

Area of LDU within AONB: 118.9 hectares

% of LDU within AONB: 39%



Date surveyed: 3 March 2010

Survey points: SS241180, SS236177, SS234174, SS231172, SS218174, SS213177

Summary of landscape character

This area comprises the northern half of the most southerly combe of the AONB, the boundary of which runs along the valley floor (dividing the valley between Devon and Cornwall). Predominantly steep-sided and covered in oak-dominated, ancient semi-natural woodland, a small stream winds through wet woodland and open areas of pasture, while the valley opens out towards the coast as shrubby grassland and heath replace the woodland cover. SAC and SSSI designation covers most of the area, with the stretch west of Gooseham Mill comprising the Welcombe and Marsland Valleys Nature Reserve. Largely devoid of settlement and roads, this is a very tranquil landscape.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION

LANDFORM / TOPOGRAPHY

Landform description	Steep combe slopes stretching inland from the coast, delineating a narrow valley floor. A tributary valley joins the combe from the north halfway along, before it splits into a 'V' at its inland edge.
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LAND USE AND PATTERNS

Agriculture	<i>Main agricultural land use</i>	<i>Other agricultural land use(s)</i>	
	Pasture and rough grazing.	N/A	
Field patterns and boundaries	<i>Field patterns and origins</i>	<i>Size (note variations)</i>	<i>Boundary type / description</i>
	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other land uses (e.g. recreation)	Recreation – footpaths cover most of the length of the valley.		

WOODLAND AND SEMI-NATURAL HABITATS

Trees / woodland cover	<i>Size and distribution within landscape</i>		<i>Type and species(broadleaved / conifer)</i>	
	Steep-sided broadleaved woodland covers the majority of the combe slope, with flushes of wet woodland along the valley floor (traditionally under coppice management).		Predominantly oak woodland intermixed with ash, holly, rowan, beech, sycamore and hazel on the slopes, with wet flushes of alder and willow on the valley floor.	
Semi-natural habitats	<i>Description and location within landscape</i>			
	An area of national and international importance for its wildlife habitats (part of the Marsland to Clovelly Coast SSSI & SAC), with the western half also part of the Devon Wildlife Trust Welcombe and Marsland Valley Nature Reserve. Along with the semi-natural woodland cover (large patches of which are ancient towards the east), maritime grassland, heathland and scrub occurs on the slope in the west, while grazing pasture, ponds and hay meadows contribute to the diversity.			
SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT				
Settlement pattern	<i>Settlement size, type, density and relationship to landscape</i>			
	Apart from West Mill inside the western edge (once home to poet Ronald Duncan), and a couple of small houses just north of Gooseham Mill near the centre, the area is devoid of settlement.			
Transport pattern (including Public Rights of Way)	<i>Road pattern, character and relationship to settlement / landscape</i>			
	The combe is accessible for most of its length via public footpaths, whilst no roads (just a few access tracks) are found within the LDU.			
Local vernacular styles and materials	<i>Predominant traditional building materials</i>	<i>Any local variations</i>		<i>Other built features reflecting vernacular</i>
	Cream render with green-painted window frames, and grey slate tile roofs.	N/A		N/A
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT				
Key historic features visible in the landscape	<i>Description</i>			
	N/A			
VIEWS / PERCEPTUAL QUALITIES				
Views	<i>Key views / landmark features</i>		<i>Intervisibility with LDUs</i>	
			<i>From this LDU</i>	<i>To this LDU</i>
	Views are largely confined by woodland, though on the open slope in the west there are views to West Mill and the coast, whilst limited views are afforded across the more		694 (the coast to the west)	694 405, 686 (the elevated land to the north)

	open valley floor.		overlooking the combe)
Perceptual qualities (description)	Strong perceptions of tranquillity occur throughout the combe, reinforced by the proximity of the running stream and the rich wildlife. Sense of enclosure is associated with the thick, dominant woodland cover, with expansive views from the more open slope in the west.		

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

Designation	Number	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
NATURE CONSERVATION		
SAC	2	74.71%
SSSI	2	74.71%
County Wildlife Sites	1	7.82%

UK BAP PRIORITY HABITATS

UK BAP Priority Habitat	Area (ha)	% of LDU land area that is within the AONB
Lowland heathland	38.87	32.69%
Maritime cliff and slope	11.54	9.70%
Traditional Orchards	0.38	0.32%
Upland oakwoods	18.75	15.77%

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING LANDSCAPE CONDITION

Perceptual qualities	High levels of tranquillity throughout.
Views	Views predominantly restricted by woodland, though open in the west to West Mill house and the coast.
Land use	Evidence of woodland clearance along the valley bottom, where enclosed pasture is a typical feature.
Field patterns	N/A
Field boundaries	N/A
Trees and woodland	Evidence that woodland is largely being managed in accordance with its international designation (e.g. previous removal of conifer plantation within heathland in the west). Some upper slopes in the east have a bramble/bracken-dominated understorey suggesting the need for improved management in these areas.
Semi-natural habitats	Comprehensive national and international designations suggest favourable management of the LDU's semi-natural habitats.
Settlement and development	No issues noted in the field.
Local vernacular	N/A