

## **5. Exmoor National Park Case Study Sites**

### **5.1. High Coastal Heaths**

### **5.2. High Wooded Coasts, Combes and Cleaves**

### **5.3. Low Farmed Coast and Marsh**

### **5.4. Open Moorland**

### **5.5. Farmed and Settled Vale**

### **5.6. Enclosed Farmed Hills with Commons**

### **5.7. Incised Wooded River Valleys**

### **5.8. Plantation (with Heathland) Hills**

### **5.9. Wooded and Farmed Hills with Combes**



**Figure 5.1.1:** *Hunter's Inn* in the River Heddon Valley was built in 1906 in the Arts and Crafts Style. Alfred Robert Quinton. Watercolour. c.1910.

Courtesy: Salmon's

## 5.1. High Coastal Heaths

### 1. Location

This case study extends along much of the Exmoor coastal frontage, from Combe Martin in the west to Minehead in the east. It is broken by wooded coastal combes and cleaves at Woody Bay near Martinhoe and Lynmouth, and by farmland and marsh between Malmesmead and Porlock Bay to the east. This is a dramatic coastal frontage with high, steep cliffs backed by heather-clad moorlands with gorse and coastal grasslands. The shoreline comprises rocky promontories and bays, which provide extensive exposures of the distinctive coastal geology.

### 2. Why was the Case Study selected?

This important section of the Exmoor National Park coastal frontage represents a distinct 'Landscape Character Type', one of nine such zones within the National Park and which, with coastal combes and cleaves, contribute to the remarkable scenic character of the coastline of North Devon. Artists were attracted to the subject matter here and, as a result, the range of artworks allow comparisons to be made between past and present environments.

### 3. Summary of Geology, Geomorphology, Processes and Environment

The coastal geology comprises almost entirely sandstones and limestones of the Torbay and Tamar Groups of the mid-to-late Devonian Period. Rocks of the Carboniferous and Quaternary Periods are also exposed along this multi-coloured cliffline. Much of the coastline is undefended and the natural processes of weathering, coastal erosion and cliff instability are allowed to continue uninterrupted. Whilst coastal defences are provided to protect the main settlements at Combe Martin, Lynmouth and Minehead, natural coastal processes are being allowed to intervene at Porlock Weir, where an historical approach to maintenance of shingle defences has proved unsustainable, and managed realignment is the preferred long-term coastal management strategy.

This coastal case study frontage is designated for its geological, environmental and heritage significance, including a Special Area of Conservation (Exmoor Heaths), Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a Marine Conservation Zone and Heritage Coast. The rich cultural heritage of the frontage is likely to be impacted upon by coastal change over the next decades, affecting sites located close to the top of or at the foot of high cliffs and slopes, such as Duty Point Tower near Lynton.

### 4. How can the art imagery inform us of changes that have affected the case study over time?

There is a rich art resource depicting the North Devon coastline since the late eighteenth century. Although there are fewer images of the open coast, there are numerous views of the fishing villages that expanded to become popular seaside resorts by the mid-nineteenth century, in particular Lynmouth and Combe Martin. The dramatic coastal frontage, including the Valley of Rocks at Lynton, is richly illustrated and, whilst changes can be perceived in terms of expanding coastal development over time, the artworks demonstrate how well managed much of this case study area has been in the face of physical, environmental and socio-economic pressures.

### 5. What are the key issues that can be learnt from this case study?

The case study comprises largely a natural wild and beautiful cliff top frontage, affected by relatively little development. Whilst there have been some tourism impacts over time, comparisons between historical artworks and present-day observations and photographs show that the natural landscape has been particularly well preserved.





**Figure 5.1.1 (Above):** *Near Combe Martin*. Lithograph. c.1840. **Figure 5.1.2 (Below):** *Near Combe Martin* by the Pre-Raphaelite Follower, George Wolfe. Watercolour. 1855. Courtesy: Crown Copyright. UK Government Art Collection. A typically highly detailed coastal view by Wolfe taken from the shore to the east of the village. **Figures 5.1.3 & 5.1.4 (Bottom Left & Right):** Entrance to Combe Martin harbour.







**Figure 5.1.5:** A lithograph showing the post-Medieval lime kiln located on a ledge above the River Heddon at Heddon's Mouth to the north-west of the village of Martinhoe; the structure was restored by the National Trust in 1982 (**Figure 5.1.6 Below**). Access steps lead to the kiln working area from the shore. In the past the kiln has suffered severe storm damage in this exposed location; such coastal heritage sites will become increasingly vulnerable to the effects of the sea level rise coastal erosion.







Contrasting views of Countisbury Hill, Lynmouth, over time. **Figure 5.1.9 (Bottom)** a lithograph by George Rowe, c.1840, shows the coastal slopes largely bare of vegetation, whilst by the time A. R. Quinton painted the same view c.1920 (**Figure 5.1.7 Left**) the coastal slopes were covered by trees as they are today (**Figure 5.1.8 Top Right**).

Such sequences of images by artists ranked for their eye for detail and topographical accuracy can inform us of long-term physical, environmental and cultural changes over time.





## VALLEY OF THE ROCKS, LYNMOUTH (WEST)

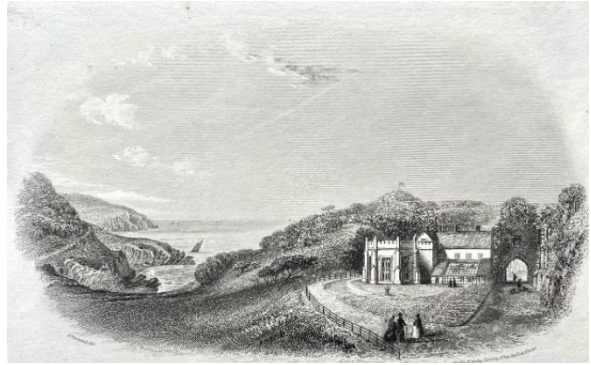
**Figure 5.1.10:** *Valley of the Rocks* by William Henry Mullais captured in watercolour in 1857. The exceptional detail obtained by the artist allows comparison with later and present-day images. Despite some limited developments and tourism pressures the character of this fascinating site remains largely unchanged.



G. Rowe

*Lee Bay from Duty Point*

c.1840



G. Townsend

*Lee Abbey*

c.1838



William Henry Millais

*Panorama of Lee Bay to Valley of the Rocks*

1857

Courtesy: Maas Gallery



Lee Bay



Lee Abbey



## VALLEY OF THE ROCKS, LYNMOUTH (EAST)

**Figure 5.1.11:** The eastern frontage of the valley is depicted in Millais' panoramic view. Image courtesy of Maas Gallery.



A.R. Quinton

*Castle Rock, Lynton*

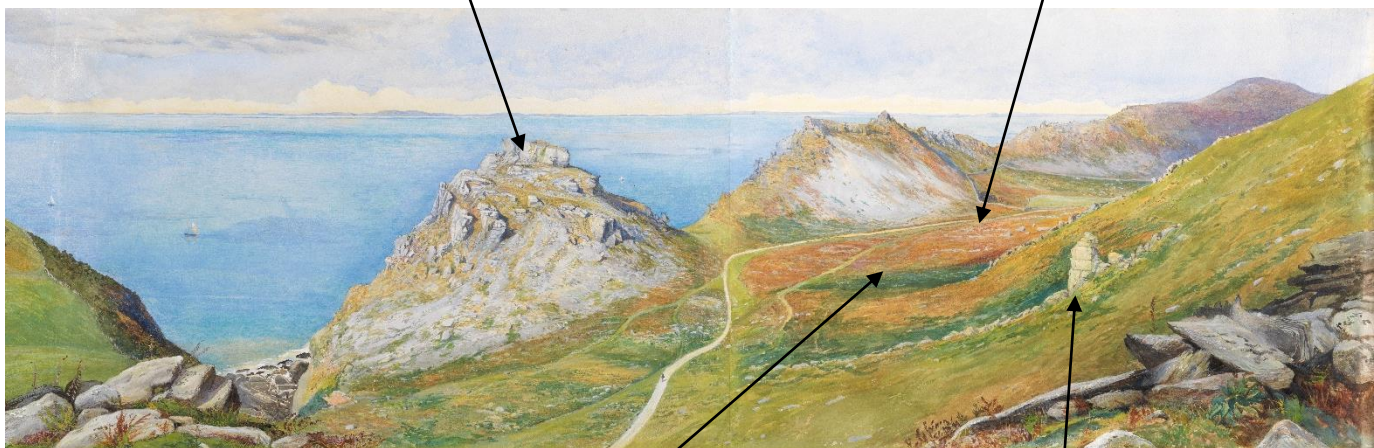
1925



A.R. Quinton

*Valley of Rocks*

1925



Courtesy: Maas Gallery



Valley of the Rocks



J.T. Linnell

*Mother Meldrum's Cave*

c.1885

Courtesy: Maas Gallery





Courtesy: Devon Archives & Local Studies, 2021

The *High Coastal Heaths* Case Study extends to the eastern end of Exmoor National Park behind the town of Minehead where the coastline rises steeply behind the town. The harbour at Minehead was depicted in watercolour by the Rev. Swete on his tour of North Devon in 1796 (**Figure 5.1.12 Top Left**) and in the lithograph from the harbour arm by George Rowe, c.1840 (**Figure 5.1.13 Top Right**). The developing village of Minehead, again showing the rising ground behind, is captured in the watercolour drawing by James Bulwer (**Figure 5.1.14 Below**) in 1834.



James Bulwer

Minehead

c.1834

Courtesy: Yale Center for British Art