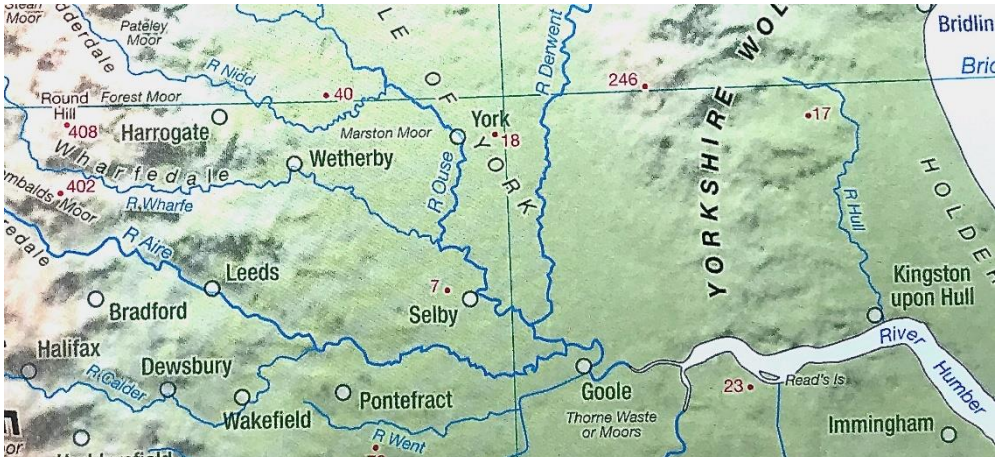
5.16. River Wharfe

1. Location

The River Wharfe in Yorkshire flows through the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The case study focuses on a short section of the river to the east of Skipton, in particular in the vicinity of Bolton Abbey.



2. Why was the Case Study Site selected?

This case study, together with three others in northern England, have been selected to illustrate upland sections of rivers and their natural landscape settings. These rivers were regularly painted over the last two centuries on account of their picturesque scenery, particularly where historic buildings, such as abbeys, were located adjacent to river frontages. Following the publication of William Gilpin's *Picturesque Tour of the River Wye* (Case Study 15) locations such as Bolton Abbey were painted by the masters of English landscape painting, and not only do these works highlight the quality and variety of the river scenery, but also provide individual detail on natural river processes.

3. Summary of the Geology, Fluvial Geomorphology and Processes

Starting at the confluence of two becks near Beckermonds, the Wharfe flows east and south-east across the moors, then south-east past Kettlewell and Bolton Abbey, before continuing through Wharfdale and on to Wetherby and Tadcaster.

On its course to its confluence with the River Ouse, the Wharfe passes through rocks mainly of Carboniferous age, comprising the Millstone Grit and sandstones and limestones. After collecting numerous streams across the upland moors, the river expands in its middle reaches, as dramatic waterfalls and rapids, such as The Strid, where the river narrows from 27 metres in width to under a metre. This contrasts with the tranquil flow of the river past the ruins of Bolton Abbey, which is illustrated and described in this case study. The Wharfe experiences flooding problems at various points along its length, including in the vicinity of Bolton Bridge and Bolton Abbey, as well as in its lower reaches. The Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust has been investigating and promoting 'nature-based solutions' to help manage flood risk in the upper and middle reaches.

4. How can the Art Imagery inform us of river change?

Because this case study site is located within an area of outstanding physical beauty and of cultural heritage significance, there has been almost no human intervention along this part of the Wharfe over time. Although the area is subject to periodic flooding, with some consequent riverbank erosion, a comparison of the historical images with present-day photographs again suggests very little change. The purpose of this study is not just to focus on change, but also to note lack of change and this can often point to careful river management, which is the case along this frontage of the River Wharfe.

Figure 16.1 (above): This picturesque view of *The River Wharfe near Bolton Priory* was produced by R. and D. Havell in 1811. Like the view of historic Barden Tower in c.1909, the watercolour by H.S. Palmer in **Figure 16.2 (below)** the deep river valley and the quality of the landscape is richly portrayed by both artists.

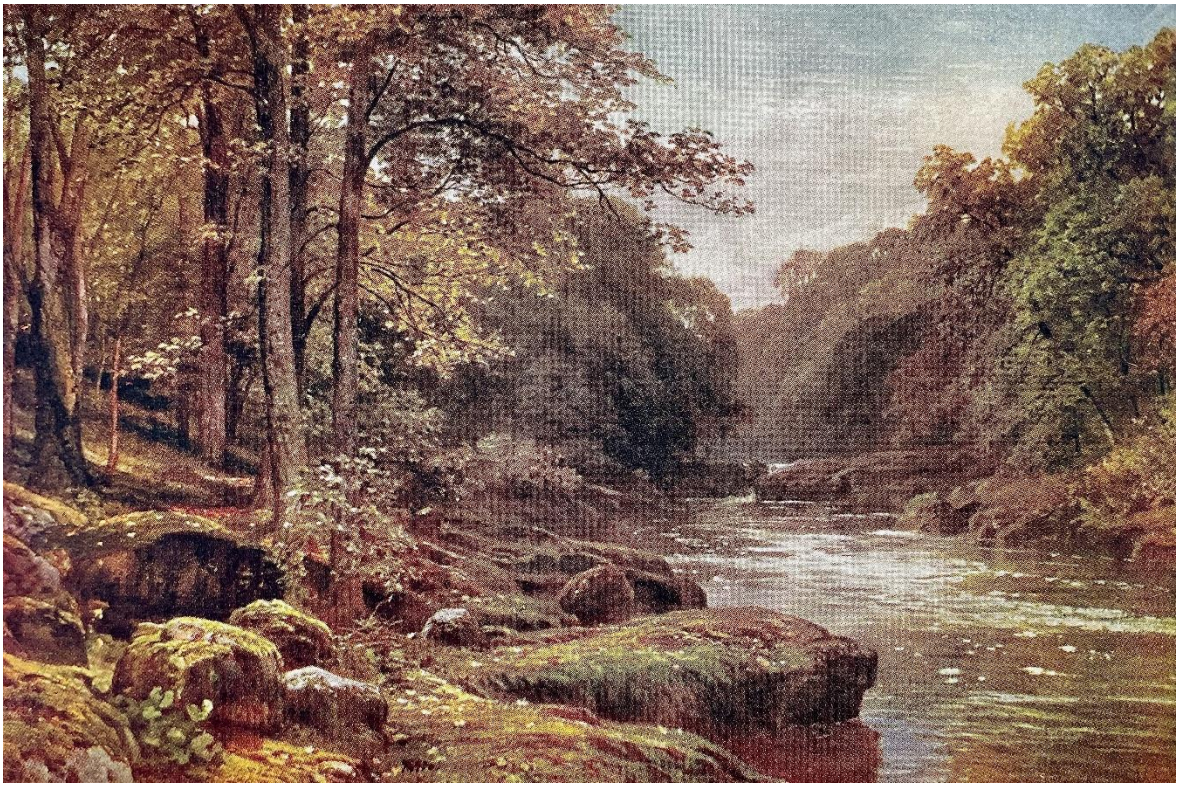
Courtesy: Figure 16.1 – the British Library/Licence Public Domain.

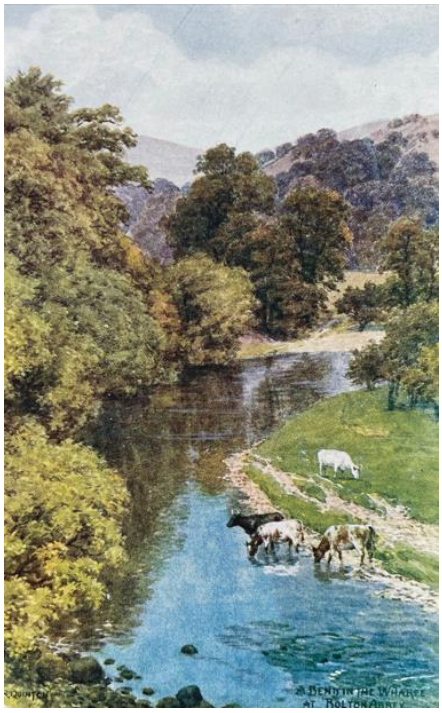
Figures 16.3 (above) and 16.4 (below): Many of the greatest British artists painted the romantic ruins of Bolton Abbey beside the Wharfe. The scene has changed little since the chromolithograph above was produced in c.1870. lying within the National Park, the Listed Building and its grounds are well-preserved, although this section of the Wharfe is subject to flooding.

Figures 16.5 (above): The artworks of Harold Sutton Palmer, who painted in the late Victorian to Edwardian eras, provide us with a detailed record of the physical nature of England's rivers at that time. On account of his topographical accuracy, they can be readily compared with the present-day conditions. Artists always favoured painting beautiful and highly saleable artworks such as this, particularly if the painting also included architectural heritage subjects.

Figure 16.6 (below) shows a further present-day view of the Abbey in the river valley, with the uplands beyond.

Figures 16.7 and 16.8 show the location of *The Strid*, a series of waterfalls and rapids contained within a deep channel eroded into the local sandstone. Here the Wharfe narrows from 27 metres in width to less than a metre. The view above was dramatically lithographed in 1821, whilst Sutton palmer's c.1900 watercolour (below) is taken from below the waterfall.





Figures 16.9 (left) and 16.10 (right) compare a stretch of the Wharfe close to Bolton Abbey in c.1920, as illustrated in A.R. Quinton's watercolour, with the present-day view. The scene is virtually unchanged, including erosion and deposition along the river banks.

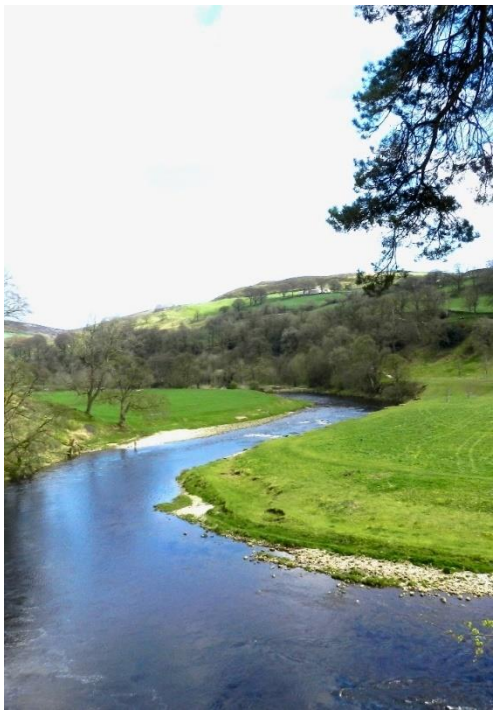


Figure 16.11 (below): This watercolour, also by Quinton, c.1910, shows the line of stepping stones across the Wharfe near Ilkley.

Courtesy: Figures 16.9 and 16.11 – Salmon's.

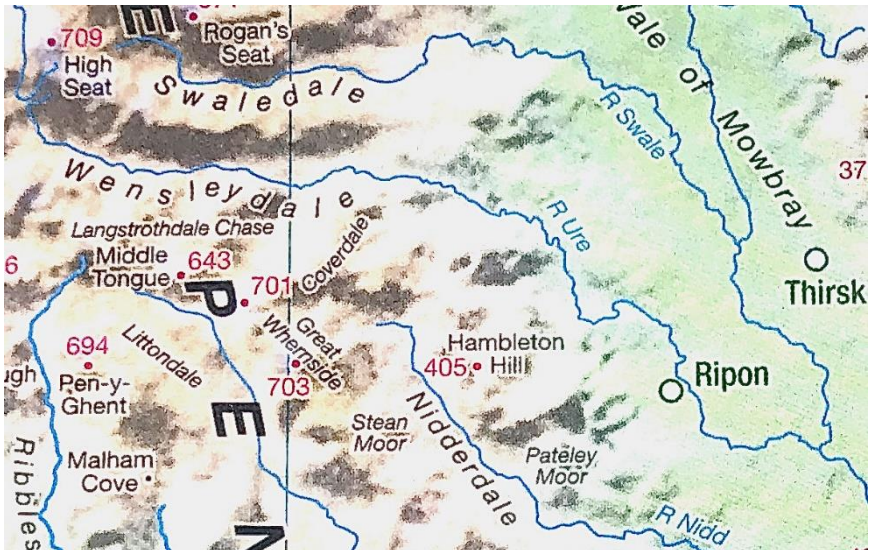
5. What are the key issues that can be learnt from this Study Area?

The study site provides an example of a largely natural river frontage where there is little evidence of physical, environmental or other changes affecting this highly important cultural heritage site. It is equally important, therefore, to note that sites where no change is evident over such an extended time period can contribute to our wider knowledge of river processes and the impacts of management or limited intervention over time.

5.17. River Ure

1. Location

The study site considers the River Ure between Aysgarth in Wensleydale and Ripon to the south-east.



2. Why was the Case Study Site selected?

This case study considers this dramatically located section of the River Ure within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The case study exemplifies the grandeur of the river scenery as it passes from the upper to the middle reaches, and the subject matter attracted some of Britain's leading river artists to the location. The illustrations by early artists show the course of the river within its wider topographical setting and, therefore, this study site is likely to be of particular interest to those involved in landscape and environmental management, and physical geography.

3. Summary of the Geology, Fluvial Geomorphology and Processes

The River Ure is one of many rivers that drain the Yorkshire Dales into the River Ouse; others include the Swale, and the Skell. The Upper Wensleydale is a high, open U-shaped valley. The river is fast flowing and fed by many gills, which cut through the woodland and grazing lands. The middle section of the river comprises limestones, which form the valley sides and are characterised by stepped limestone scars. Here the river is more gently flowing and meandering until it drops significantly at the series of waterfalls at Aysgarth; as can be seen from the artworks, the valley sides in places are heavily wooded, although the countryside becomes more open towards the south-east. Along its course the Ure is prone to flooding and across the Yorkshire Moors management approaches often involve *'nature-based solutions',* which play an increasingly important role in river management.

4. How can the Art Imagery inform us of river change?

A feature of this case study is the outstanding physical and natural beauties of the Ure along its course. The images suggest relatively little physical or environmental change over time, when comparing the watercolours by Harold Sutton Palmer, for example, in Figure 17.1 with the present-day image (Figure 17.2). the natural beauty of the landscape is illustrated in the succeeding two illustrations (Figures 17.3 and 17.4), whilst the dramatic Aysgarth Falls, comprising a triple flight of waterfalls surrounded by woodland, provide a spectacular feature; particularly after periods of heavy rainfall, when the flood waters cascade over the series of broad limestone steps known as Upper Force, Middle Force and Lower Force.

As might be expected locations along the Ure have attracted important figures from the art world and literature, including J.M.W. Turner, John Ruskin and William Wordsworth. In an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and of Special Scientific Interest day-to-day management of the landscape is particularly important, and this is evidenced in the policy today.

Figure 17.1: The open upland landscapes in the upper reaches of the Ure contrast with the deep valleys that the river has dissected. Rivers such as the Ure have carved out valleys, gorges and created waterfalls. Further down-river its course is sinuous and flows more slowly. Like the upper Wharfe and the Tees (Case Study 18) the Ure has a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity and, no doubt, this was experienced by the Victorian artists and writers who explored and described the river.

Drawing on the art resource it is apparent that the special qualities of the river environment and wider landscape have changed little since it was painted by the great river artist, Harold Sutton Palmer (above), and Anthony Devis in the eighteen century (Figure 17.3 overleaf).

Courtesy: Figure 17.1 – Maas Gallery, London; Figure 17.2 – Gordon Hatton/Creative Commons Licence.

Figure 17.3 (above): The River Ure at Hackfall near Ripon, c.1770, shows the grandeur and remoteness of the river. A gentler scene is provided in **Figure 17.4 (below)** by Harold Sutton Palmer's watercolour of the Ure near Ripon.

Courtesy: Figure 17.3 – Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston.

Figure 17.5 (above) and 17.6 (below) show Aysgarth Falls on the Ure to the west of Leyburn. The triple flight of falls cascade over the series of broad limestone steps – Upper, Middle and Lower Force. Harold Sutton Palmer has painted the scene with the river in flood in 1909. Many of the key river and waterfall painters of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries painted this beauty spot.

Courtesy: Figure 17.6 – David Dixon © Creative Commons Licence.

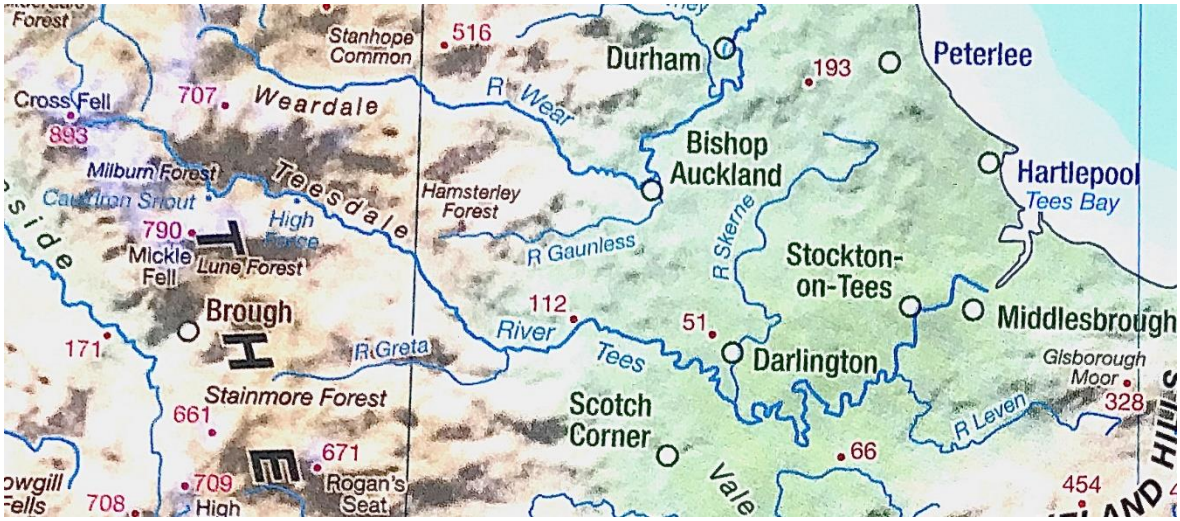
5. What are the key issues that can be learnt from this Study Area?

As seen in the upper and middle reaches of rivers within other case study sites, designated landscapes through which important rivers flow receive a high standard of protection. Because of the lack of development and human intervention over the centuries, they often remain in near pristine condition and this points to the sustainability of the natural environment and the management measures that have been put in place for its protection.

5.18. River Tees

1. Location

This case study considers a section of the upper and middle reaches of the Tees between High Force waterfall in the north-west and Barnard Castle to the south-east.



2. Why was the Case Study Site selected?

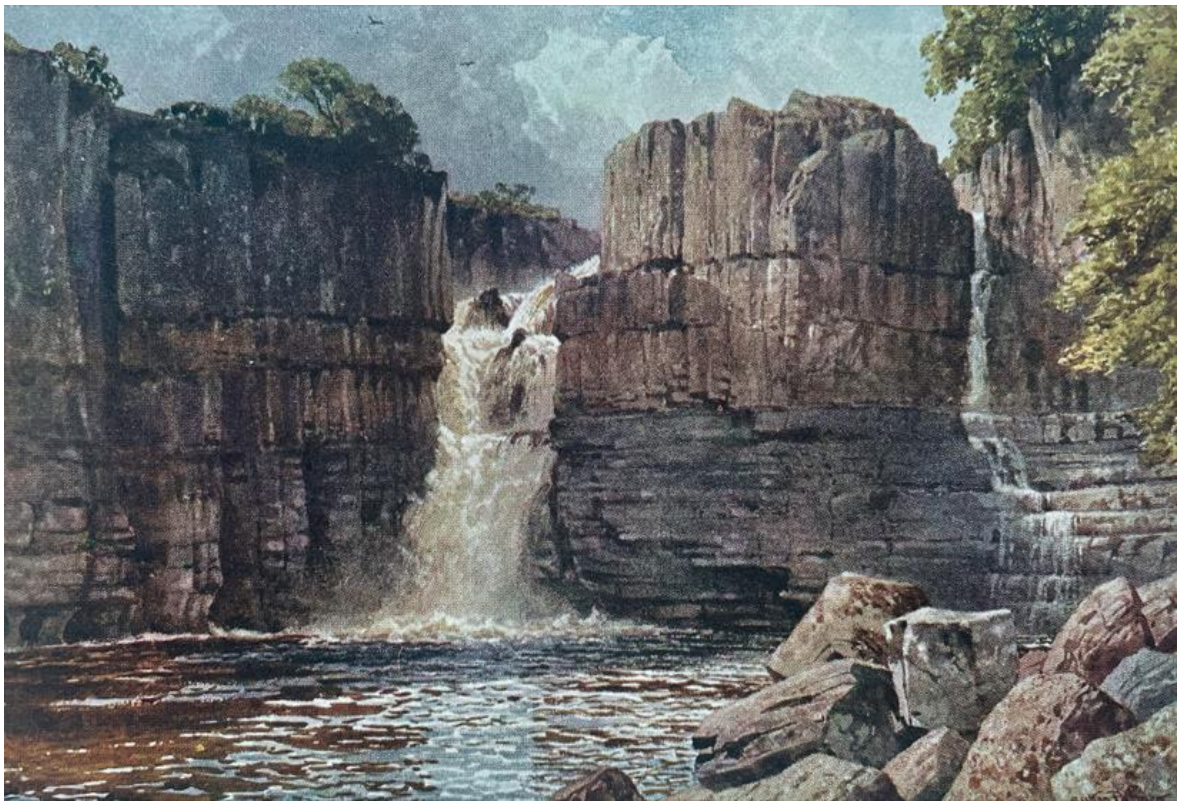
The wild and open landscapes of the fells and the Tees Valley proved an immediate attraction for artists on account of the scenic beauty of the river, and its deep gorges and dramatic waterfalls, for which artists found a ready market. The artworks provide detailed depictions of the physical characteristics of this part of the Tees in the nineteenth century and the wider natural environment and setting.

3. Summary of the Geology, Fluvial Geomorphology and Processes

The upper and middle reaches of the Tees flow largely across Carboniferous geology comprising particularly the Millstone Grit, with sandstones, mudstones and limestones. The Tees flows from Cross Fell in the northern Pennines to the North Sea near Middlesbrough. In its upper reaches, after emerging from the reservoir of Cauldron Snout, the river passes over a series of hard basalt and dolerite rocks that intrude through the softer limestone, resulting in a succession of falls and rapids. From Middleton-in-Teesdale, the river follows a more gentle south-easterly course towards Barnard Castle. The Tees is susceptible to flooding in its upper and middle reaches and locations including Barnard Castle were affected most recently by Storm Franklin in 2022.

4. How can the Art Imagery inform us of river change?

For this case study a series of images of the Tees at High Force, Rokeby, Cotherstone, and Barnard Castle were reviewed and compared with present-day images. All these locations are of great scenic value, and the natural beauty of these locations appears virtually unchanged when compared with present-day photographs. The images that have been chosen for this case study include works by two particularly fine river landscape painters, Thomas Creswick, who painted in the mid-nineteenth century, and Harold Sutton Palmer, who painted in the late and early twentieth centuries. Both these artists can be relied upon as providing true depictions of the landscapes at that time.



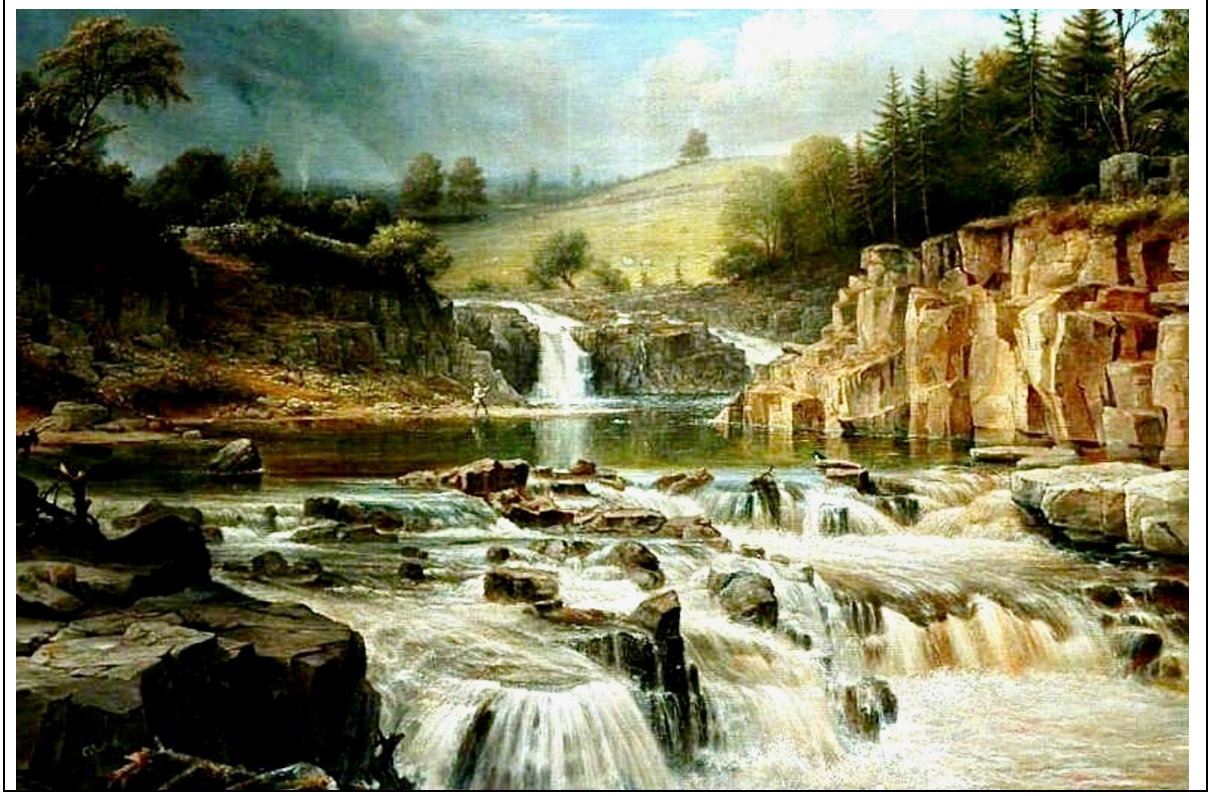
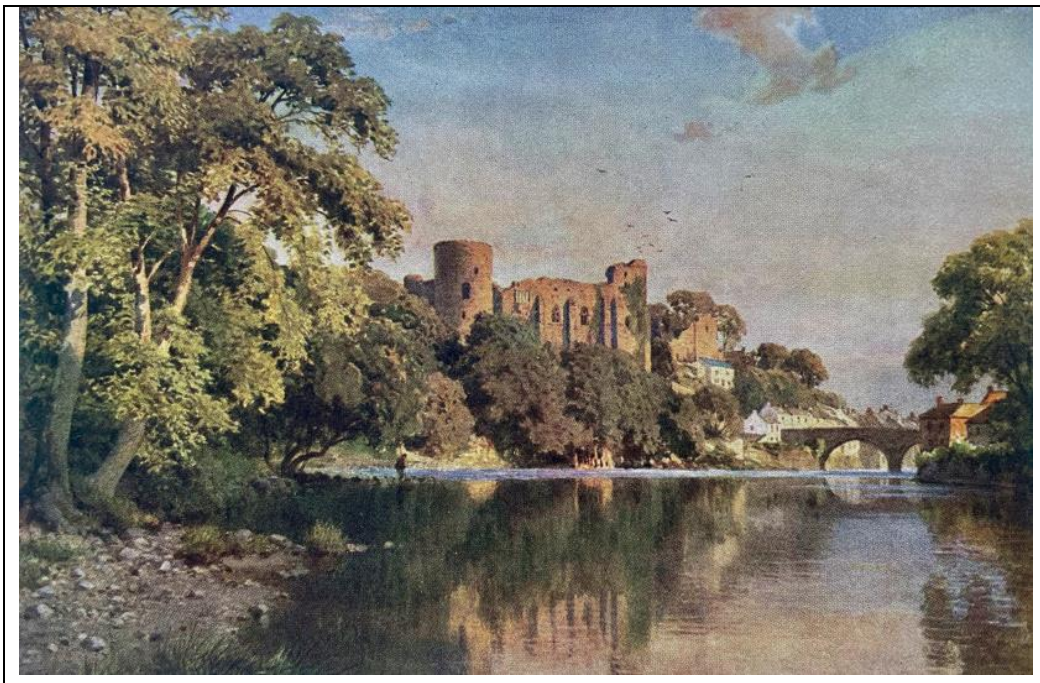


Figure 18.1 (above) and 18.2 (below) showing two of the dramatic waterfalls along the course of the Upper Tees. The watercolour above by Harold Sutton Palmer (c.1900) shows High Force in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the falls cascade over a hard formation of Igneous dolerite, which overlies Carboniferous Limestone. Below are the falls at Wynch Bridge painted by Clement Burlison in c.1860s.

Courtesy: Durham County Council N&T Collection.

Figures 18.3 (above) and 18.4 (below) show more tranquil, although dramatic and beautiful, locations along the Tees at Cotherstone near Barnard Castle and Rokeby, south-east of Barnard Castle. The view above shows the grandeur of this section of the river painted in watercolour by Harold S. Palmer in c.1890, whilst the highly detailed painting below was produced by Thomas Creswick in c.1850.

Courtesy: Manchester Art Gallery.



Figures 18.5 (top) and 18.6 (bottom) show views in the vicinity of Barnard Castle on the north bank of the Tees in County Durham. The Castle in its picturesque setting was painted by many artists, including H. S. Palmer (top) in c.1900, together with the present-day view.

Sutton Palmer painted English river scenery with great topographical accuracy.

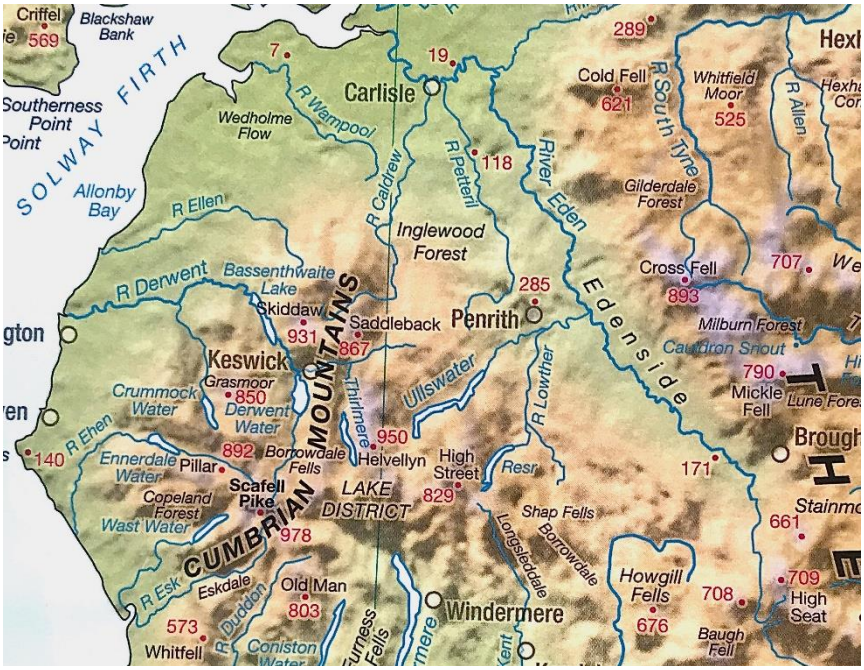
5. What are the key issues that can be learnt from this Study Area?

Artists tended to paint beautiful locations, such as the upper and middle Tees Valley, because these were highly desirable and commercial subjects. These landscapes lie within the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and, therefore, receive particular landscape protection through the planning system. Within such environmentally important locations it is to be expected, therefore, that relatively little physical and environmental change will be observed.

5.19. River Eden

1. Location

The case study considers scenery along the River Eden between Lazonby and Carlisle along the river Eden in Cumbria.



2. Why was the Case Study Site selected?

This case study site was selected on account of its wildness and scenic beauty along the course of the river, and Carlisle where the river flows into the Solway Firth.

3. Summary of the Geology, Fluvial Geomorphology and Processes

Through most of its course the River Eden flows through sandstones and mudstones of Permian and Triassic Age. Its route includes a dramatic waterfall at Gilbeck and steep sided valleys, with the body of the river growing as it receives flows of waters from the many other becks flowing off the Pennines to the east, and the longer rivers from the Lake District to the west. The scenery to the north is contrasting with the more low-lying Vale of Cumbria and the Solway Plain. Along its course, therefore, the river exhibits a wide range of geological and geomorphological features of interest.

4. How can the Art Imagery inform us of river change?

Despite the great scenic beauty of the River Eden, research for this case study has found that there was a much smaller art resource than anticipated, with the exception of numerous views of Carlisle. Perhaps it was the great attraction of the Lake District that drew artists there rather than to the wonderful scenery along the course of the River Eden in Cumbria. As a result, there were only a few illustrations found to be of use for this case study. These included, however, two exceptionally fine watercolours by the great river artist, Harold Sutton Palmer, (see Figures 19.1 and 19.3) of '*Samson's Chamber'* near Carlisle, and the Eden near Lazonby.

In terms of Carlisle itself there is a wide choice of images dating back to the early nineteenth century. Figure 19.4 provides a fine view of Carlisle in 1868 showing the bridge and the river with adjacent pastureland. The present-day photograph shows the same bridge, together with riverside parkland and meadow rather than grazing land for cattle and sheep, as in the earlier image.

In terms of the artworks by Sutton Palmer, these show an enduring landscape, with the river flowing through durable geological formations, which are subject to only a very slow rate of change. The wider landscape appears similar today, although the tree cover on the hillsides appears more managed than in Sutton Palmer's watercolours.

Figures 19.1 (above) and 19.3 (below) show the Eden at Salmon's Chamber and near Lazonby respectively. Sutton Palmer's works display the grandeur of the river settings in c.1900. the present-day view (Figure 19.2, centre) shows the nature of the Eden today.

Courtesy: River Eden Fishing.

Figure 19.4 (above): *Carlisle from the Sands with the Eden Bridge* in 1868. Watercolour by William Henry Nutter.

Courtesy: Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle.

Figure 19.5 (below): The present-day view of the bridge with parkland on both banks instead of meadows for cattle and sheep grazing.

Courtesy: Guy Percival, CLO Public Domain.

5. What are the key issues that can be learnt from this Study Area?

The availability of suitable artwork images to illustrate some case studies can be limited, such as in this case where a greater range of saleable subjects, such as of the Lake District, drew artists away from some of the highly scenic but more remote and less accessible locations such as parts of the River Eden. Nevertheless, the images do provide insight into the nature of the river over a hundred years ago and its appearance at a key point in Carlisle.