

7. Other examples of HLC data analysis and potential for further research

As stated earlier in this report, there is tremendous scope for the digital characterisation data to be analysed in a variety of ways, and this report presents just some examples of these. The following sections provide examples of how the data can be analysed at parish and estate level.

7.1 Analysis of Scrayingham Parish

The parish of Scrayingham lies within the district of Ryedale, close to the south-eastern boundary of North Yorkshire, see Figure 198. It covers an area of 1,108 hectares and is generally low lying with the settlement at Leppington situated upon slightly higher ground.

The two main settlements within the parish are the villages of Scrayingham and Leppington. Both are similar in form, a two row village either side of a main road. However there do seem to be differences between them. For example, at Scrayingham there are clear areas of enclosures associated with the dwellings in the village¹⁵⁷. At Leppington, there is no clear evidence in the current landscape for such crofts. There are a couple of boundaries at SE 765610 and SE 764612, which may be part of these enclosures, but they seem to be part of the overall pattern of enclosed strip fields that lie to the east of Leppington.

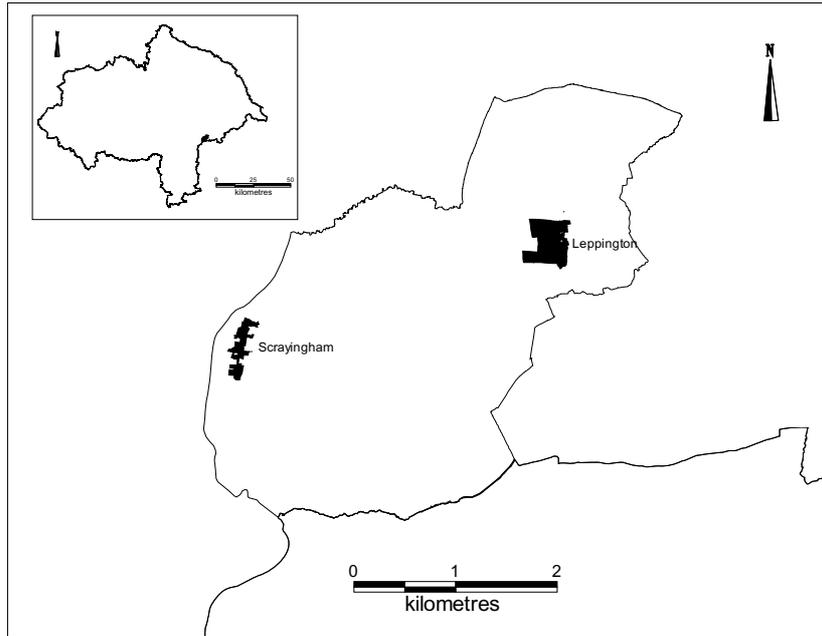
There has been some expansion in Leppington, which has seen the building of a small number of detached houses at the north end of the village, as well as a number of houses built to the west of the main street. At Scrayingham, there has been less expansion, with the building of some new houses, as well as the construction of agricultural buildings associated with farms in the village.

Both villages currently display a post-medieval character. The earliest building in Scrayingham is the former rectory which dates to AD 1704, whilst the north wall of the church was built in the 14th century. However, whilst the villages have seen changes since the end of the medieval period, they both originate in the medieval period. This is reflected in the wider landscape with the presence of enclosed strip fields. There is supporting evidence in the fact that both villages are mentioned in the Domesday Book of AD 1086; Scrayingham is referred to as '*Escr(a)ingham/Screngham*', whilst Leppington is '*Lepinton*'¹⁵⁸.

Areas characterised as the HLC type of enclosed strip fields cover 280 hectares of the parish, see Figure 199. These can be seen throughout the fieldscape between the two villages, and to the south of Scrayingham village. Defined by reverse 'S'-shaped, curved hedges, they almost certainly represent the previous location of open fields. At the grid reference SE 747604, the 'S' curve of the field strips is followed by the road, suggesting that the road was established at the same time as, or later than, the field system. Two very well-preserved fields can be seen at SE 733595.

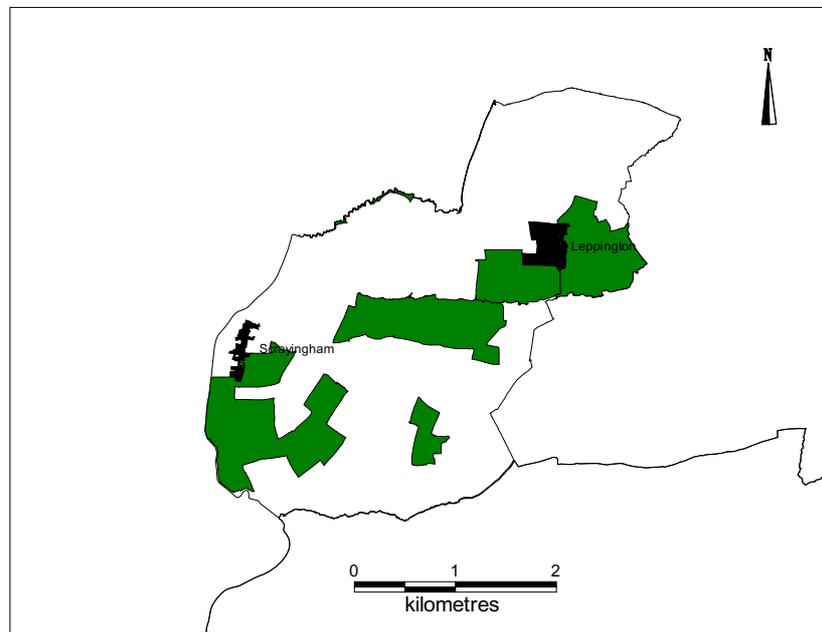
¹⁵⁷ HLC records HNY 24510 and HNY 24511

¹⁵⁸ Smith 1970



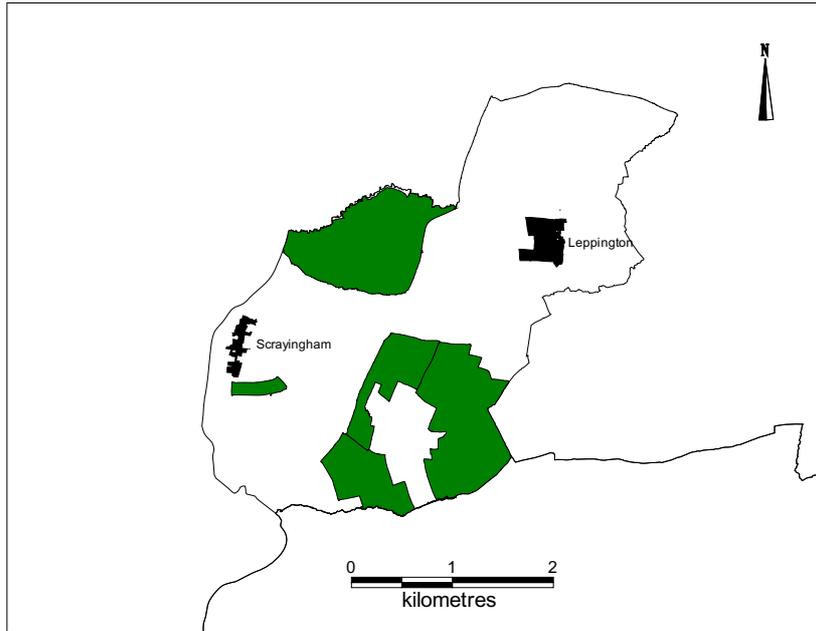
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Figure 198 Scrayingham parish, including the two main settlements of Scrayingham and Leppington, with inset showing location in relation to the wider project area



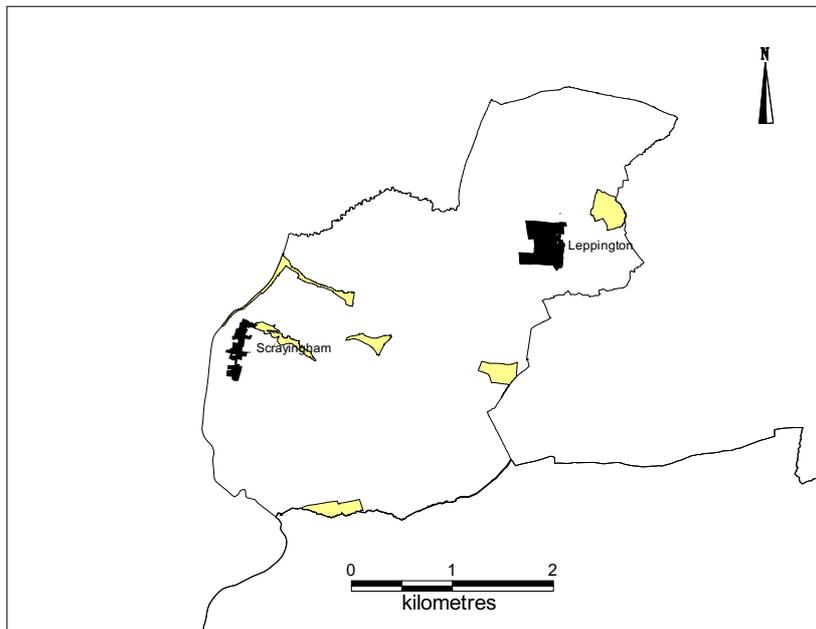
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Figure 199 Distribution of enclosed strip fields within Scrayingham parish



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Figure 200 Distribution of unknown planned enclosure within Scrayingham parish



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Figure 201 Distribution of woodland within Scrayingham parish

There are no areas of piecemeal enclosure within the current landscape of the parish, although there are some areas that have seen boundary loss and which have been characterised as modern improved fields.

There is no act of parliament for the enclosure of the parish of Scrayingham, there are however extensive areas of planned enclosure which are broadly contemporary, dating between AD 1750 and 1850. An example of this is the fieldscape that surrounds Plaster Pits (SE 743612), which comprises regular, medium-sized fields defined by straight hedges. One of the interesting aspects of this field system is the fact that it is defined on three external sides by shelter-belt-style plantation woodland.

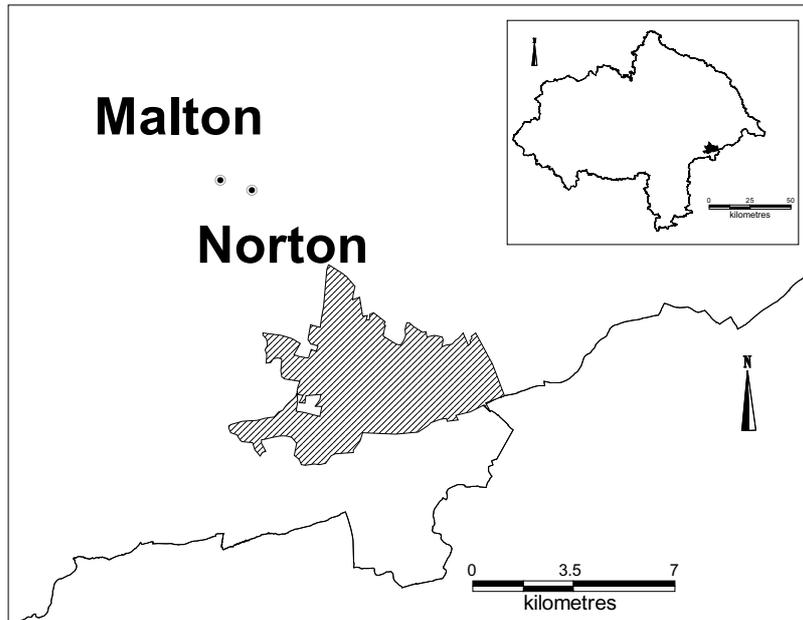
There are six areas of woodland of a size large enough to be characterised by the project, see Figure 201. The oldest of these is Leppington Wood which lies to the north east of the village, see Figure 202. Consisting of non-coniferous species defined externally by erratic hedges, this is an area of ancient woodland which dates before AD 1600. With very little change since the first edition six inch County Series Ordnance Survey mapping (1846-63), this is an excellent example of where the natural environment can be understood in terms of human activity. The woodland is defined by a watercourse that runs to the north and east. To the west, between the village and the woodland, is an area of enclosed strip fields, and from its form, the woodland appears to pre-date these.



High Resolution Aerial Imagery of the UK © ukperspectives.com 2003

Figure 202 Leppington Wood, to the north east of Leppington village, also showing areas of enclosed strip fields

7.2 Analysis of the Birdsall Estate



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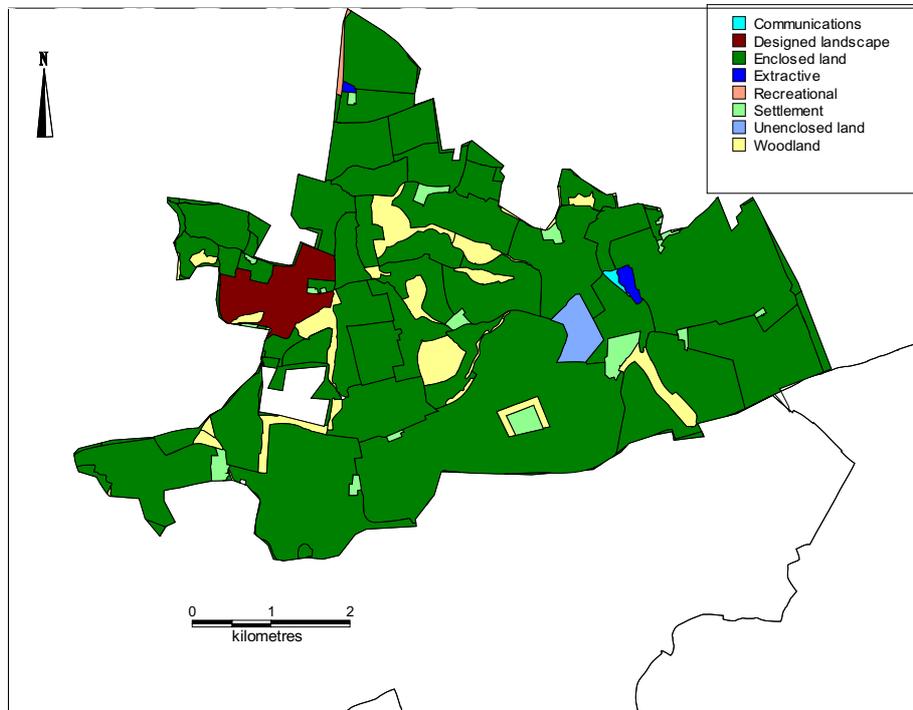
Figure 203 *Birdsall Estate (hatched), with inset showing location in relation to the wider project area*

The aim of this section is to focus on one area in some detail, and show how the information recorded by the HLC project can be utilised in the day to day work of a local authority historic environment team. The guidance for the completion of farm environment plans, as part of the higher level stewardship agri-environment schemes promoted by Natural England, makes explicit reference to the use of HLC data, where available¹⁵⁹. Early on in the North Yorkshire and Lower Tees Valley HLC project, North Yorkshire County Council's historic environment team received a request for information for a large-scale farm environment plan related to the Birdsall Estate. This provided an opportunity for this area to be characterised in order to assist with the stewardship scheme. As such, as a landscape with a very different character to the other pilot areas characterised at the beginning of the project, this work was done before the HLC methodology was finalised. As a result, there are a number of areas characterised which are less than two hectares in extent. Once the methodology was formalised, areas below two hectares were not characterised individually for the remainder of the project area. As the estate holdings straddle a number of areas with different geologies, the estate area also enables discussion of the roles that geology and topography play in the historic character of a landscape.

Covering 2,908 hectares, the Birdsall Estate lies on the northern edge of the Yorkshire Wolds, see Figure 203. The southern half of the estate sits on white chalk deposits, whilst to the north there are deposits of Corralian material, consisting of mudstone, limestone, siltstone and sandstone. At SE 842660, there is an outcrop of white chalk with a band of grey chalk defining the outer edge. This is surrounded by deposits from the West Walton formation, Kimmeridge Clay and Ampthill Clay (WWKCAC) deposits, see Figure 205. This geology influences the topography of the

¹⁵⁹ Natural England 2010a and 2010b

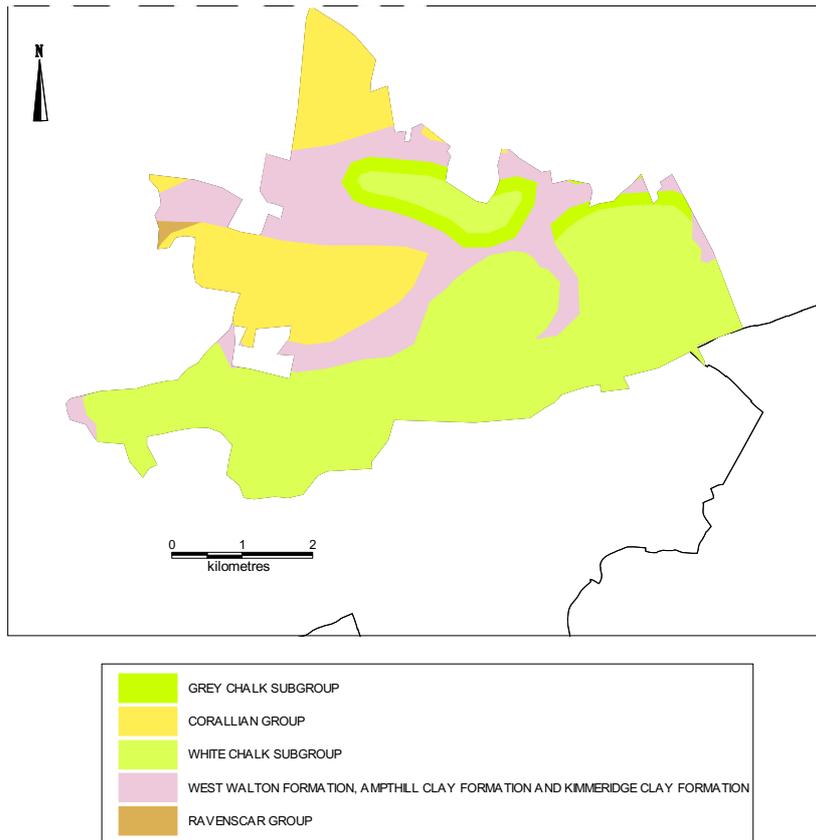
area, with the mudstone, sandstone and siltstone of the WWKCAC deposits defining the scarp slope and the ground rises up at the point of the outcrop of white and grey chalk. There are a number of small, steep valleys running into this scarp, which form significant features in the physical character of the landscape, see Figure 206.



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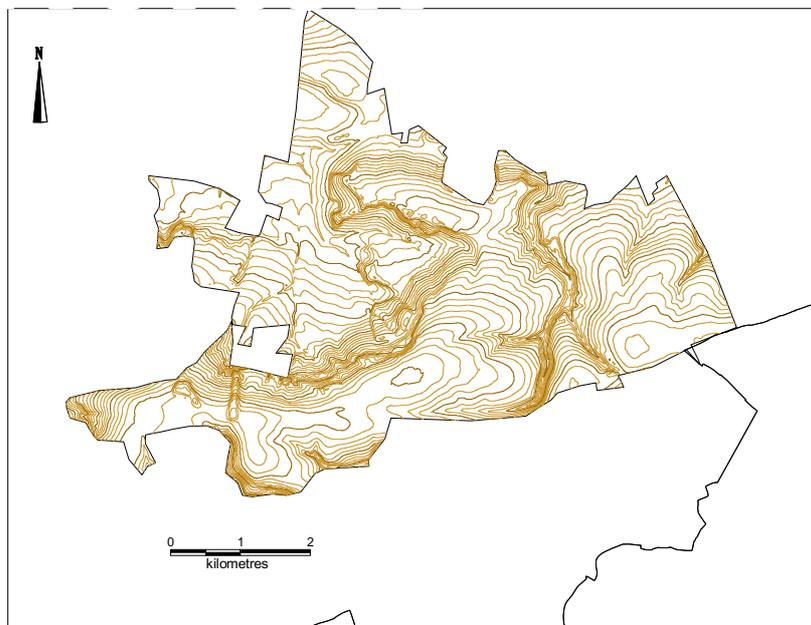
Figure 204 The historic landscape character of the Birdsall Estate mapped by broad type

Enclosed land dominates the historic landscape character of the Birdsall Estate, accounting for 2,503 hectares or 86% of the area, see Figure 204. However, there is wide variation within the character of this enclosure. There have been 20th-century changes to the fieldscapes, particularly on the lower-lying sedimentary geology. There are two areas of modern improved fields found on the higher, white chalk series, accounting for 450 hectares, where boundaries have been lost. The highest concentration of large, planned fields is in the northern part of the estate, around Dale Bottom (SE 825670). These changes in the type of enclosure reflect changes in the management of the landscape and changes in agricultural practice.



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Figure 205 The geology of the Birdsall Estate



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Figure 206 Contours of the land in the Birdsall Estate

7.3 Potential areas for further research

Whilst the project has carried out a fairly intensive study of the whole project area, it is evident that the characterisation has thrown up as many questions as it has answers. This section will outline some of the potential areas for future study which could be taken forward on the basis of the HLC work undertaken to date.

Settlements

With the exception of the urban settlement areas of the Lower Tees Valley, a relatively broad-brush approach has been taken in relation to the characterisation of the settlements throughout the rest of the project area. This is an area which would benefit from further detailed study, for example along the lines of the extensive urban survey programme sponsored by English Heritage¹⁶⁰. There is also scope for further detailed analysis of village origins, morphology and development.

Planned enclosure

A large number of areas were characterised as post-medieval planned enclosure during the course of this project. However, as it has been beyond the remit of the project to pursue additional sources to those outlined in Section 3, it has not been possible to determine, in more detail, the origin of these areas. For example, there is potential for further research to identify whether these enclosures are as a result of private agreement or individual landowners, through investigation of tithe maps, enclosure awards and other archives.

Such an approach would be particularly beneficial within the area of the Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As identified in Section 5.1.2, following analysis of the characterisation results for the AONB, it has emerged that there appears to have been a particular historic process occurring in the latter half of the 19th century. Areas of piecemeal enclosure were having their erratic boundaries replaced with straight boundaries. Whether this is a result of an individual landowner, or other groups within the community, is unclear. This would require more detailed study of the archives for this area.

Transport networks

One of the key elements of the landscape that has fallen outside the remit of this HLC project is the road network. Roads contribute greatly to the historic character of the project area and there are several elements which have great antiquity, for example the Great North Road having its origins in at least the Roman period. Later networks, such as the railways and canal system, reflect the historic character of the post-medieval period. There is scope for these networks to be characterised, using a similar methodology to that developed for HLC, to further enhanced understanding of these networks.

Assarting

A number of areas characterised within the project demonstrate evidence of assarting. Further work into this historic character type needs to be twofold: both in relation to management and research.

¹⁶⁰ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/landscapes-and-areas/characterisation/townscape-character/>

Assarting is particularly vulnerable to losing its current historic landscape character through the removal of the small areas of fieldside woodland, which help to define it. This can be seen in the parish of Womersley in Selby District, for example, where a number of these small woodland areas have been removed since the mid 19th century. To maintain their historic landscape character, these areas require effective, proactive management, which has a joint natural environment and historic environment approach.

More research needs to be carried out to establish areas of assarting which may not have been identified during this project, due to either the broad scale of the study or woodland loss since the mid 19th century.

Extractive landscapes

One of the limitations of the HLC project has been the ability to characterise extraction, particularly where it is dispersed, due to the small-scale nature of the surviving evidence. Examples of this include the jet working in the North York Moors National Park, and the extensive small-scale quarrying found throughout the project area. More work could be done to characterise the landscapes of these industries, in particular to provide an historic narrative for current mineral extraction within the study area.

The influence of country estates

During the HLC project, characterisation of areas of designed landscapes and their surrounding areas has thrown up a number of questions as to the influences that large country houses and their estates had upon the surrounding landscape.