

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Carnmenellis

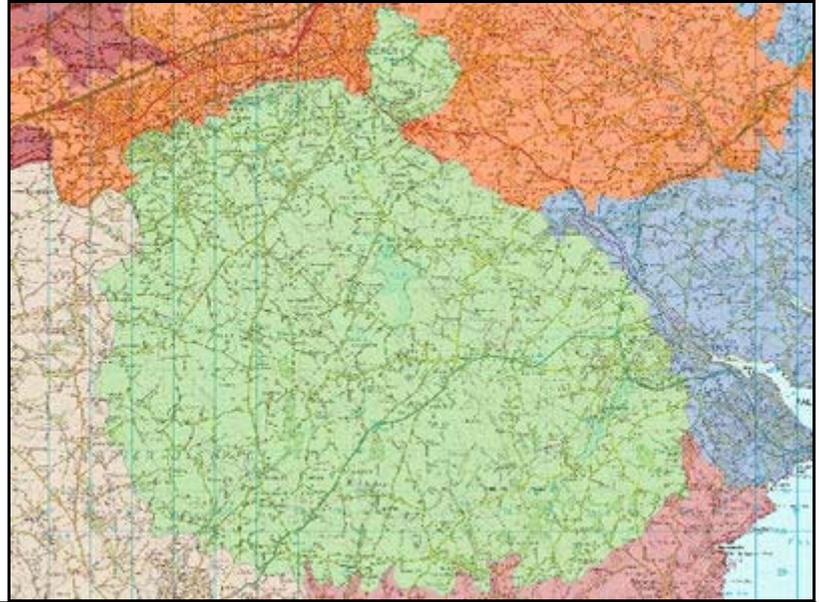
LCA No

CA10

JCA

Constituent LDUs

Total 4: 163, 164U, 168U, 258



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Location Upland plateau located south of Redruth/Camborne.

Designations AONB on the very southern fringes [LDUs 163, 164]; 3 separate WHS in LDUs 163, 168, 258; LDU 258 has SSSI; 2 LDU have SMs and 3 LDUs have CGS.

Description

The area is an elevated undulating granite plateau with outcrops in places and incised by stream valleys towards the edge. It is boggy in places and the soils are impoverished and humic. The area is open and exposed with few trees on the tops although there are some limited broadleaved plantations in the valley heads and bottoms. The field pattern varies from small fields within a medieval landscape of Anciently Enclosed Land around the fringes of the upland, bounded by sinuous Cornish hedges or hedgerows, to more recent enclosure of former rough ground into strongly rectilinear field patterns. Some areas of rough ground survive. The land is mainly down to permanent pasture with some rough grazing. The heath and wetland habitats are small and fragmented but most link along the stream valleys to form valuable ecological corridors. Some fields are being invaded by scrub. The settlement pattern is of dispersed farmsteads and small clusters of modest cottages, single or in terraces, in former industrial areas. There are also some larger industrial settlements such as Troon, Beacon and Pengegon, based primarily on terraces. Mining (tin and copper) and quarrying have been of major importance in the area in the past. Evidence of this intense industrial use is visible in the form of engine houses and tips, and the monument at Carn Brea on the northern fringes. The northern part of the Landscape Character Area abuts the urban areas of Camborne and Redruth.

Key Landscape Characteristics

Gently undulating open and exposed elevated granite plateau, boggy in places, with radiating valleys at edge.

Significant remains of mining and quarrying industry including mine engine house and related structures and settlements particular around Carn Brea to the north and around Porkellis.

Permanent pasture and rough grazing, with some horticulture on south facing slopes.

Cornish hedges and some hedgerows enclosing small to medium scale fields of Anciently Enclosed

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Land, once highly managed.

Few hedgerow trees on plateau and narrow areas of woodland (mostly Wet Woodland) in valleys. Fragmented remnant Lowland Heathland in high parts of Landscape Character Area with associated species in Cornish hedges.

Settlement pattern of mainly dispersed villages of medieval origin.

Pylons, masts and poles prominent in places.

Long views from elevated areas.

Upland recently enclosed as small farms and 'miners' smallholdings.

Geology and soils

The plateau is formed by a large igneous intrusion (granite boss), which has given this area its distinctive topography and landscape character. Subsequent erosion and soil development has created an upland landscape, with occasional outcrops of granite rock. The soils are impoverished humic soils (organic material derived from partially decomposed plant remains).

Topography and drainage

This area is an exposed, elevated gently undulating plateau rising to 250m AOD at Carnmenellis Beacon. The land drops away at the edges of the plateau, most steeply on the south eastern side where it dips into the Helford Ria (Landscape Character Area 09). Small streams which drain the plateau become incised and significant at the edges of the granite, while on the plateau itself they form insignificant shallow depressions often associated with wetland vegetation. To the north the edge of the plateau has been carved into headlands, the most notable of which are Carn Brea and Carn Marth.

Biodiversity

Though the main landcover is improved grassland/pasture with some arable, there are many small fragmented semi-natural habitats at the head of and along the small stream valleys which arise and drain the Landscape Character Area. These include narrow areas of broadleaved woodland, scrub and bracken with areas of Wet Woodland, Fens and Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture. These link to fragmented patches of Lowland Heathland on the higher ground to the northwest and to small areas of either Ancient Woodland or Upland Oakwood at the lower reaches of the valleys into LCA 09 (Helford Ria) and LCA 13 (Fal Ria, Truro and Falmouth). Where mine-workings have been abandoned, remnant woodland, heath or wetland has survived or has developed around the workings, forming interesting and sometimes unique assemblages of associated fauna and flora. The network of Cornish hedges form ecological corridors between the farmed land and the semi-natural areas.

Land Cover

The dominant landcover is improved grassland/pasture with arable increasing towards the southern and eastern fringes. Unenclosed rough moorland areas with Lowland Heathland exist, as at Crowan Beacon. Tree cover is limited due to the exposed nature of the plateau. High rainfall and areas of poor drainage have allowed Wet Woodland and wetland to develop in the small stream valleys.

Land Use

The area is predominantly used for pastoral agriculture with some land in rough grazing and most in permanent pasture. Medieval enclosure dominates in the lower areas but reduces on the main bulk of the upland area. Occasionally, horticulture occurs on the south-facing slopes of the plateau towards the

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Helford Ria, where greater sun and shelter provides more hospitable conditions. Fragmented patches of rough ground occur throughout the area either as unenclosed land of heath and scrub or as Recently Enclosed Land that has through neglect, reverted back to scrub. There are remains of tin and copper mining activity including structures and tips. The area contains a number of relatively small reservoirs; Stithians (the largest) is used extensively for recreation, Cargenwen and Argal reservoirs are less significant. Several large masts form major landmarks on the high points of the area.

Field and woodland pattern

There are extensive areas of Anciently Enclosed Land with small fields, mostly around the margins of the Landscape Character Area, and large areas of Recently Enclosed Land created on former rough ground during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, characterised by the straight-sided fields. Part of this Recently Enclosed Land is in the form of miners' smallholdings, each typically of around 5-10 acres. Cornish hedges form a network in the area, some with hedgerows but mainly turf capped stone sided banks. Woodland is broadleaved plantation. It is very limited and confined to the valleys and valley heads.

Settlement pattern

Historic nucleated settlement consists of a number of enlarged medieval churchtowns, as at Stithians, Constantine and Wendron, and post-medieval industrial settlements such as Troon, Longdowns and Carnkie. In the twentieth-century other settlements have developed substantially from small historic cores as at Mabe Burnthouse and between Lanner and Redruth along the A393. Outside the villages, the settlement pattern is dispersed with sheltered valley farmsteads relating to the medieval enclosures. The exception to this scattered pattern are the small villages associated with the extensive tin and copper mining in the area around Carn Brea to the north and Porkellis, Carnkie and Rame located centrally. Buildings are generally small and basic looking. They usually have slate roofs and local stone walls. Houses are often grouped with other small outbuildings and tin sheds, the overall feel of which is ad hoc and generally degraded. The landscape around Mabe is dominated by a cluster of nineteenth and twentieth century granite quarries and the terraces and cottages associated with them.

Transport pattern

The A 393 runs north/south along the eastern edge of the area and the A394 runs along the southern boundary. The B3297 links Redruth with Helston but the remainder of the area is linked by narrow lanes with sharp bends created by following the rectilinear field boundaries and a significant number of tracks leading to isolated smallholdings or single dwellings off the road.

Historic features

Former areas of Upland Rough Ground (now mostly Recently Enclosed Land) include earlier prehistoric ritual monuments including the stone circle at Nine Maidens, standing stones and numerous hilltop cairns and barrows. The summit of Carn Brea is of very high importance, with a Neolithic tor enclosure and an Iron Age hillfort, a medieval hunting lodge and deer park. This Landscape Character Area also has traces of later prehistoric unenclosed settlements and field systems and of Iron Age and Roman-period defended farmsteads (rounds), the latter particularly around the margins of the area. There are medieval churches at Constantine, Stithians, Crowan and Wendron; the latter unusually has a tower without pinnacles and the seventeenth century lych gate unusually incorporates the parish rooms. There is much evidence of former streamworking and mining activity for tin and copper, including engine houses, dressing floors and other features that have a strong influence on the landscape character of the area and form a key part in the World Heritage Site designation. Quarrying has also been important. The de Dunstanville / Bassett monument on Carn Brea dominates the skyline above Redruth and, with the nearby 'castle' is widely visible across mid and west Cornwall.

Condition

CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



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Some land is in poor condition reverting to scrub in places. There is fragmentation and poor management of heathland and poor management of wetlands.

Pressures

Changes in agricultural practice reducing management input- field rationalisation, intensification, new structures and diversification.
Suburbanisation of dispersed settlements.
Windfarm development.

Aesthetic and sensory

This is a bleak and exposed landscape. It has a strong visual association with its history of poor farming and tin and copper mining, with the patches of rough ground, basic settlements and engine houses creating a melancholy atmosphere in the post-Industrial age. It does, however, have an appealing remoteness despite the large number of isolated dwellings and telegraph poles, which seem overly dominant on the open uplands. In the sheltered areas there are some attractive valley farmsteads.

Distinctive features

The most distinctive features are the Cornish hedges and hedgerows enclosing the small, irregular field pattern of permanent pasture, the dispersed settlement pattern with mining associations of modest cottages and terraces, the engine houses, narrow rural lanes and woodland in valleys. Carn Brea is visible for many miles around. The communications mast at Four Lanes is prominent.

Visions and objectives

An upland area with a remote landscape character that is being eroded by clutter of overhead wires and isolated dwellings. Patches of the original upland rough ground still exist amongst the irregular yet distinctive field pattern. The objective must be to conserve the remote landscape character and the cultural features of the landscape.

Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Manage the historic features of the World Heritage Site in particular and improve interpretation in places.

Maintain and repair Cornish hedges, hedgerows and stiles using appropriate materials and methods of construction.

Manage Upland Rough ground for biodiversity and archaeology.

Encourage the planting of small woodlands and farm copses in sheltered valleys avoiding planting conifer plantations on high open ground.

Develop design guidance to avoid incremental change to dwellings and development out of scale, pattern and landscape character.