

## 2. the peak tradition



*The centre of Tideswell showing buildings of various ages, forms and materials*



*Longnor Market Place*

## Landscape and Settlements

**2.1** The beauty of the Peak District owes much to its variety of upland landscapes. Often within a relatively small area, moorlands alternate with dales and wooded valleys with upland pastures. Dramatic change in the underlying geology is the key influence here. However, other factors such as climate, land form and human intervention, especially access and land management practices from prehistoric times, have all shaped both the landscape and the settlements and buildings that are now integral to it.

**2.2** The landscape of the National Park can be readily divided into the gritstone and shale areas of the Dark Peak and Southwest Peak, and the limestone area of the White Peak.

**2.3** The **Dark Peak**, to the north and east, has high open moorlands with gritstone edges giving way to enclosed rough grazing and riverside pastures bounded by drystone walls, and settlements in the valleys. The **Southwest Peak** covers

the Staffordshire and Cheshire parts of the Park. Although geologically similar to the Dark Peak, the landscape here is a mosaic of moorland, rough grazings and pasture land with scattered, loose knit settlements. Drystone walls frequently give way to hedgerows. The **White Peak** in the centre of the Park is characterised by a high, rolling plateau of walled fields, tree belts and settlements close to a reliable water source, the other characteristic feature being the steep-sided dales whose watercourses often disappear underground.

**2.4** The siting and appearance of buildings, farmsteads and villages, both large and small, are intimately related to the surrounding landscape. All had a purpose, such as farming or mining which depended on and shaped the land. Drystone walls and occasionally hedgerows link buildings together and also link villages into the wider landscape. Overall this gives a strong local identity to the Park as a whole.

**2.5** Pressures for development, new infrastructure or the desire to extend gardens and make fields into amenity space



*Dark Peak, Holme*



*South West Peak, Longnor*



*White Peak, Chelmorton*

pose a long term threat to parts of the National Park landscape. It need not be so. An understanding of the area's landscape character, how it evolved and how individual buildings, roads and settlements contribute to that character allow informed decisions to be made on how new development can enhance local identity.

**2.6** The Authority is preparing a Landscape Character Assessment for the whole of the National Park. Conservation Area Appraisals for the 109 Conservation Areas within the Park provide further character analysis at a village scale. Both the Assessment and the Appraisals are there to inform and ensure better management of the National Park landscape. Design and Access Statements are a statutory requirement for most planning applications. They should be taken as an opportunity to demonstrate how a proposal will relate well to the character of the area and not just the neighbouring property and should refer to Landscape Character Assessment and where relevant to a Conservation Area Appraisal.

## Buildings

**2.7** Traditional buildings in the Peak District have their own distinct character. Think of the Peak District National Park, and stone is likely to be part of the picture. Whether you are on moorland edges, in limestone dales or in the Southwest peak, the net of field walls, the buildings themselves and the sheer



*The Cat and Fiddle Public House*

commonality of material give a superb visual unity. The nature of the **local stone** - its durability, strength and how easily it is worked - has shaped how the buildings look. It is also what distinguishes our buildings from the vernacular architecture of other regions. Vernacular architecture is defined as the style of building which is traditional rather than academic in its inspiration, and strongly related to function and the use of local materials.

**2.8** **Climate** is the other important factor in determining how buildings look. The weather in the Peak can be harsh. Houses were generally sited in sheltered locations and orientated so that their fronts faced south to capture most of the light and solar gain. By contrast, the rear (north) elevations were largely blank.

**2.9** Add the two factors of climate and materials together and the result is a building style characterised by three qualities:

- Robustness
- Simplicity
- Horizontality of form

**2.10** The buildings are strong, solid and well proportioned. Their form has a horizontal emphasis which readily harmonises with the landscape. The detailing is generally simple, with a minimum of decoration. The smaller the building, the plainer it is.



*Monyash*



*Field barn, nr. Warslow*

## Understanding the Peak District Style

**2.11** The best way to gain an appreciation of the Peak District style is to look at the buildings, landscape and villages local to you. The landscape character of a particular part of the Park will affect and inform the character of the buildings locally.

**2.12** Despite an overall similarity, there are subtle variations throughout the National Park that give each part a slightly different character. Monyash, for example, is almost unique in using limestone rather than gritstone for quins and dressings to its traditional cottages. Other villages such as Abney are roofed almost entirely in stone slate, whereas Calton in the Southwest Peak relies heavily on Staffordshire blue clay tiles.

**2.13** Buildings in the north of the Park often have distinctive rows of weavers' windows on their upper floor giving a Pennine look to what are sometimes large, three storey properties. By contrast, in the south, dwellings are smaller, more homely in scale, closer in spirit to cottages in the Midlands.

**2.14** Both styles can be termed vernacular in the sense that they employ the same basic approach but allow the solutions to be generated locally. Both styles reveal some element of careful composition and, from the late 18th century onwards, a tendency to adopt elements of more academically inspired architecture, such as Georgian windows or Gothic revival details such as hood mouldings or linked, octagonal chimneys. Such elaboration however is not common (except perhaps on large estates) and by and large even this architecture is marked by its relative simplicity.



*Cottages, Parwich*



*Eyam Hall*



*Estate house, Edensor*



*Houses with weavers windows, Holme*



*Arkwright Square, Bakewell*

## The Role of Modern Architecture

**2.15** It is not easy to introduce modern architecture successfully into an area of traditional buildings. The temptation is to imitate past styles, often poorly and without the craftsmanship of the past. This leads at best to a bland version of the vernacular; at worst to a pastiche solution that devalues the original.

**2.16** Previous generations of designers and builders were able to produce buildings that related well to the past without relying on imitation. This was achieved through the use of common materials, care in ensuring that the form and detailing

were in harmony with older buildings and a high standard of workmanship. The new development was complementary, rather than identical to, surrounding buildings.

**2.17** Polite architecture (which particularly in the 19th century produced one-off buildings such as churches or town halls) is based on academic tradition rather than the vernacular, and on national rather than regional styles. It is only the use of local materials that links such buildings to the area. Today it is easy to ignore even that constraint. A modern building can now look the same wherever it is, and at the same time belong nowhere.



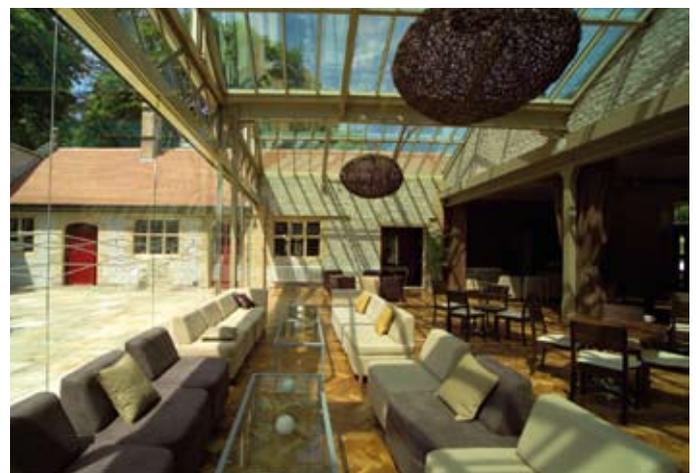
*Polite Architecture: All Saints Church, Hassop, built 1818. The Presbytery alongside is much more vernacular in style*



*New swimming pool, Thornbridge Hall: a contemporary addition to the historic context*



*Former cornmill converted to a house, Nether Padley (see also chapter 8)*



*New conference facility within converted stableblock, Thornbridge Hall*



*Here the local tradition is the starting point for something new and of its time, but which fits in well to its context. New houses, on the left, in Calver; on the right, Winster*

**2.18** There may be circumstances where traditional designs need to be followed, particularly in a terrace of houses or in estate villages. By and large however, it is preferable to find a design solution which reflects or reinterprets the local tradition and is also a product of our time. This is not an easy option. As well as requiring good design skills, it needs an in-depth knowledge of what makes traditional buildings look the way

they do. New modern buildings often fail in design terms when their designers are more intent on current architectural fashion than respecting the context they are working within. Such developments do not stand the test of time. The National Park is an outstandingly beautiful area. Modern architecture needs to respond accordingly and create inspirational buildings worthy of that context.



*Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell houses a livestock market, Business Link, Farmers' Market and public rooms - a one-off design worthy of its National Park context*