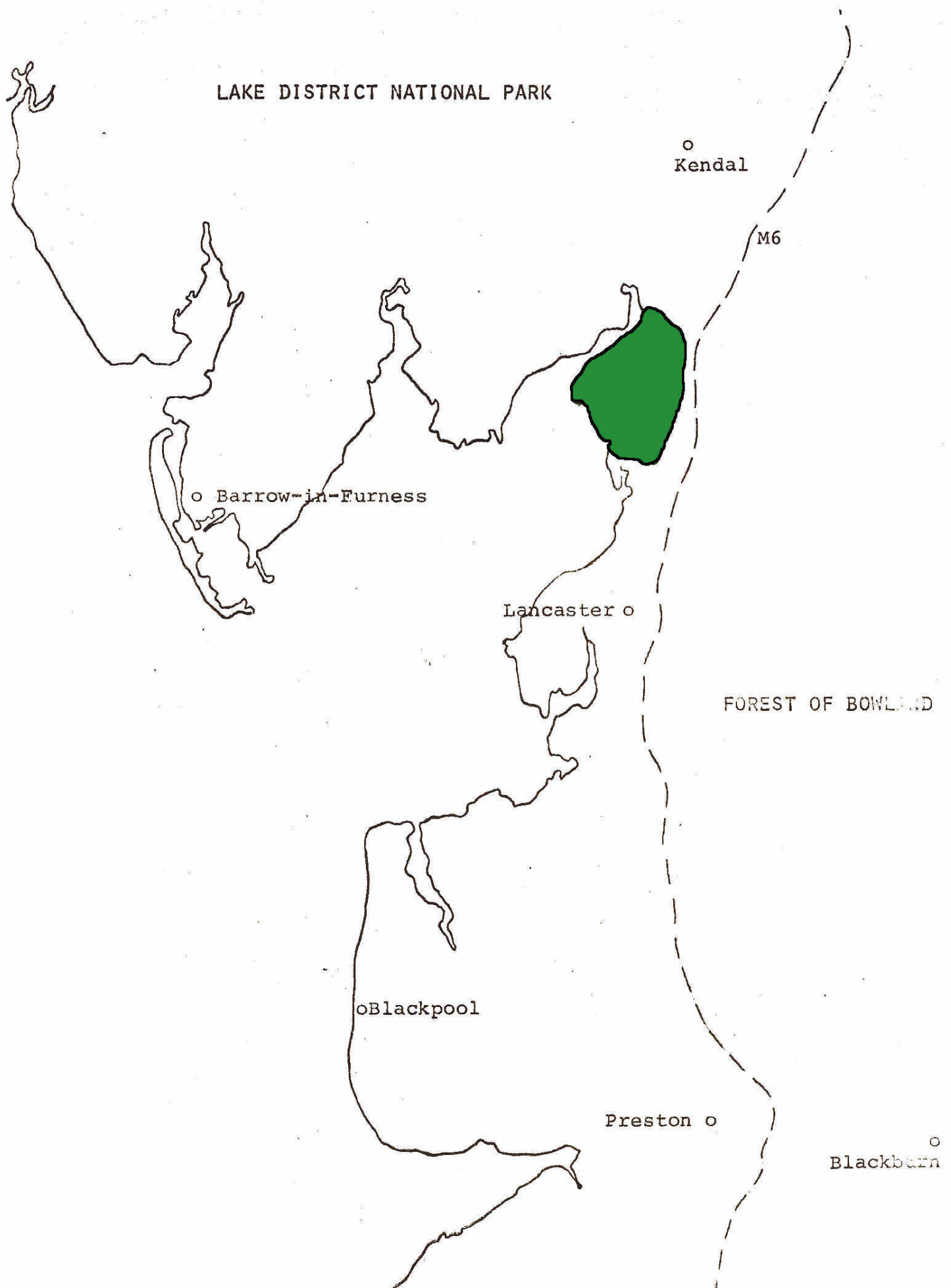




The Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Arnsdale-Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

A report by the Lancaster and Morecambe Group
of the Ramblers' Association

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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INTRODUCTION

The Ramblers' Association is active in the protection and enhancement of the amenity of the countryside. Particular attention has always been given to footpaths but interest is taken in all matters affecting recreation and the natural scene.

During the winter of 1972/73 the Lancaster and Morecambe Group has studied the Arnside-Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Order creating the Area was confirmed during the study, in December 1972. Eleven evening meetings were held to discuss different aspects of the Area and there were three day-long visits to investigate specific points that had arisen. Since the Area is very near many members of the study group took separate visits on other occasions to further the study. The meetings were open to all members of the Group and other organisations who were thought to be interested were invited to contribute to the discussion. In fact there were regular attenders with visitors who came for specific evenings. Several visitors with specific expertise were invited and contributed greatly. The Group Secretary wrote numerous letters to various local organisations and authorities to gather information and opinion. In general we received great cooperation and considerable interest was shown in the study.

Amenity organisations are frequently criticised for having a negative approach, for being "against", and for trying to stop things happening. We hope that this report will show that we can look ahead and make suggestions for the future so that the Area can remain of "Outstanding Natural Beauty". Another criticism is that of "elitism"; for example, that the members of an organisation want to keep an area in a certain way for their exclusive use or the few of the general public with similar interests. To some extent this is inevitable in any organisation since it exists for a specific cause, be it the Automobile Association or a political organisation. We hope that this criticism can be allayed by a reasoned approach to the recommendations. In this particular study we had one overriding consideration: the well-being of the Arnside-Silverdale Area and the continuance of its Natural Beauty. The consequences of this aim might appear

to some as elitism but they are not derived from personal or organisational selfishness but rather from concern for the future of the Area.

This report attempts to be a consensus of opinion of the Group discussions and does not necessarily imply general Ramblers' Association policy. Where possible we have made specific recommendations. We hope that the organisations, and occasionally individuals, to whom these are directed will take them as sincere and helpful suggestions.

THE ARNSIDE-SILVERDALE AREA

General Planning

The Arnside-Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was designated on 17 July 1971 and confirmed during December 1972. It has an area of thirty square miles of which ten are covered at high water and lies adjacent to the southern tip of the Lake District National Park between Morecambe Bay and the main routes along the west coast, M6, A6 and the London-Glasgow railway (see the cover). The M6 motorway provides easy access from the populated areas of southern Lancashire and further afield. It has a varied geology and vegetation with areas of bare limestone pavement, salt marsh, foreshore, fen, parkland, woodland and agricultural land.

The boundary and principal features are shown in figure 1. Although areas of good scenic value lie to the east we feel that the present boundary is reasonable to include the highest proportion of the finest quality of landscape. The designation of an AONB makes little direct effect on the area since the planning authorities have adequate powers and the Countryside Act extended to the countryside as a whole most of the grants previously available only to National Parks and AONB's. However, such a designation has a significant effect on the strength at which planning can be applied and thus provides extra protection in practice.

The Area lies across the boundary between Westmorland and Lancashire and even after local government reorganisation responsibility will still be split between two councils. We are concerned that this Area of obvious geographic unity should have a common planning policy. With the proposed council boundaries we realise that, although desirable, a single detailed planning committee is impracticable. However, there should be strong cooperation in planning policy. There has been joint county discussion in the past but in some aspects such as village and caravan site development the two sections of the Area are rather different.

We urge strongly that there is a joint planning policy committee for the AONB with frequent meetings.

A suggestion has been made that there should be a "shadow" committee with representatives of local parish councils, amenity bodies, etc., to monitor the Area as a whole. However, it is not certain that the problems are large enough to keep such a committee sufficiently active to be more effective than the constituent bodies acting separately with their present informal cooperation.

We welcome the Westmorland County Council-South Westmorland Plan for rural development which proposes policies for development until 1981. Although some of the conclusions, such as the expansion of Arnside and Storth in the AONB, may not be totally appropriate a coherent forward planning policy open for public discussion and consultation is a great improvement on the apparent piecemeal development often experienced. The villages of Arnside, Storth and Milnthorpe have better access and lower amenity and architectural value than the settlements in the Lancashire section which are therefore more susceptible to inappropriate development.

We recommend that a long term and detailed planning strategy should also be considered for the Lancashire section of the AONB with full public discussion.

Two major proposals were under review during the time of the study, the Arnside Link Road and the Morecambe Bay Barrage. Fortunately the former was decided in favour of the AONB during the winter and we welcome the decision. A decision on the Barrage has not been reached at the time of writing. The Barrage is a major undertaking with a profound effect on the whole region. Because a decision had not been reached, and more particularly because the several possible schemes vary so widely, detailed consideration could not be given. However, some general comments can be made whichever scheme may be suggested and we expect that most of the recommendations in this report will remain and probably be reinforced if the Barrage is constructed.

The primary, or direct, impact of the Barrage on the AONB need be fairly limited if it were carried out sympathetically. By direct impact we mean the effect of the Barrage itself once it had been constructed and assuming that the AONB was fairly isolated from the work during and after construction.

The visual effect from the high points will be most serious since the finest views at present over the Bay will be of large harsh sea walls with ugly shorelines where there is considerable draw-down. The change in the water level surrounding the AONB may have some effect on the drainage and hence on the nature of the moss areas. If there is no salt water seepage landward and a comprehensive drainage scheme is installed with primary regard to the natural aspects of the land then the water table may in fact be more stable than at present. Considerable changes may be expected round the shores, especially in the Kent estuary. The nature of the tidal areas and the shore wild life will be altered drastically with the change from tidal salt water to constant level or slowly fluctuating fresh water. Except for the areas of large draw-down this may be only a change rather than a destruction. The draw-down should be concentrated in the more artificial pumped storage reservoirs. The effect of the large new polder areas will be unknown until their nature and use has been determined.

Although the primary impact is marginal to the Area the secondary impact could be considerable. In all of the schemes major roads and embankments will be constructed very near the AONB. During the construction there will be considerable pressure to obtain constructional material from the nearest source, the AONB. Not only would this be serious but there would be pressure to "improve", streamline, widen and reinforce the roads to take the heavy traffic. This would almost certainly happen even with the proposals of the use of cable railways. After construction the Barrage would be a major tourist attraction especially if its possible mass recreation potential is realised. We see this as a major threat to the natural beauty and it should be managed carefully. In particular, any new facilities on the Kent estuary should be sited away from the present shoreline with access only from any new road on the sea walls.

If major construction is carried out in Morecambe Bay we want no mineral extraction from the AONB, no access to the construction from the AONB and no changes in the roads. The plan for the Barrage should have complete separation of the mass recreation from the AONB with no direct access points from any new roads.

Building Development

In the South Westmorland Plan Arnside and Storth are proposed for expansion. The Arnside population change is from 2050 in 1970 to 2200 in 1981 on outstanding planning permissions and it is not proposed to release further land for development. In Storth, however, the corresponding change is 540 to 840. In the Lancashire part of the AONB plans are less defined. Silverdale and Warton are "suitable for smaller expansion" and "a large amount of the anticipated development" indicated on the "Urban Fence" maps has already taken place. Silverdale has no main drainage so that the density is necessarily restricted. Little development is expected in Yealand Conyers and Yealand Redmayne. We feel that this development is enough and further building should be severely restricted. In particular, Warton has suffered from recent expansion.

Concern has been expressed over the proportion of retired people in the AONB (Arnside has 32%, the largest in South Westmorland), but this seems inevitable.

Building Conservation

The Civic Amenities Act 1967 1(i) says that "Every local planning authority shall from time to time determine which parts of their area are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance and shall designate such areas".

Recently Lancashire County Council announced its intention to designate the main street of Warton village a Conservation Area. We welcome this and hope that active steps will be taken to enhance the area. In particular, the Post Office and Electricity Board should remove their overhead wires. Other obtrusive wires are at Slack Head and near Arnside Tower Farm.

We ask that where possible the overhead wires in the AONB and, in particular, in Warton village be removed.

The general appearance of the frontage abutting the road through Yealand Conyers is very pleasant and contains many listed buildings and should be given protection. Another area containing many listed buildings and with a pleasant character is the centre of Beetham including the church, the Wheatsheaf Hotel and adjacent cottages. Storth, round the Post Office, contains no listed buildings but is worthy of protection.

Consideration should be given to the designation of the appropriate parts of Beetham, Storth and Yealand Conyers as Conservation Areas and the objects of such designation should be actively pursued there and in Warton.

There are many fine buildings in the Area and most are in private hands and well looked after. With our limited resources we have not been able to consider these in detail but we are particularly concerned that the Pele Towers of the Area (Beetham Hall, Hazelslack and Arnside) should be well looked after and are concerned about Arnside Tower which sustains considerable pressure from visitors. On a similar note we hope that the chimney at Crag Foot will be preserved although we have divided opinions about the proportions and material of the top section.

The limestone field walls are falling into disrepair in many parts of the Area. This process is being hastened near roads by the removal of stone by visitors. Although public disapproval of such acts may have some effect the best remedy is to keep the walls in good repair so that they do not look like stone piles.

We encourage all efforts to preserve the historic buildings and dry stone walls of the Area.

Roads and Transport

The railway line still exists between Carnforth and Barrow and is fairly well used. The bus service from Carnforth through the Yealands, Silverdale, Arnside and Milnthorpe is good compared with many present rural routes. The area has no through routes to tempt heavy traffic from the M6 and A6 so the roads exist mainly for private cars, of both inhabitants and tourist visitors, service vehicles and industrial (quarry) traffic. We see road development as the largest potential problem in the Area since there seems to be no planning control or public consultation.

There must be careful consideration to road development which is prompted by the congestion caused by visitors at only a few times during the peak summer periods since during the majority of the year the visitors are few but the roads remain. The capacity of the existing road system should remain basically as at present. Major improvements in some parts would threaten the present scenic character of the Area both directly by injuring visual amenity and indirectly by encouraging larger traffic flows. We believe most strongly that the present road system should remain as at present with extremely little change.

Let us consider the principal road users. The access to Sandside Quarry is along the B5282 to Milnthorpe and the A6. This is a short road and the whole route from Arnside has a good claim to be a good road serving two large population centres. With the conversion of the old Arnside-Sandside railway this should be accomplished. Middlebarrow quarry has a direct rail connection, some material perhaps goes by train and this should be encouraged. Road traffic can pass along the low road by Crag Foot to Warton and Carnforth and need not pass through Warton village.

The major caravan sites are mainly for static caravans so that no road improvements are needed for the very few touring caravans or removals from the sites. This is as true for the

sites near the coast as for the sites at Fell End near Hale with short access to the A6.

The inhabitants of the AONB have mostly come to live in the Area at considerable expense (judging from house prices) and have therefore made a conscious decision to live in natural surroundings. In this respect also theirs is a privilege to live in such an area and with this privilege there are some disadvantages linked with beautiful surroundings. Thus the inhabitants do not want an urban environment with wide, fast roads and appreciate that travelling speeds must be appropriate to the natural scene.

The visitors come to the Area for the natural beauty and a major part of this is the narrow winding roads, which are all that most see anyway. Widening and straightening of roads will not increase the pleasure but will increase the volume and speed of the traffic. The destruction of the scenic nature of the roads will not increase safety since speeds will rise. The elimination of bends and removal of hedges and walls will increase the number of cars visible and visitors do not come to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to see a multitude of cars on the sort of road that they can see at home. This Area could be a prime example of destruction by the provision of too many facilities in the way of roads. AONB's are areas where road changes should be made with sensitivity. The existing roads are adequate for the present and future use since there is to be little extra development. Only during peak holiday times is there pressure. This is a special problem and we will deal with visitor impact and the provision of facilities later.

We deplore the recent road widening on the low road between Crag Foot and Warton with the destruction of many fine trees. This road was one of the delights of the district. Piecemeal straightening only removes the worst bend along the road and increases speeds and danger while reducing the pleasure. We foresee that without a specific plan this type of spot "improvement" will take place all over the Area. Straightening, widening and opening of corners are not the only likely changes. Any unpaved public roads in this Area should be kept in this pleasant state. Hard kerbs do not now exist along most of the roads but could be put in, unnecessarily, at any time, further urbanising

the Area. White and yellow road lines could be put on, again without need. Multitudes of large inappropriate signs could appear. All these unnecessary and costly works could be undertaken using hard-pressed public funds in an arbitrary way without plan or public consultation. While this is true of all areas the dangers are more acute in the AONB.

We very strongly recommend that a plan be drawn up by the County Surveyors department and the Planning department with full public consultation to define which road works should be allowed and prohibited on each road in the AONB. We believe that the road system should remain basically as at present.

Given the roads as they are we would like weight and width restrictions on vehicles. Since there is almost no through traffic the usual restrictions which have exemptions "for access" would carry little weight. Similarly we would prefer a 40 m.p.h. speed limit on the whole Area so that there would be less pressure to widen the roads, but present legislation does not permit this without major compensating changes such as repeated roadside signs. The major problem concerned with the size of traffic rather than the volume is for the quarry traffic, which could be restricted in weight by agreement with the quarry and haulage operators, and for bus and coach traffic. Caravans are too few and light for serious consideration. We think that the coach congestion could be solved by restricting such traffic to the present bus route and introducing a one-way system for the coaches. With relatively few coach operators we suspect that there is such an informal understanding but if necessary active agreement could be sought if the problem became serious. Such simple strategies are far simpler and cheaper with less destruction than road "improvements".

Industry

The Area has many mines and sites of industrial archaeological importance and these should be preserved where possible. The only significant industry in the Area now is quarrying. The active quarries are at Sandside and Middlebarrow. Trowbarrow quarry appears to have outstanding planning permission from before 1948. In 1964 permission was granted for work in the middle of the approach to the existing workings. However, all the workings have been inactive for many years. Recently the derelict buildings at the entrance have been removed and we welcome this but regret the trial blasting that has been carried out on the old face. We would regret to see this quarry reopened because of the visual impact and the secondary effects of increased road traffic with the resulting pressure to widen the roads. It is unsatisfactory that a quarry which has remained unworked for many years should be able to be reopened on pre-1948 permission. Present planning permissions have more control over the screening while in use, and the restoration or after-use state. Also present permissions expire if not taken up after five years. The major firms of the extractive industries are very conscious of their public image and reopening on the legalistic grounds of long outstanding permission would give a bad impression.

We suggest that it would be in the public interest if new planning permission were sought if Trowbarrow Quarry were to be reopened.

Middlebarrow quarry is at present extending to the crest of the hill, beyond which it would become very obtrusive.

We urge that no further permission is given to extend Middlebarrow quarry.

Sandside quarry is a large operation with good communications to the A6. Since quarries must exist somewhere we accept that this will be a large long-term operation and will cut back right through the hill. It is at this stage that consideration should be given to its final use. Naturally this cannot be assessed precisely but an outline decision could affect the gradients of

the walls. The final extent should also be determined now so that tree screens can be planted at once near the southern end where the skyline will be broken. To obtain maximum output from this quarry consideration should be given to extracting to the maximum depth possible consistent with the final anticipated use.

The present workings at both quarries emit considerable dust etc. In particular, we note that there are occasional overflows from the settling tanks at Middlebarrow. We hope that efficient and automatic vehicle washing plant will be operating at these quarries since there is considerable whiteness within half a mile of each. The dust emission is also serious and could be improved. The new regulations will probably be effective. To reduce public inconvenience the plant in Sandside quarry could be moved into the excavation as the face progresses into the hill.

We hope that the existing quarries adopt better housekeeping beyond that required by recent legislation.

Although not legally quarrying, a related industry occurs sporadically in the area, the removal of limestone pavement which is the weathered limestone surface layer beloved of suburban rockeries. Much of the existing areas of pavement are probably well protected; however, recently there has been considerable removal in two areas in the centre of the area. The cracks in the limestone pavement take a long time to form and provide a unique and rich habitat for many plants. At present there seems to be no mechanism for protection since planning permission is not required for removal of surface stone and there is no equivalent to a Tree Preservation Order.

We urge that all removal of limestone pavement be stopped and that some mechanism is produced for its protection.

At this point it might be appropriate to mention tipping. The tips at Slack Head and Cote Stones (the Warton slag heaps) are both rather unattractive and in particular the surface covering of the latter is inadequate. We will consider the potential of the slag heaps later.

Although strictly outside the AONB the gravel pit at Dock Acres is relevant to the recreational potential of the AONB and will be considered later.

Sandside Railway

Westmorland County Council intend to buy the disused railway line from Arnside to the Bela river. A preliminary plan has been produced by W.C.C. for the use of the line. In general we welcome the excellent suggestions and have a few comments. Basically the scheme envisions moving the road onto the railway to the east of Sandside to give an improved road from Arnside to Milnthorpe with a bridleway on the seaward side. It is proposed to relocate the inappropriate industry from along this road. At the Bela estuary a picnic site is proposed. We see this as a car park with a small formal picnic site on the east bank near the trees and perhaps on and beside the existing railway embankment. A low profile bridge could connect this site to an informal picnic area on the west bank. It is proposed to remove the five hundred yards of embankment remaining east of the Bela to the road. We agree with this but hope that the bottom section will be left to act as a sea wall and to preserve the mature trees at its base. In Sandside we hope that as well as a sea shore bridle-path a foot right of way could be kept through the railway cutting. Perhaps another use such as a nature trail could also be found for this area. At Sandside there is a very fine iron foot bridge over the railway. We feel that this should be preserved in a suitably useful location, probably outside the AONB. Two immediate thoughts are at Carnforth Steamtown or over the Lancaster-Kendal canal, perhaps where the use either side has altered requiring better foot access, perhaps at the new marina again at Carnforth.

The station yard at Arnside is a very valuable site. We agree that a picnic site and car park are suitable but would strongly regret a touring caravan site.

We welcome the proposals for the Arnside-Sandside railway line with minor modifications.

Footpaths

The Area is of small scale and does not contain, and is not suitable for, areas of mass recreation. Large collections of people with their accompanying cars would be inappropriate. The ideal way of experiencing the area is on foot and a very short walk from the road in almost all parts will bring one to an interesting view.

There is a reasonable network of over fifty miles of public footpaths within the Area, most of which are well used. In such an area where there is considerable public use it is essential to disperse the visitors as much as possible for their benefit and to reduce their impact on the area. To help this, all public footpaths should be signposted where they leave a metalled road, as required by the 1968 Countryside Act. There are many such signs in the Area which need installing or replacing.

Many of the footpaths are well used and therefore clearly defined, but others are not so well known, or cross other well-used private paths where there could be confusion, and require some way-marking along the route. This is to the advantage of the landowner so that unintentional trespass is avoided. Although the highway authorities may undertake this work they are not bound to do so and will naturally give priority to the tasks which they are required to do. However, the highway authority may give consent for other persons to undertake this work. Where needed this work will be carried out by the Ramblers' Association on the request of the landowner.

We urge that footpath signs be installed at all junctions with metalled roads and offer help in way-marking paths at ill-defined points along their route.

Small problems such as obstructions are reported to the highway authority by the Ramblers' Association and need not concern this report. However, there are a few major and longstanding problems which need public airing.

Footpath No. 8 in Yealand Conyers Parish crosses Leighton Moss and is now under water for long periods of time, whereas it used

to flood only after heavy rainfall. Attempts have been made to build up the path but the cause appears to be due partly to extra drainage from Hawes Water but mainly the silting of the outfall as it crosses the salt flats below Jenny Brown's Point. This path forms an important link in the network between Leighton Hall and the Yealands and Silverdale.

Bridleway No. 30 in Silverdale Parish skirts the edge of Hawes Water over marshy ground. It is normally wet and soft. Normal maintenance and drainage is unlikely to solve the problem. A major improvement is required and we suggest that this is probably best achieved by means of duckboards on supports with a handrail.

Footpath No. 12 in Beetham Parish links Slack Head with the A6 at Hale and is a delightful woodland walk. The end at Slack Head is through a deer fence across some steep and rough limestone overlooking the South Westmorland refuse tip. This section could be considerably improved by moving the stile a few yards downhill.

We urge the continual maintenance of the existing footpaths especially the difficult sections mentioned.

A few new footpaths could considerably increase the number of circular walks which are possible in the Area. One is from Arnside Knott through Arnside Park to White Creek. The main new paths would be links to create a continuous right of way along the coastline of the Area. From the Bela bridge to Sandside the path already exists and improvements are suggested when the railway is taken over by the County. A new section is needed from Arnside to New Barns along the coast and then round Blackstone Point. From Know Hill south of Silverdale to Jenny Brown's Point a new path is also needed. The use of the shore is not ideal since it is dependent on the height of the tide so that the right of way should be well above the high water level. We would also like to see a completion of the coastal path to Carnforth. From the River Keer to Scout quarry there is a good raised site along the old railway line from the quarry to the ironworks. North of Scout quarry the land to the seaward side of the road is raised and easily passible. A section of about a half mile south of Crag Foot presents a more difficult problem which needs further investigation.

We suggest that new rights of way are created to complete a coastal path round the area.

A suggestion has been put forward that a footpath extension be made to the Arnside railway viaduct to provide direct access to the Lake District National Park.

Access

Most of the landowners in the Area are very tolerant of visitors but strictly the Area can only be viewed from the roads and footpaths except for the shore (and even here there is an occasional attempt to restrict access) and the two National Trust properties, part of Arnside Knott and Eaves Wood. We hope that good relations are maintained between the public and the landowners with increased visitor pressure.

By tradition, and by tacit agreement of the landowners, Warton Crag is used by the public as though it were access land. Similarly the area of rough grazing on the headland at Jenny Brown's Point is used for picnicking. Whilst the present arrangements are satisfactory to the public, there will be an inevitable increase in the number of visitors and facilities so that it would seem reasonable that the landowners of these popular areas should benefit from the management provisions of the Countryside Act 1968.

We thus suggest that formal access arrangements be made over areas of high public use in the AONB.

NATURAL HISTORY of the AONB

The Area contains a wide variety of interesting and rich habitats, mossland, saltmarsh, woods and limestone crags. There is correspondingly a wide variety of wild life. Fortunately, this is well looked after by such organisations as the Naturalist Trusts. However, we can make a few comments.

Habitats

Small changes in some of the richer wildlife habitats are always being made by agricultural improvements with increased drainage, hedge removal and rough grazing improvement. At present these changes are small and widespread damage is not foreseen. It is hoped that the hedgerows will be maintained and that the roadside verges will be kept tidy by scythe rather than mechanical mowers and hedge slashers or, even worse, by chemical sprays. New forest planting requires unsightly deer fences but these do not appear to upset the wild life. Widespread changes in land use such as afforestation seem unlikely. There are, however, a few places where significant changes may occur. The removal of limestone pavement mentioned earlier could cause a reduction of valuable rich habitat. On a smaller scale the turf cutting on the salt marsh especially near Silverdale is becoming very widespread and causing changes. The cutting near the shore and the vehicle tracks are particularly damaging.

The RSPB is preserving an important habitat at Leighton Moss with restricted access. Inevitably this will be managed to the advantage of birds rather than other wild life. Haweswater has been proposed as a Nature Reserve with restricted access. We would welcome this and do not think that it need affect the present footpath network.

There are at present two nature trails in the Area. Since they encourage rather than restrict access they are places of mass recreation and education rather than areas reserved for nature and we will consider them later.

Trees

The Area is well wooded and little major change is foreseen. The Forestry Commission has several large areas on long lease and their management policy has improved over the last few years. Although there are conifer plantations their harsh outlines and straight rows are not generally visible. Most of the recent planting is of hardwoods with softwood protection so that after a few years we may expect a general hardwood area. We expect and hope that careful selective felling will be undertaken.

The National Trust woods, Arnside Knott and Eaves Wood have local management committees with similar, although not identical, management policies.

The major offenders in forest management are the private owners who are encouraged to obtain quick return by planting softwoods and clear felling. We hope that government policy and reasoned persuasion will encourage a longer term view on the forestry in the Area. In some more critically threatened areas we feel that the local authorities should consider the creation of Tree Preservation Orders. A difference of opinion seems to exist over the value of the Yews which are considered by some as an essential part of the native flora to be encouraged but by others as a weed.

One of the finest aspects of the British landscape is its parkland. There are three established parks in the Area, now used for grazing land. Since parkland looks best with isolated mature trees, a continuous planting scheme is necessary. This should not be expensive nor interfere with the grazing.

We ask that there be a continuing scheme for the replacement of the mature parkland trees of the area.

The protecting wings and bank at the entrance to the disused Warton quarry were planted in a very unenthusiastic manner. A massive and effective tree planting scheme is needed here.

Fauna

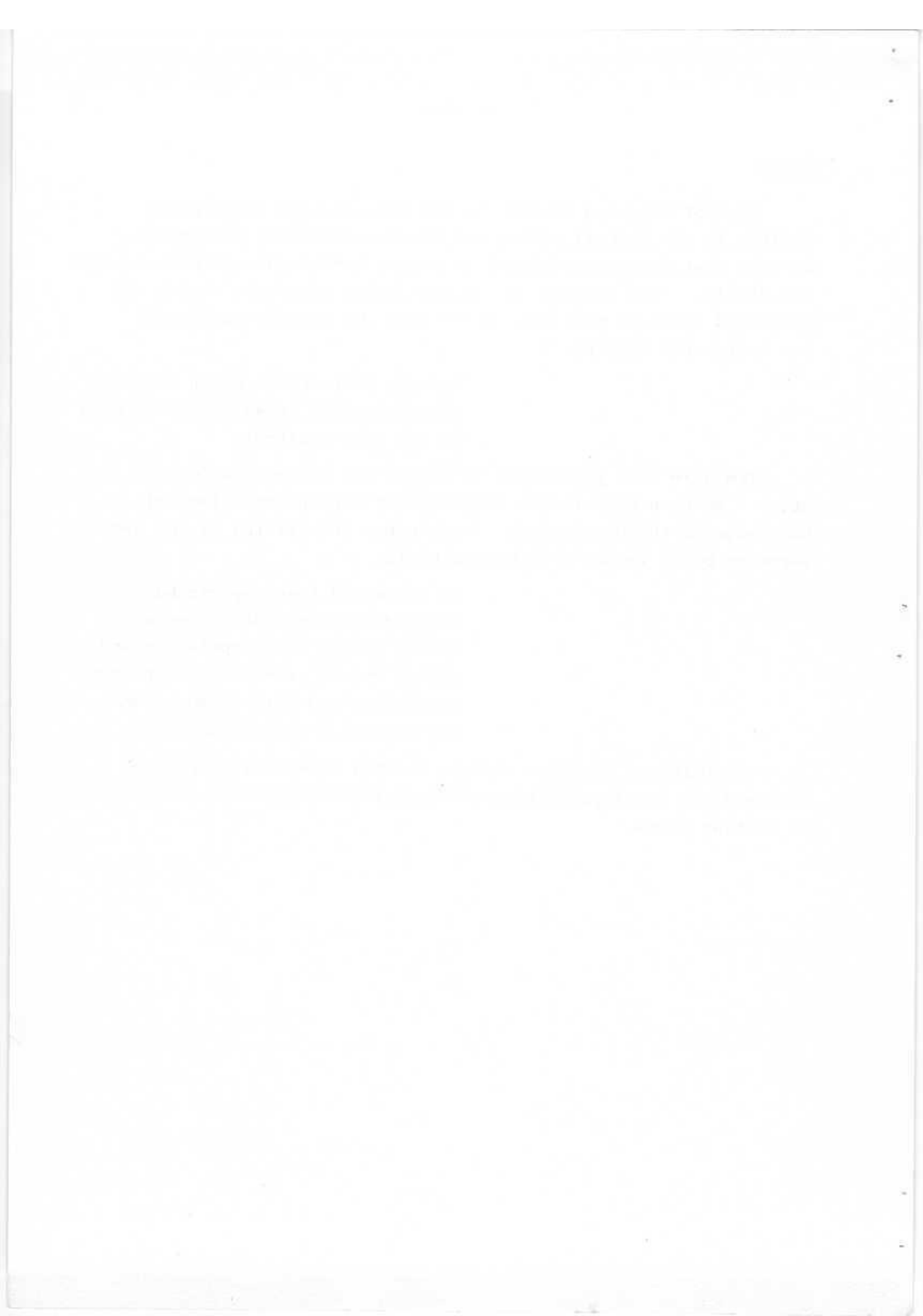
Most of the wild animals in the Area are not immediately visible to the general public and are not seriously threatened. We note that the grey squirrel is moving northwards and has crossed the Ribble. Its arrival in the Area might seriously change the flora and fauna in many ways other than the obvious ousting of the native red species.

We urge that active steps be taken to prevent the invasion of the Area by the grey squirrel.

The wild deer population is one of the attractions of the area. We have been rather surprised by the apparent lack of knowledge of the population. At present the killing of the deer seems to be on rather a haphazard basis.

We recommend that experts be invited to carry out a complete survey of the deer population and habits and to recommend an optimum population and herd composition and suggest a culling policy.

The birds of the Area seem to be well looked after by the RSPB and the local population who feed them and provide a multitude of nesting boxes.



MASS RECREATION and VISITOR IMPACT

So far we have been describing the Area and suggesting how its natural beauty could be preserved and enhanced. The problem we now have to discuss is how this beauty can be appreciated by as many people as possible without degrading the natural beauty that they wish to see. This must surely be our starting point. The resources of the country have been investigated, perhaps not in a very systematic way, and areas have been set aside as being most suitable for certain purposes, agriculture, cities, docks, nature reserves, historic buildings, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Once this decision has been made all efforts should be made to keep to that designated use until it is decided that the land has a better use. Naturally, there is a conflict since one might say that to have a beautiful area is of no consequence if people cannot visit it. This conflict is resolved and the solution accepted for other unique objects. The crown jewels are not cut up and distributed among the population for all to enjoy but are kept in their finest state as an entire collection and facilities are provided for the maximum number to visit and enjoy consistent with each obtaining an adequate view for a sufficient length of time. The number of visitors is limited to be consistent with this. We notice that this voluntary limitation is becoming accepted in the countryside recreation which has until recently been considered as free for all. The private parts of R.S.P.B. reserves such as that at Leighton Moss in the AONB can only be visited with prior permission obtained from the national office. This is accepted since the bird reserve would be rendered worthless by unmanaged numbers of visitors. Similarly the public have accepted and even welcomed the restrictions on vehicles in the Goyt Valley since it resulted in a more pleasant, car-less environment for all. It is with the protection and enhancement of the natural beauty in mind that we consider the impact of visitors on the Area.

We believe that the Area has a considerable ability to absorb visitors in the intimate and small scale scenery with

woodlands, small and steep hills and rocky coves. The problem is that the visitors arrive by car and these can be absorbed less readily without making considerable impact. Although the number of visitors is increasing rapidly we do not foresee drastic measures, such as closing the entrance roads on summer Sundays, in the near future if careful management is started soon. We will thus concentrate on general principles and the immediate future allowing for perhaps a 50% increase in visitors and leave the more distant future for another time.

There are various types of areas for public outdoor recreation with different capacities to absorb large numbers and different needs for protection from the public. These range from urban sites, such as Blackpool, through Country Parks, National Parks, undesignated countryside, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Nature Reserves. Comparing just two of these, the Country Park is a fine idea providing a countryside environment within easy reach of the large urban areas. The Park should have very good facilities and be designed for heavy use by many people. The facilities themselves, toilets, tea-house, good parking and open spaces for children to play, usually provide sufficient attraction so that these areas of high density use do not need a site of particularly fine natural beauty. In fact such developments would detract from such beauty. We feel that these intensive recreational areas should be placed quite near urban areas and at sites which have some attraction such as a lake or river but are perhaps run-down or derelict so that the development enhances the area. The AONB's, however, should not be managed as attractions for mass recreation but as areas where the natural beauty can be appreciated.

Such studies as Leisure in the North West, together with personal observation, show that most trips are made by car about twenty-forty miles on a half or whole day. The object is either a scenic drive with a stop at some suitable place, with facilities if possible, for a snack, sit or a stroll around, or a drive to some particular focal point such as a stately home, zoo, beach or country park. With the location and size of the Arnside-Silverdale AONB probable visitors are

from the local towns, perhaps beyond Preston and Lake District holidaymakers. The peak period is on summer Sunday afternoons. There are at present few specific focal points to act as attractants except perhaps the RSPB reserve, Leighton Hall, the two nature trails, Silverdale shore and Arnside front. The natural beauty of the area is probably the major stimulus for visits. In this respect designation as an AONB has a negative effect in the area since it may increase the number of visitors. Visitors come to the Area for the amenity the Area provides rather than being attracted by the (almost non-existent) facilities provided.

We therefore consider that no facilities for visitors should be provided that will attract visitors to the facilities rather than the Area. Provided that they do not detract from the natural beauty, facilities should be provided so that the natural beauty may be appreciated.

Thus we favour small car parks (for, say, three or four cars) discretely sited at intervals in the Area so that easy short walks can be made. We do not favour formal picnic sites with tables, café, etc. We would be against any publicity such as signs on the A6 to encourage the casual tourist and hope that this report does not increase the pressure on the Area.

In some respects the Area is like a Country Park since it has an attraction to many visitors and can probably absorb as many as a typical Country Park but at a much lower density: it is thus an extensive rather than intensive recreational area. Because of the heavy visitor impact definite management will be necessary. We have already mentioned a joint planning committee. In recreational areas wardens are necessary for maintenance and to keep a watchful eye. Because of the diffuseness of the visitors we do not consider the traditional warden who interacts mainly with the visitor as suitable, but favour assistance to the landowners such as is available through

the "Upland Management Scheme". In this scheme, originally experimental but now extended to cover about one third of the Lake District National Park, money is made available for the repair of stiles and walls, tree planting and other small jobs which are most economically carried out by the owner or tenant. The "warden" or administrator can thus enhance, protect and manage the area for the visitor by his interaction with the inhabitants rather than the visitors. This seems to be a very economical and effective method of reducing landowner-visitor conflicts and protecting the Area.

Quiet and Spontaneous Recreation

The principal recreation is walking, or strolling. The main centres are Warton Crag, Fairy Steps, Arnside Knott and the Yealand and Silverdale wooded areas. Golf, sailing, sea fishing, etc., all take place on a small scale. Nature study is naturally very popular and is largely spontaneous but the RSPB reserve at Leighton Moss does attract visitors both to the reserve proper and to the public hide on the footpath across the Moss. Since this public access cannot be restricted care should be taken not to provide too many facilities, such as nearby parking places, which might significantly increase this public pressure. There are two nature trails in the Area, at Arnside Knott and Eaves Wood, both National Trust properties. Another is proposed at Warton Crag. Although we are in favour of nature trails we are concerned that they may be very strong attractants to the area and the damage caused by the visitor pressure may outweigh the education provided. Some nature trails advertised by a petrol company attract thousands of visitors. In this Area the cars alone would cause immediate problems. We suspect that reasonable trails could be established in less intrinsically beautiful areas and that the present sites were chosen only because the land had an amenable owner and the location was obvious. We therefore suggest that no more trails be established in the Area but that the existing trails be kept and improved. Publicity of the trails generally should be restricted but more publicity should be given to them

in the local villages, Arnside and Silverdale. We note that the Eaves Wood trail is not in a very good state. We have earlier suggested a nature trail in the Sandside railway cutting. Although this is a suitable site, other better uses may be suggested.

Intensive Recreation

There is little, if any, organised mass recreation in the Area. If the Barrage is built the pattern might well change. There are occasional angling competitions, orienteering meetings, hill trials and stock car races, but all on a small scale. We consider the latter as the more inappropriate to the Area. Two sites must, however, be considered, the Warton (Carnforth) Slag Heaps and Dock Acres Gravel Pits.

Dock Acres lies just outside the Area but since it is so close and its final use is likely to be for recreation we are considering it now. The present workings lie between the A6 and M6 with the River Keer touching the southern boundary. Already a large expanse of water occupies the flooded workings. With the easy access and large lake area it would be a suitable site for water sports, sailing or power boats and perhaps a nature reserve. Such a site which might be a Country Park would produce some increase in pressure on the AONB, but since it is so near the obvious transport routes we would expect the increase to be small. A partial tree screen was planted some years ago and a further section planted during the winter of 1972/73. This is not adequate. With an undertaking of this size with a relatively short life and limited extent the planning permission should be given for the full size initially and a tree screen and related amenity works should be introduced and established before the actual working starts. Similarly the final use should be planned as early as possible, preferably at the planning consent stage, but certainly while there is active operation so that the final configuration can be tied in to the exploitation. We would like to see plans for the final use of Dock Acres established now, initial works such as tree planting started next winter and if possible part of the site opened for the final use before the whole operation ceases.

The Warton or Carnforth Slag Heaps at Cote Stones are located on the marsh at the south-west corner of the AONB. They are the remains of the slag from the now demolished iron and steel works at Carnforth. Some of the material has been removed from the main area. A ridge or causeway extends across the marsh towards Jenny Brown's Point from an attempt at land reclamation. Except where there has been some recent removal the tip has weathered to a not unattractive appearance and is beginning to be recolonised by plants. An adjacent area is being used as a local authority refuse tip and, as mentioned before, it is not being well covered. An area of the heaps is used occasionally for stock car races.

Although this site might be considered as one of industrial dereliction unsuited to an AONB, it does not in fact look very unnatural and is reverting to a wild state. Such a large expanse of unused land is seen as a reserve, something to be improved and ultimately to become a valuable countryside asset. The final use for such a site needs considerable thought but we favour quiet, spontaneous recreation. For example, a camping or picnic site at the more sheltered landward end where the refuse tip is and small informal picnic areas in the hollows along the sheltered side of the causeway. Some outline decision should be reached over the future use of this site soon so that, if possible, trees and shrubs for windbreaks can be planted early, since establishment could take some time in such an exposed position.

Caravans

We note that the Department of the Environment is not in favour of more caravan sites in the Area. We welcome this policy decision and suggest that some of the more exposed caravans could be removed. Most of the sites are well screened by trees or within old quarry excavations. There are one or two possible future sites, such as Warton Crag quarry, and if these are given permission the less desirable existing sites could be removed leaving the total number constant. The total number of caravans in the Area is of importance as well as the

location of individual units since the increase in residents during short peak periods imposes a considerable strain on the resources of the Area. For economic reasons these resources must be geared for the permanent resident population. The population of the area is not known but must be about 7,000 so that the estimated increase of 4,500 in caravans during peak periods makes a significant change.

We repeat here that the presence of caravan sites, which are mainly static, should not be an excuse to widen and straighten the roads of the area.

Cars

We have already made some points about the central role of the car in the possibility of visitor impact on the Area. There is considerable evidence from recent experiments that sightseers do not mind being forced to leave their cars if everyone is treated the same and scenery is consequently not spoilt by the presence of the cars. We do not yet see drastic measures having to be taken although the roads are becoming very congested on Sunday afternoons in peak periods. We note, however, that the easiest strategy to adopt is to restrict access to the area for cars by leaving all the roads near the boundary narrow and winding. These small restrictions leave the majority of roads in the Area below the congested level with consequent more enjoyment for the visitor. Those put off by the sight of the congested entrance can go elsewhere without suffering.

Possible solutions to road problems could be considered by width and weight restrictions but these do not affect the principal peak holiday car traffic. It has been suggested that the main roads be made "scenic routes". We would not like such a formal designation to create motorised nature trails although perhaps this, with a one-way system, might be the ultimate fate of the Area on summer Sundays.

We have made the point that facilities should not be attractive in themselves. For this reason we would not like

to see car park-picnic site complexes developed and the present parking areas are quite large enough. At Arnside there is a special problem since the visitor and shopping parking coincide. We would like to see car parking prohibited on the seaward side of the promenade road and either removed from the shore or limited to the landward edge of the shore. To accommodate these changes other parking areas such as in the station yard would be necessary. We would not like to see the fields opposite the station used for parking. Since the station yard car park would not be suitable for local shopping we suggest that short period parking be permitted on the landward side of the promenade road. This scheme would provide the residents with the convenience of parking near the shops and restore the pleasure, for both residents and visitors alike, of being able to walk or sit on the seaward side of the promenade without the intrusion of the motor car.

We recommend that parking on the Arnside shore and promenade be restricted and a new parking area opened in the station yard.

At Silverdale shore the existing parking area will have to be formalised if only to provide an adequate turning space. We hope that this will be done with delicacy and in as natural a way as possible without major civil engineering. Some discrete toilets near the shore would be desirable.

We recommend that a turning area be made at Silverdale shore with a few parking places.

Although a turning area is needed, cars at Silverdale Cove should be discouraged.

Parking areas exist at Sandside. We will make no specific comment since the major realignments proposed with the adoption of the old railway line will alter the pattern. We hope, however, that any car parking will be kept well on the landward side of the proposed and existing bridleway.

We are not very happy with the presence of the car park on Arnside Knott and would not like to see it expanded in any way.

We have made the point that small (three-four cars) car parking spots are needed round the area for better access to the footpaths and to disperse the visitors. Such arrangements, well sited, need not intrude. We give a few examples.

Off the Slackhead road just to the north of the entrance to Fell End caravan site (G.R. 499777) and adjacent to the end of the footpath from Hale. About eight-ten cars could be tucked into the end of the woodland.

Off Cockshots Lane (G.R. 483799) small parking bays on either side of the road would serve for visitors to Underlaid Wood, Fairy Steps and Hazelslack Tower.

Off the junction (G.R. 493761) at Yealand Storrs is an obvious spot but a safe entrance and a tree screen would be needed.

There is considerable parking along the Silverdale Yealand Storrs road for visitors to the RSPB reserve. This could be made better with small bays in a strip of woodland beside the road (G.R. 481754).

Warton Crag should have several such parking bays around it but suitable sites are not easy to identify. The old Warton quarry might be used. The face is very steep and may not be stable so a small parking area could be made temporarily near the entrance. There is also an older small quarry close to the village on the same road. This is at present used to park a few cars and could at small cost be made to hold a few more cars and the high part of the quarry floor cleared as a picnic area.

On the Coach road (G.R. 496738) some informal parking already takes place at the end of the footpath from Crag Foot. Here again there is reasonable tree cover to enlarge the area without damage.

We recommend the creation of small informal parking bays in the Area to alleviate traffic problems and increase access and dispersion.

Although we consider that formal picnic sites would tend to attract visitors to the facility rather than the Area, we recognise that there are many picnic areas already existing. That is, there are spots commonly used for picnicking, sitting and playing. We would not like to see these formalised but see the necessity of appropriate management with perhaps bollards to limit the cars, etc.

Perhaps the most important area is at Jenny Brown's Point. The problem here has been made worse by the use of the quarry as an intensive sheep rearing field with the massive marsh grazing. There is now no adequate parking or turning area along the long access road. We consider that the only solution is to close the road to non-resident traffic from just past Lindeth Tower. A small car park could be made in one of the fields by the road. An ideal location for this parking area is not obvious and needs further study. To make the walk to the Point more varied, one or two new paths could be opened between the parking area and the shore at other points.

We recommend that the road to Jenny Brown's Point be closed to cars and a parking area established near the main road.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us in this study. The many members involved have had their own reward in the pleasant discussions. Since we have poached partly onto the territory of the Kendal R.A. Group we would like to thank them for their tolerance and help. The visitors from other organisations such as the National Trust and the Lancashire Naturalist Trust were particularly welcome in giving up their time to discuss particular problems with us.

The County Councils have been co-operative in answering our many questions. All departments of Westmorland County Council have been prompt and generous with their replies and showed considerable interest.

The Parish Councils of the Area have shown varied interest. Silverdale P.C. extended an invitation to meet interested members. In particular, we would like to thank Arnside P.C. who were interested enough to spend an afternoon talking over the subject. We would also like to acknowledge a visit to Sandside Quarry.

Finally we would like to thank the Lancaster and Morecambe College of Further Education for a meeting room and the University of Lancaster for its varied help.

Further copies of this report may be obtained from

Brian Greenwood,
Secretary, Lancaster and Morecambe Group,
Ramblers' Association,
1 Pickard Street, Lancaster.

(20p inc. postage)

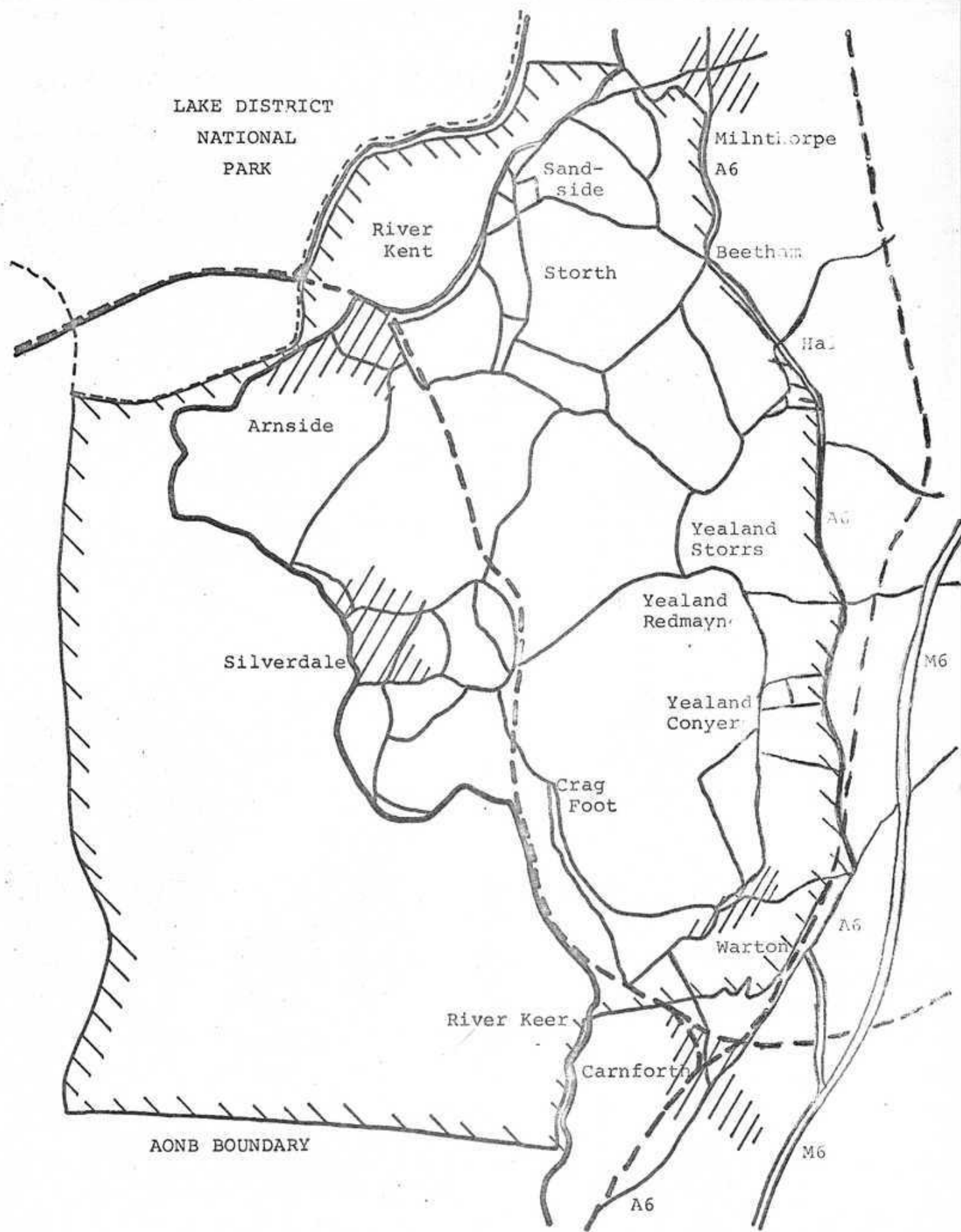


FIG. I MAJOR FEATURES

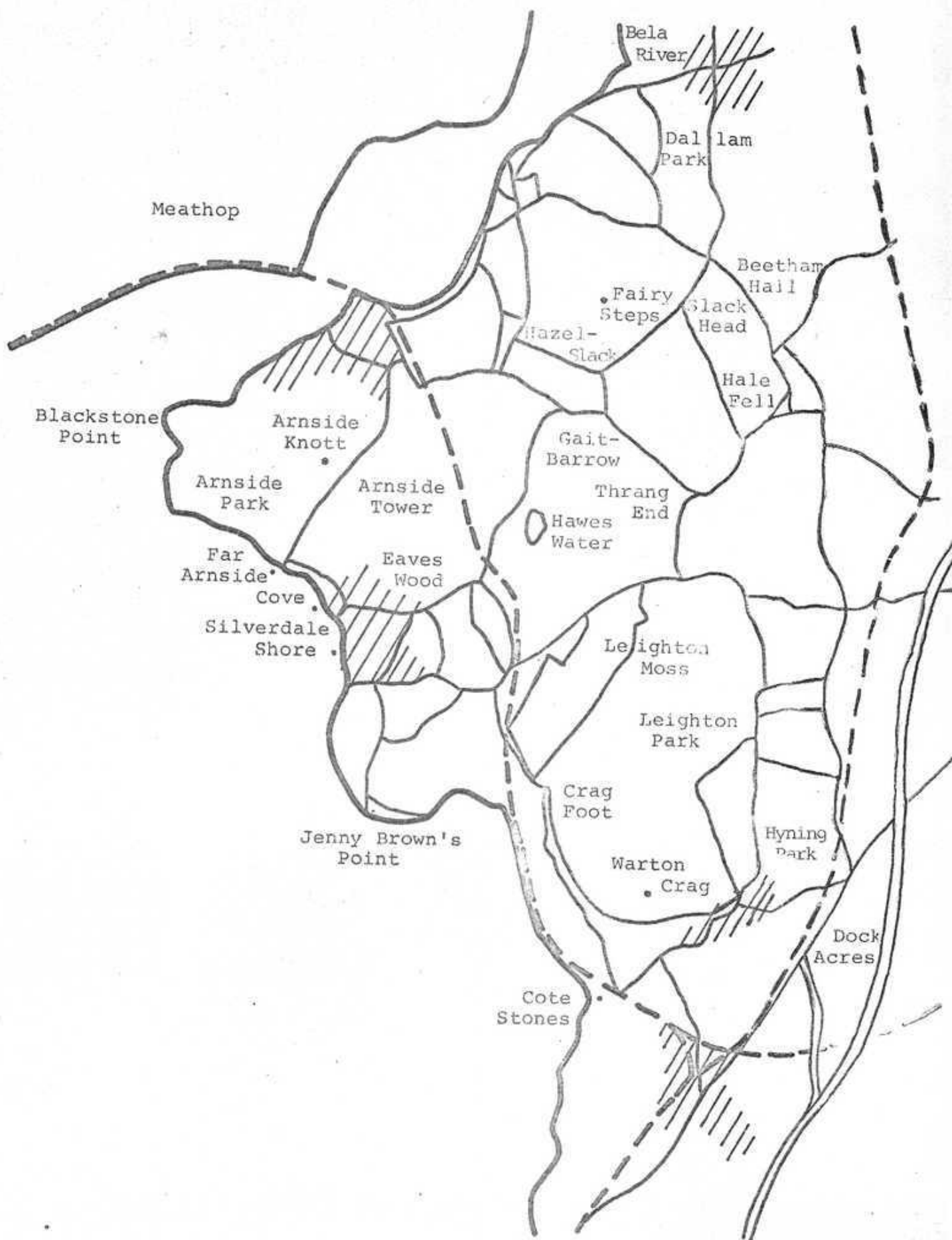


FIG. 2 SPECIAL FEATURES

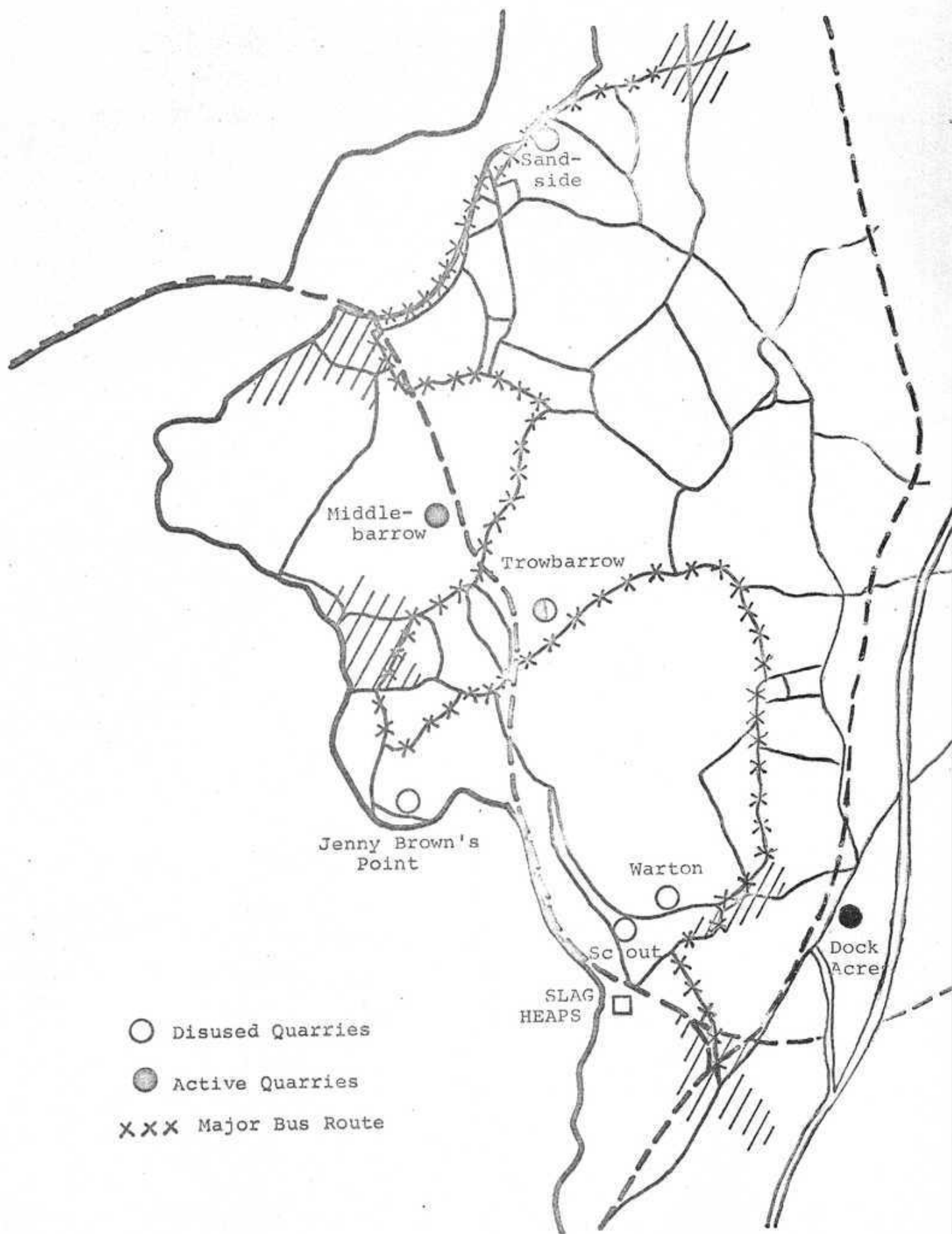
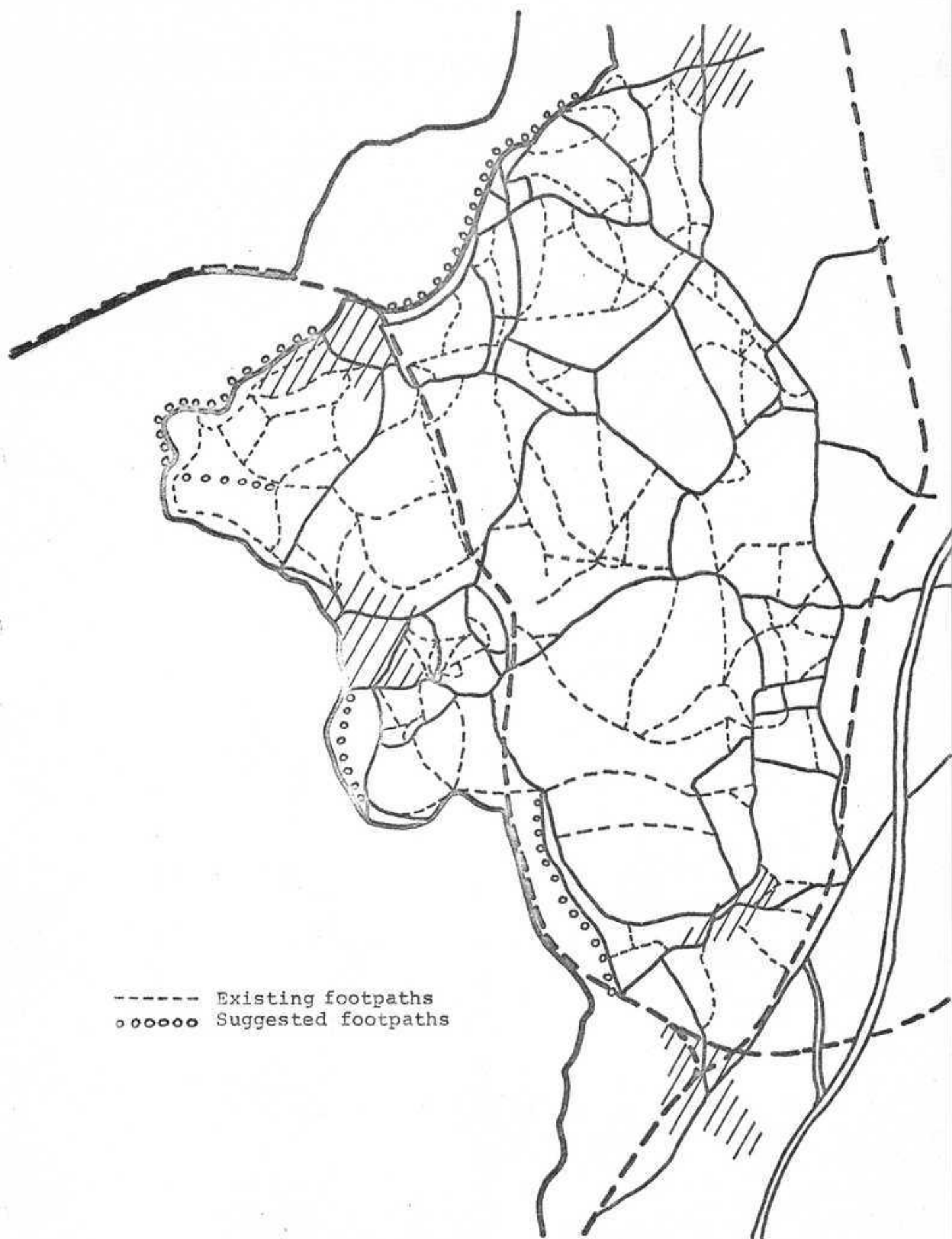


FIG. 3 INDUSTRY AND TRANSPORT



----- Existing footpaths
oooooo Suggested footpaths

FIG. 4 FOOTPATHS

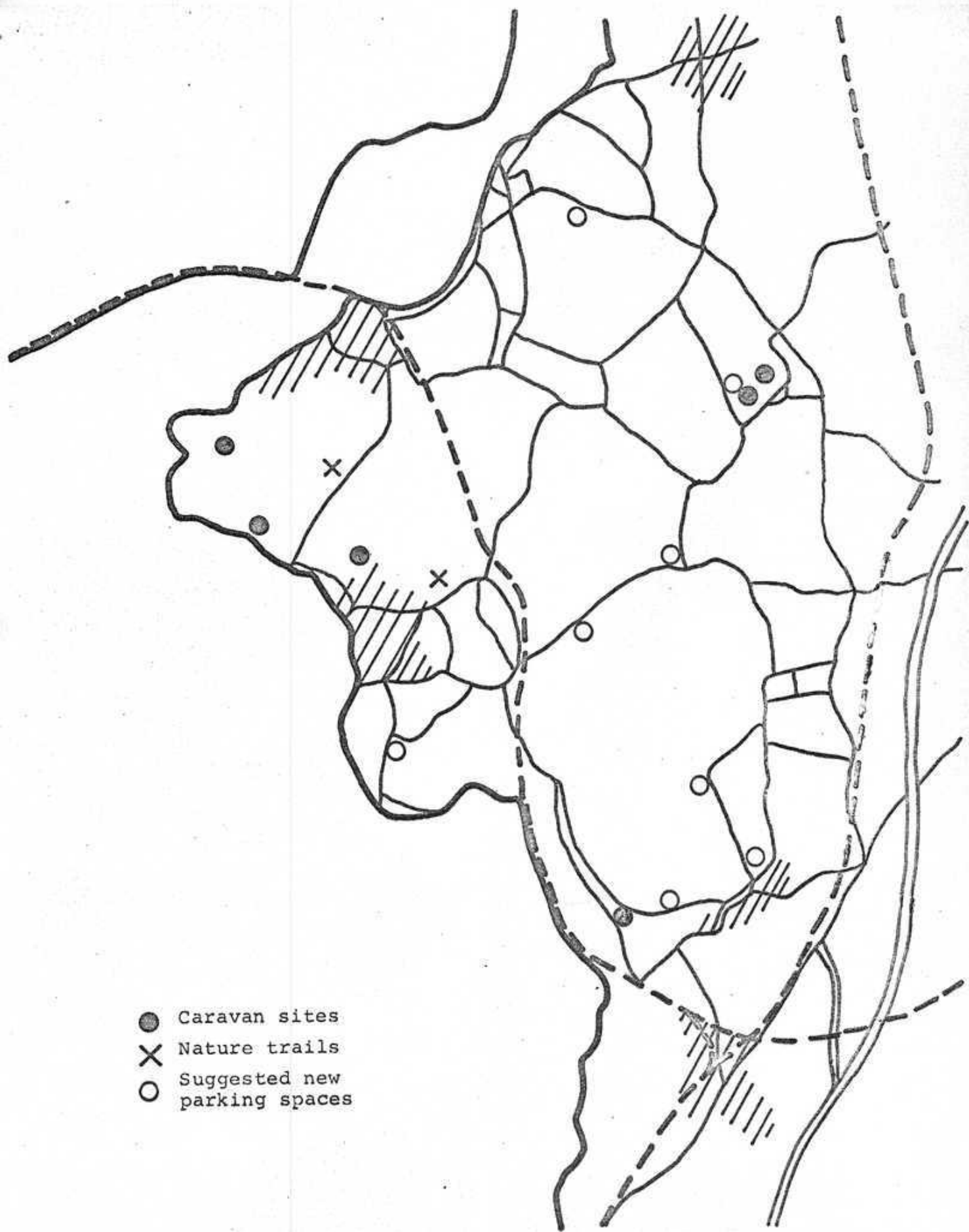


FIG. 5 RECREATION