

# CORNWALL AND ISLES OF SCILLY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



## Landscape Character Area Description

LCA - Lynher and Tiddy River Valleys

LCA No

CA25

JCA

### Constituent LDUs

Total 16: T25, 35, 36, 37, 42, 43,  
231U, 232, 234, 244, 245, 332, 333,  
334, 335, 336



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<b>Location</b>	Eastern south-coast part of county, consisting of river valley system flowing SE from Pensilva (River Tiddy) and North Hill (River Lynher), skirting the foothills of the Caradon mining district, down to St Germans and the confluence of St Germans River and Tamar. Includes Torpoint and the northern half of the Rame peninsula. Other settlements are Millbrook, Antony, St Germans and Tideford. Callington lies to the east on the plateau.
<b>Designations</b>	11 LDUS lie partly or completely within the Tamar AONB and one within the Cornwall AONB; 12 LDUs contain SSSIs and 2 are within the Caradon WHS. 11 LDUs contain SPAs and 15 contain SACs; 7 contain SMs and 4 contain CGS.

## Description

This is an extensive but narrow river system in the south east corner of the county that includes the western banks of the lower Tamar estuary. Here small areas of flat land are surrounded by water and intertidal land of two wide inlets or basins, St Johns Lake and the St Germans River. The flat open land between the two inlets is a combination of large scale farmland and managed parkland of the Antony estate as well as the urban sprawl of Torpoint. To the south is the wooded ridge of the Mount Edgcumbe estate and this together with the estates of Antony and Port Eliot at St Germans creates a lush wooded parkland area backing the creekside landscape. The village of St John and the old port of Millbrook nestle in this creek landscape around St John's Lake whilst on both sides of the St Germans River small villages and hamlets lie at the heads of side creeks. Torpoint provides a complete contrast with its urban sprawl, ferry landing facilities and military connections. With its 12th century church, the parkland at Port Eliot and its spreading housing, St Germans is the main settlement inland. Here the two main rivers of the system divide from the main estuary and, both tidal in their lower reaches, divide from the main estuary and begin to penetrate north-westwards into the hinterland. The valley of the more westerly river, the River Tiddy, has a small flood plain to begin with but this disappears as the steep valley sides close in and the river twists through rounded hummocky ground to eventually rise close to Pensilva, south east of Caradon Hill. Steep narrow little side valleys feed the main river and some of these tributaries such as Hay Lake are quite long bringing water from a large area. Similarly the wider valley of the River Lynher twists northwards. The valley sides are well wooded and in the lower reaches the valley floor cultivated. Further up the valley narrows and straightens to run along the eastern edge of Bodmin Moor, (LCA 32), to

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the river's source close to the A 30 at Upton. The valley is still lush and green and this is added to by the well wooded estate of Trebartha. Unlike the lower sections there are a number of footpaths in this part of the valley that link into the adjacent Landscape Character Areas. The tributaries are shorter and straighter than those feeding the Tiddy and come mainly from the north side of the valley. The plateau between the river valleys forms part of Landscape Character Area 22 (South East Cornwall Plateau).

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### Key Landscape Characteristics

Estuarine landscape of winding inlets, extensive intertidal zones, with intertidal Mudflats, large areas of Coastal Saltmarsh and a Saline Lagoon; very well used by watersport enthusiasts.

Tidal river valleys with Coastal Saltmarsh and wetlands, grading to mixed farming; many hedgerow trees and tree lines along watercourse.

Parkland at Mt Edgcumbe, Antony and Port Eliot.

Small steep - sided upper river valleys inland with mix of farmland and woodland, with mature trees on network of Cornish hedges adding to wooded feel.

Farmland is a mix of pasture, arable, fruit and flower growing, with estate land with deer park and much beech.

Maze of narrow enclosed winding lanes throughout, with many trees on boundaries.

Visual prominence of Torpoint and major conurbations in neighbouring LCAs: Plymouth and Saltash.

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### Geology and soils

Hard rock comprised of slates and grits of the upper Devonian period give rise to hard rock soils. At the river mouth there are marine levels with sandy raw soils.

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### Topography and drainage

A strong NW to SE drainage system to south coast comprised of two rivers that join together to form a large tidal estuary, the St Germans River, that in turn empties into the lower part of the Tamar estuary. The rivers run roughly south east from the eastern side of Bodmin Moor, (LCA 32). The more westerly River Tiddy rises near Pensilva and collecting from steeply sloping feeder stream valleys runs through farmland in a valley with strongly undulating sides. In the lower reaches the valley broadens into a flood plain over which the river winds its convoluted way towards St Germans. Some of the tributaries such as Hay Lake can be quite long in their own right collecting from minor streams. The other river, the Lynher, is much bigger rising from the north eastern corner of Bodmin Moor, LCA 32 (Bodmin Moor), and flowing down its eastern side before bending away onto lower ground where the valley broadens and the route becomes extremely contorted. Lower down the valley straightens where a flood plain has developed and the river becomes tidal between Landrake and St Germans. The two rivers join at St Germans and flow in a curving estuary between high banks to join the River Tamar. The Landscape Character Area includes the west bank of the Tamar estuary with a wide inlet known as St John's Lake.

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### Biodiversity

The Landscape Character Area has a high proportion of broadleaved woodland, mostly following the streams in the sinuous valleys, with Upland Oakwood, Upland Mixed Ashwoods and Lowland Mixed Deciduous, some within Ancient Woodland. Some of the woodlands have been replanted with conifers, and there is an area of Lowland Wood-Pasture and Parkland at Antony Estate, and adjacent the Mount Edgcumbe Estate (in LCA 22 (South East Cornwall Plateau)). In the upper parts of the valleys, small areas

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of Wet Woodland along the valley bottoms are associated with small fragmented areas of wetlands, including Fens. The valleys also have small fragmented areas of neutral grassland, with bracken and scrub associated with the adjacent mixed woodlands. Farmed land is mostly improved grassland, with pasture, and arable. The network of Cornish hedges link the semi-natural habitats in the small valleys and many have mature trees, creating linear woodlands between the fields. The Lynher estuary has a significant proportion of Coastal Saltmarsh, with extensive Intertidal Mudflats, a Saline Lagoon at Millbrook, and small areas of Reedbeds. The estuary is important for birds, and is part of the Plymouth Sound and Estuaries SAC. Towards the southern part of the LCA there is a high proportion of ornamental planting and parkland. Semi-natural habitats link into the adjacent LCAs 22 (South East Cornwall Plateau) 26 ((East Cornwall and Tamar Moorland Fringe) and 32 (Bodmin Moor).

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### Land Cover

Mostly pastoral with improved grassland and some arable. Valley sides have high proportions of mixed woodland and towards the southern part of the LCA, parkland. A significant area of the lower-lying part of the Landscape Character Area is estuary.

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### Land Use

Improved pastoral and arable farmland with trees, with interlocking broadleaved woodland and conifer plantations; some amenity/ recreation/ tourism, especially around and on estuary. Contrast of open river with Coastal Saltmarsh and formal parkland with mature ornamental trees. Small areas of semi-improved grassland in valley bottoms but arable becoming more significant throughout. Significant military presence around the estuary.

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### Field and woodland pattern

Mainly medieval Anciently Enclosed Land, with some large fields in southern part, possibly partly a consequence of woodland clearance or removal of boundaries, and medium to small fields elsewhere with tall hedges forming sinuous boundaries. In the Tiddy valley south of Cutkive there is a medieval enclosed landscape of medium-size fields, but to the north around Pensilva/ Middlehill is an area of Recently Enclosed Land with straight sided rectilinear fields, former 'miners' smallholdings' associated with post-medieval industrial development. Hedges throughout, with discrete mixed woods, more prominent in northern half especially on valley sides and up the little side valleys. Around the estuary the field boundaries may be ditches within wetlands.

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### Settlement pattern

Unsettled wildland grading to clustered villages with small farms and hamlets, the main settlements are at St Germans, Torpoint and Millbrook. Along the rivers the settlements are mainly on the higher ground outside the valley. Many of the settlements have grown up around the heads of creeks so have an old core, 19th C development, often in terraces, plus 20th C bungalow expansion around edges and infill. Villages close to the Tamar are in the commuter zone for Plymouth. Away from the Caradon mining area in the north of this Landscape Character Area, most settlements are small and generally vernacular in style and materials - local stone, occasionally with decorative brick detailing and openings. Some recent development uses clay tiles and render. Torpoint with its ferry port and military establishments is a major intrusion into this pastoral riverine landscape, visually dominant in some areas. Places like St Germans and Millbrook were small ports and there are still old quays and boat building enterprises in the creeks. Cremyll is the landing for the passenger ferry link to Plymouth.

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### Transport pattern

The area is a mix of major and minor roads which cross the Landscape Character Area, with A38, A390 and A374 generally skirting the estuary basin. Elsewhere, there are steeply sloping narrow winding leafy lanes, with dense hedges forming a prominent feature. Good footpaths around nature reserve. The London to

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Penzance main line railway crosses the creeks on a number of high viaducts. Ferry links at Torpoint and Cremyll. This is a popular commuting area for Plymouth.

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### Historic features

These include: Cadson Bury Iron Age hillfort on top of the steep hill overlooking Lynher; the remains of Upton Castle; Newbridge near Callington, which dates from c 1470, and other granite bridges (e.g. Starabridge); St Germans Church which is 12th C and one of Cornwall's most important ecclesiastical sites, and the location of a former bishopric; St Julian's Well; Mt Edgcumbe and Port Eliot estates (both EH Grade 1) and Antony House (EH Grade II); Trebartha estate; Ince Castle; Erth Barton; Scraesdon Fort; port detailing and quays along river (St Germans, Wacker, Treluggan and Poldrissick) and up the rivers to Tideford and Notter Bridge; Limekilns at Tideford on the Tiddy mark upper limits of former navigation; viaducts over the Tiddy and the Lynher; relics of mining industry around Pensilva.

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### Condition

There has been a loss or decline of hedgerows on arable land around estuary. Around the smaller valleys there is an apparent extensive lack of management of landscape features, with abandoned land or unmanaged land and conversion to arable with loss of hedges. Generally it is a well managed pastoral landscape with plantations and woodland in good condition. Trend is towards conifers, but this may have stopped. Ecological corridors generally intact, with good management of nature reserve. Some evidence of dereliction, e.g. waste tipping, around derelict industrial/mining sites/quarries Impact of urban areas localised and moderate (away from Torpoint) but impact of transport network widespread/moderate.

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### Pressures

- Extension around existing settlements.
  - Isolated dwellings in the countryside.
  - Changes in agriculture and farm diversification.
  - Problems with shellfish pollution in estuary.
  - Recreation on the water of the estuary.
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### Aesthetic and sensory

An intimate, tight landscape of narrow winding lanes with overhanging trees and small streams gradually widening through relatively shallow, small scale valleys to a lush comfortable landscape, rich and well-managed. There is a strong contrast with urban area of Torpoint and openness of the flat land around the estuary. Tranquil in northern section away from main transport routes.

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### Distinctive features

Contrast between wide flat estuary and steep narrow wooded valleys. Relic mining waste tips, quarries and mining smallholdings plus other industrial relics in the south; working boatyards, quays and jetties around estuary, with some wrecks below HWM. Main feature in south is functioning landscaped parkland, Mt Edgcumbe, Port Eliot and Antony with large-scale arable farming, plus viaducts (St Germans), fishing dams etc in the estuary; in small valleys, contrast between traditional farms and modern bungalows; Cremyll Ferry and quay; Mt. Edgcumbe country park. The Mt Edgcumbe woodland on the prominent coastal ridge to the south of St Johns Lake forms a distinctive skyline.

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### Visions and objectives

An area of contrasts with tight, undisturbed river valleys where access is limited to an estuarine landscape of creeks, mudflats and flat land that has been urbanised. (Torpoint) The objective must be to maintain the diversity of this area without weakening its strong landscape character or diluting its tranquillity and manage the water environment appropriately.

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### Planning and Land Management Guidelines

Strengthen local distinctiveness by preparing and implementing design guidance for development around settlements.

Strengthen landscape pattern by good agricultural management supporting the development of agri-environmental schemes.

Provide guidelines on good management of hedges to farmers and highways authorities.

Support measures for the good management of the rivers and the water environment of the estuary including the conservation of the mudflats of St John's Lake and the St Germans River.

Introduce a woodland strategy and guidelines on scrub management and coppicing of river fringe trees/woodland.

Support measures for the conservation, restoration and management of historic parks and gardens together with historic features and landscape.

