tops, with their exhilarating panoramas across the valleys and the hills.</p>	
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Selected Bibliography

ASH Consulting Group 1998. The Borders Landscape Assessment. *Scottish Natural Heritage Review, No. 112.*