

CHAPTER 6. UNENCLOSED LAND

Introduction

Unenclosed land forms the largest single category of landscape type within the National Park, covering 87,390 hectares and comprising around 38% of the total area of the park. The overwhelming majority of the unenclosed land is in the uplands,

with only around 160 hectares of lowland moss and just over 27 hectares of other unenclosed lowland. The only significant area of unenclosed land outside the uplands is the stretch of coastline between Drigg and Silecroft on the west coast. Upland which has reverted from some

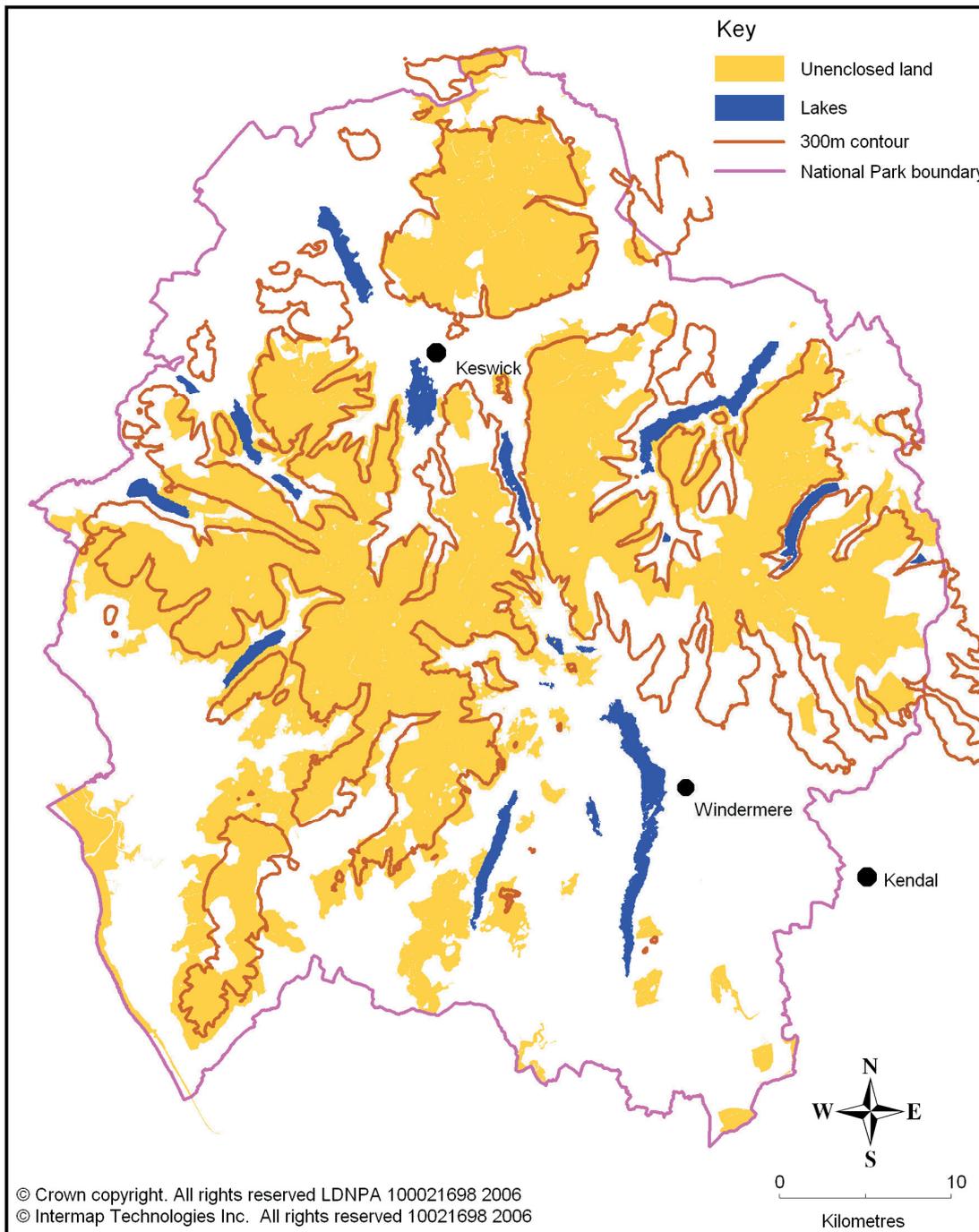


Figure 24: Unenclosed land within the Lake District National Park

form of enclosure back to unenclosed land covers around 4,800 hectares, forming a small but significant category and accounting for some 5.5% of all unenclosed land.

Unenclosed Lowland

Almost all the lowland mosses within the National Park have been enclosed and drained. The only unenclosed area of lowland wetlands are on the north shore of the estuary of the River Kent at Meathop. This area is made up of mudflats and saltmarsh, and the raised bogs at Meathop Moss and Foulshaw Moss. This is the vestige of a once widespread landscape type, which up until the mid-nineteenth century covered large areas of river valley floodplains on the northern fringes of Morecambe Bay. The area has been reduced through the cutting of peat for fuel and the improvement of land through enclosure and drainage. This is more fully described in Chapter 5: 'Planned Enclosure'. Areas of reclaimed wetlands were planted up with conifers in the twentieth century. One such area is Foulshaw Moss, now forming part of the unenclosed wetlands at Meathop. Both Foulshaw and Meathop Mosses are SSSIs, and are at the centre of plans to recreate a large area of wetland. To this end, the coniferous plantation at Foulshaw has now been cleared.¹

The remaining unenclosed lowland within the National Park has been classified as a green by the HLC. Covering some 27 hectares, the green is at Butterwick, north of Bampton, and is a small unenclosed area of valley bottom land, mostly on the west bank of the River Lowther. Its classification is probably derived from the name of the area, which is known as Green Crook, but it now forms the western end of a larger area of common land known as Knipe Moor.² It is not known whether this area has been registered

as a village green,³ but from its location within a river valley, it probably originated as common meadow land.

The Changing Countryside

This landscape type represents a small element of HLC types in the Lake District, however Foulshaw Moss is not only one of the largest remaining areas of lowland raised bog in Cumbria, but also one of the largest in Britain.⁴ Meathop Moss is also one of the best remaining examples of a raised mire in southern Cumbria and was one of the first nature reserves to be set up in the country.⁵ Meathop, Foulshaw and Nichols Moss were once interconnected but peat cutting, forestry and drainage have fragmented them. Farming activity, particularly in the 1950s and 60s resulted in many raised bogs becoming drained throughout the UK and Europe and so this landscape type has a high rarity value. The mosses clearly have national importance as a landscape type and this is reflected in their status as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and also as a Special Area of Conservation.⁶ Most mosses are therefore protected for nature conservation reasons, although their potential value as an archaeological resource is not reflected in their designations. Positive forces for change are therefore derived from existing management regimes developed by nature conservation bodies.

³ Cumbria County Council, www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/commons-registration/commons-registration-service

⁴ Cumbria Wildlife Trust, www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cumbria/Reserves

⁵ Cumbria Wildlife Trust, www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/cumbria/Reserves

⁶ Joint Nature Conservation Committee www.jncc.gov.uk/protectedsites

¹ Harpley 2005

² DEFRA, www.magic.gov.uk

Shaping the Future: Recommendations

- Avoid changes in land management regimes which will result in dewatering. All proposals for new management regimes should be informed by an appropriate impact assessment which specifically includes the palaeo-environment potential of the type.
- Encourage rewetting options and tree removal as part of existing management regimes
- Mosses are potential reservoirs of organic archaeological information rarely found within other landscape types. Any proposals affecting them should be discussed with the Lake District Archaeologists.
- Management of the green at Butterwick should follow guidelines for enclosed common.

Coastal Land

“Higher up the little river Irt runs into the sea, in which the shell-fish having by a kind of irregular motion taken in the dew, which they are extremely fond of, are impregnated, and produce berries...which the inhabitants, when the tide is out, search for, and our jewellers buy of the poor for a trifle, and sell again at a very great price”.⁷

The Lake District National Park has around only 20km of coastline, extending from Drigg in the north to Silecroft in the south. It forms part of the West Cumbrian plain which stretches in a narrow band from St Bees Head southwards to Haverigg in the Duddon Estuary. The coastal landscape type includes mudflats, sand and shingle, saltmarsh and dunes, with a small area of coastal crags, and covers an area of 1,652 hectares. The northern part of the coastline is dominated by the small

estuary of the River Esk, on either side of which are sand dunes with sand and shingle banks. On the seaward side of the sand dunes, and extending southwards along the entire coastline, are extensive mudflats down to the low water mark. In general, the coastal plain comprises a low lying landscape, dominated by gently undulating ridges made up of glacial deposits. Behind the coastline mosses developed, such as Williamson’s Moss near Eskmeals, all forming part of the coastal landscape. Further south other mosses, such as that at Silecroft, have been reclaimed, and only small areas survive, for example The Mosses at Whitbeck. Here, too, is the only area of coastal cliff or crag, stretching for a distance of around four kilometres though only a few metres high.

The coastline is of great importance in nature conservation, and much of its length is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).⁸ At the southern end is the Shaw Meadow and Sea Pasture SSSI, which occupies an area of former farmland, including some surviving ridge and furrow. This is an area of lowland heath, with sea-pasture and species-rich wet pasture. At Silecroft, the stretch of low cliffs have been designated as the Annaside and Gutterby Banks SSSI. These provide exposures of geomorphological and sedimentological evidence for glacial deposits, comprising interbedded tills, sands, gravels and silts. The most extensive SSSI is known as Drigg Coast, and stretches for around 11 kilometres southwards from Drigg, taking in the River Esk estuary and the sand dunes of Eskmeals and Drigg. In addition to being a SSSI, the area around the Esk estuary is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which provides strict protection under the European Habitats Directive.⁹ The

⁷ Camden’s account of pearl fishing on the coast near Ravenglass, from Lindop 2005, 211

⁸ DEFRA, www.magic.gov.uk

⁹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee, www.jncc.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SAC selection

primary reasons for its inclusion as an SAC are the presence of a bar-built estuary and the presence of sand dunes, including decalcified fixed-dunes and dune slacks. Secondary priorities include the presence of intertidal mud- and sand-flats, pioneer salt marsh vegetation, Atlantic salt meadows, shifting dunes and fixed dunes. Altogether, it is considered one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for sand dune habitats. The Eskmeals Dunes area, which forms part of the SAC, is also a Nature Reserve.¹⁰

The coastline has considerable archaeological and historical significance, and has been the focus of a number of archaeological and palaeo-environmental studies. Following the discovery of early lithic assemblages at Drigg in the mid-1950s, there were extensive programmes of field walking around Eskmeals in the 1960s and 1970s,

leading to integrated landscape studies of the area around the Esk estuary in the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹ The area around Ravenglass has produced evidence of ‘submerged forests’, which indicate that the coastline lay to the west of the present one in the early Mesolithic. Around 7000BP, the coastal lowlands were inundated, creating the broad shallow bay at the mouths of the Rivers Esk, Irt and Mite that is present today.¹² The extensive surveys of the area have demonstrated that it is from this period that the west coast of Cumbria, including the area within the National Park, was widely exploited, and was one of the earliest areas to be extensively and permanently cleared for agriculture.¹³ Evidence for late Mesolithic exploitation, including the presence of a possible structure in the form of a wooden platform has been found at Williamson’s Moss, an area categorised as lowland wetland.¹⁴ By



Plate 37: The coastal section of the Lake District National Park has produced evidence for early human activity, from the late Mesolithic period (© LDNPA)

¹⁰ Cumbria Wildlife Trust 2002

¹¹ Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 61-2

¹² Clare 2000, 10

¹³ Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 62

¹⁴ Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 62-71

the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age, there appears to have been substantial woodland clearance, though evidence for settlement relies mostly upon lithic assemblages, much of which was derived from beach flint.¹⁵ Further south, the coastline was subject to periodic inundation and submergence, which may have led to the burial of archaeological deposits beneath sand and shingle, and also to the erosion of deposits in localised areas.¹⁶

As for much of Cumbria, evidence for Iron Age activity along the coast is rare. At Eskmeals, a pair of blue beads were found in association with an earlier flint scatter, whilst at Drigg, just outside the National Park, a hearth with burnt clay, pottery and metalwork, is thought to be of Iron-Age or Romano-British date.¹⁷ Romano-British rural settlement is also little known, and most archaeological evidence for settlement of the period is military in nature. Settlement was focused on the fort at Ravenglass, but there have been finds of objects such as coins, pottery, spindle whorls, jewellery, sculptured pebbles and possible metal-working sites around Drigg and Eskmeals.¹⁸

The main influence on the character of the coast in the medieval and post medieval periods was the establishment of the settlement of Ravenglass on the estuary of the River Esk. Described in 1794 as a village, the right to hold a twice-weekly market and yearly fair was granted in 1208-9.¹⁹ Its isolated situation, however, restricted its urban development. In the same year as the market charter, the rights to make fishgarths were granted for the River Esk. Fishgarths were used in estuaries and between low and high tide marks on the sea

shore. They took the form of a single wall or pair of walls at right angles, surmounted by a brushwood screen behind which fish became stranded as the tide receded. In 1338 there were four fishgarths near Ravenglass, one each in the estuaries of the Rivers Irt, Esk and Mite, and one (the 'Segarth') on the coast at Barnscar to the north.²⁰ Such fish traps continued in use until recent times, and one was recorded in use in the nineteenth century in the River Esk estuary, opposite the Roman fort.²¹

Ravenglass also became a small port on the River Esk estuary, although by the end of the eighteenth century activity appears to have been restricted to coastal trade in oysters and coal with Furness and Whitehaven.²² Even so, Ravenglass was still considered a small sea-port and market town in 1831, where some small vessels were constructed, with a '*commodius and safe harbour for shipping particularly in tempestuous weather*'.²³ The wider history of shipping along the coastline is reflected in the number of wrecks of small ship recorded by the National Monuments Record²⁴ around the estuary from the early nineteenth century onwards. Of the 36 vessels recorded, the earliest is a sloop of 1772,²⁵ and the last a fishing trawler of 1941.²⁶ Most of the recorded wrecks date to the nineteenth century, and were engaged in coastal, Irish and transatlantic trade.²⁷ They are an indication of the large number of cargo ships sailing the coastline, and how important maritime trade was to the area.

¹⁵ Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 75

¹⁶ Clare 2000, 10, 19

¹⁷ ADS, <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>, reference NMR_NATINV-37072

¹⁸ Hodgkinson *et al* 2000, 78

¹⁹ Hutchinson 1794 567; Lewis 1831, 587

²⁰ Winchester 1987, 109-10

²¹ ADS, <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>, reference NMR_NATINV-1157584

²² Hutchinson 1794, 568

²³ Lewis 1831, 587

²⁴ ADS, <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>

²⁵ ADS, <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>, reference NMR_NATINV-1387069

²⁶ ADS, <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>, reference NMR_NATINV-1368536

²⁷ ADS, <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue>

In the twentieth century, the character of the coast has been influenced by military activity. In particular, the gunnery range at Eskmeals includes a large area of sand dunes, lowland wetland and sand- and mud-flats. This is still an active gun testing range, and a number of observation posts were built along the coast, including one within the National Park at Drigg. Built of brick, they include a semi-circular viewing point providing 180 degree vision for a telescope or plotting device.²⁸

The Changing Countryside

The research strategy for the North West²⁹ acknowledges that the coastal landscape type is one of the least understood and least assessed. The high archaeological potential combined with the high threat of damage through natural processes, especially sea-level rise as a consequence of global warming, combine to make this landscape type highly vulnerable and, as such, a high priority for further research.

These natural forces both erode the landscape type and provide conditions suitable for accretion. In this respect the coastal landscape type is perhaps the most 'natural' of landscapes in the county. Several kilometres of the coast can be changed dramatically after a single storm and this may lead to an overall change of character. These same natural processes will periodically expose, erode and obscure archaeological sites which may lie within dunes or beneath mud flats. There are therefore limited measures that could be taken to protect, enhance or conserve this HLC type. What appropriate management can do is to ensure that the type is not threatened by proposals or neglect which would alter the character of the fragile dune systems or which will needlessly destroy archaeological

deposits which may be buried. A precautionary principle to management should therefore be established where the implications of proposals are not clear. This will also ensure that management of this type will not conflict with the nature conservation interests. Another potential conflict is the recreational usage of the coastline which can conflict with archaeological conservation and lead to dune instability.

Most of the activity on this stretch of coast is part of a series of existing management regimes designed to protect the landscape type and its associated wildlife habitats. These schemes originate from a variety of organisations including the Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Natural England and Defence Estates. These management plans will ensure that the landscape type is conserved and enhanced but there is some potential for conflict with the archaeological interest. In future management plans should not be produced for single conservation interests, but should draw together the different conservation disciplines to provide a seamless and holistic management regime for the coast.

Shoreline Management Plans are designed to bring all conservation interests together and the two existing SMPs for the coast include the built environment or archaeology as key issues. The Cumbrian North SMP has as one of its key objectives, "*to evaluate sites of archaeological importance and, where appropriate, adopt policies to prevent or minimise any adverse impacts*". It also has a landscape objective which seeks to retain the coastal character, "*to sustain and where possible enhance the coastal landscape*".³⁰ HLC data can now make this objective easier to implement and measure. One of the objectives of the River Wyre to Walney Island SMP is to "*minimise and*

²⁸ Barnes, RW, www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~rwbarnes/defence/ranges

²⁹ Brennan *et al* 2007

³⁰ Bullen Consultants Ltd 1999, 9

*mitigate against any adverse impacts that coastal defence works may have on the historical resource*³¹ but all stretches of the coastline within the Park fall within areas where no coastal defences are proposed. A second generation of SMPs are being commissioned and ecologists and archaeologists should seek ways of working together on new policies for the Lake District coastline. The existing SMPs have resulted in monitoring of the coast and historic environment managers should seek to explore how any future monitoring programmes in the revised SMPs can be used to enhance the archaeological record.

As part of the process of creating the second generation of SMPs, English Heritage recommend rapid coastal zone assessments³² to inform management strategies. This includes the marine environment (below low water), the intertidal zone, and land normally above high water but still deemed to be within the coastal zone. In some locations the former intertidal areas will be somewhat inland due to processes of flood, protection, land reclamation and natural processes. One of the pilot areas proposed should include Lake District National Park coastline and marine characterisation should be added to the terrestrial HLC.

Existing nature conservation-led management regimes³³ have highlighted additional issues regarding the safeguarding of this landscape type:

- *Dune stability.* The dunes system is active, but in some areas the vegetation cover has become so well established that the dunes are becoming obscured by scrub and no bare sand is exposed. Ecologists are considering introducing sheep grazing to reduce
- the vegetation cover to a low sward and expose bare sand. While this retains the landscape character, it also creates a potential conflict with the archaeological remains which may be buried beneath. Once such remains are exposed they are vulnerable and require immediate conservation or recording. When buried remains are exposed as a result of dune movement or the erosion of mudflats, a flexible approach to salvage is required so that any historic remains exposed and threatened are recorded first. Sadly there is very little funding for such salvage works a situation which is exacerbated by the need for urgency. Wardens who manage much of the coast (or local residents) need to be aware of the importance of informing the Lake District National Park archaeologist of any new discoveries so that emergency recording can take place.
- *Encroachment of trees and scrub.* At the south end of Eskmeals invading scrub and pine trees are damaging the dune system and invading the heathland which may also lead to root damage on archaeological sites. Ragwort and sea buckthorn are also non-native species which are invading the dune system and are being controlled as part of existing management plans. Ecologists have removed a number of trees and scrub and new saplings are being removed as part of an existing management regime. This should also protect any buried deposits from root damage. Scrub is not dug out due to the possible existence of ordnance from the military site and this policy should also safeguard any buried remains.
- *Burrowing.* At the Drigg SSSI there is only a small rabbit population and while the population remains small they are unlikely to increase dune movement or lead to high levels of damage to buried archaeological

³¹ Shoreline Management Partnership 1999, 7, HAB 3

³² English Heritage 2003, 8

³³ Defence Estates 2005

deposits. The rabbit population is already being monitored by ecologists.

- *Pond creation* is considered as a possible improvement to the habitat for natterjack toads. Most pond creation concentrates on the clearance of existing ponds, but any proposals to create new ponds may conflict with the conservation of buried archaeological remains and should be discussed with the National Park archaeologists.

Shaping the Future: Recommendations

- This historic landscape type should be integrated into future Shoreline Management Plans and other management plans in order to provide a multi-disciplinary approach to safeguarding coastal types.
- One of the pilot areas proposed by English Heritage as part of the revised SMPs should include National Park land. Any maritime characterisation carried out as a result should be added to the terrestrial HLC.
- Regular monitoring of the coast should take place, particularly after storms and high tides. This could be carried out by existing warden staff or local volunteers and dog walkers who may require some training. Existing SMPs have recommended monitoring of the shoreline and creating topographic surveys. Discussions should take place as part of the consultation procedure for new shoreline management plans to explore how future monitoring and surveys might enhance the archaeological record.
- A small fund needs to exist to ensure that rapid recording can take place of newly exposed archaeological remains. Sourcing this is fraught with difficulties as it falls through most funding nets. However by ensuring that the archaeological interest is

represented in any wider management plans, funds may be sourced from their capital or revenue programmes instead.

- As a landscape type which is recognised for its national and international importance, it is unlikely to be threatened with inappropriate development. However offshore developments may also result in damage to the landscape type and therefore the impact of any sand winning or other measures, such as offshore windfarms and tidal barriers, should be fully assessed before proposals are submitted for approval.
- Managing agencies should recognise the competing interests of recreational users and conservation and seek to monitor visitor activity on the landscape type.
- However interpretation of this landscape type could better reflect its historic dimension in what is often perceived to be a natural landscape.

Moorland and Fell

“Here we entered Westmoreland, a country eminent only for being the wildest, most barren and frightful of any that I have passed over in England, or even in Wales itself; the west side, which borders on Cumberland, is indeed bounded by a chain of almost unpassable mountains, which, in the language of the country, are called fells”³⁴

By far the largest single category of unenclosed land is in the uplands, that is land over 300m. Out of a total of 87,380 hectares, 50,530 hectares has been classified as moorland, and 31,306 hectares as fell, including 16 hectares of limestone pavement. The distinction between moorland and fell, for the purposes of the HLC, has been

³⁴ Talbot and Whiteman 1997, 7, quoting Daniel Defoe

drawn between areas of heath, heather moorland and unimproved grassland (moorland), and those areas of rock-dominated hillside and hilltop (fell). The Phase 1 Habitat Survey for Cumbria was used to assist in distinguishing the two areas. No attempt was made to try and determine a more detailed vegetation cover, such as distinctions between grass, heather and bracken, as this could not be done consistently using the Survey. Large parts of the unenclosed uplands are designated as Special Areas of Conservation for the mosaic of dry and humid grassland, heath, bogs, marshes, and inland rocks and screes.³⁵ Other areas are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest for their geological (Langdale Pikes) and botanical (Troutbeck) interest.³⁶ In general the moorlands are dominated by acidic grasslands, particularly *Festuca-Agrostis*, with remnants of heather and



Plate 38: Young bracken growth on Foul Scrow moorland above Coniston. Bracken has invaded a group of seven cairns, scheduled monument no CU059 (© English Heritage)

bilberry, and *Nardus* or mat grass on less steep slopes where waterlogging can occur. Mosses are also plentiful on waterlogged ground. In many places, however, bracken has invaded and in some areas replaced some of the species-rich grassland.³⁷ This has occurred through changes in land management, such as the decline of hill cattle and the cessation of bracken-cutting,³⁸ and more recently in over-grazing by sheep which has weakened the grass swards. Some indication of the extent of bracken cover on the unenclosed uplands can be gained from information gathered for the Monuments at Risk Survey, a condition survey of scheduled ancient monuments undertaken by English Heritage. Out of a total of 275 scheduled ancient monuments within the National Park on all types of land, 42, or just over 15%, are infested by bracken, and most of these are situated on unenclosed land.

Areas of woodland plantation on unenclosed land were distinguished by the HLC, as this is recorded on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey. The woodland comprises mostly coniferous plantation on land owned by the Forestry Commission, and covers around 2,833 hectares. There are three main concentrations; on the north side of Ennerdale Water and along the Ennerdale Valley, on Broughton Moor above Torver to the west of Coniston Water, and in Dunnerdale on the sides of Ulpha Fell. The small conifer plantation at Foulshaw Moss, which has been recently felled, was also included.

The largest area of unenclosed land is concentrated around the central Lakeland fells, including the Scafell range, the Langdale Pikes and the Helvellyn range, with a second area around the Skiddaw range to the north, and a third to the east based around the fells above Kentmere and

³⁵ Joint Nature Conservation Committee, www.jncc.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/SACselection

³⁶ DEFRA, www.magic.gov.uk

³⁷ Halliday 1997, 54-5

³⁸ Winchester 2000, 6-7

Longsleddale and extending north towards Penrith. The areas of rock-dominated fell tend to be in the highest areas, particularly around the Scafell range, Helvellyn, the fells above the western lakes and on High Street and Harter Fell above Kentmere to the east. Rocky landscapes are less common in the open landscapes around Skiddaw, being restricted to the eastern and southern fringes. These fells become a higher extension of the lower rolling moorland around Caldbeck, rising into the Caldbeck and Uldale Fells, before reaching the highest points of Skiddaw and Blencathra. The lack of exposed rock in the northern fells is the result of geology, with the central fells dominated by volcanic lavas and tuffs, whilst the geology of the Skiddaw area is one of slates.³⁹ The unenclosed areas around Coniston Water are also dominated by rock and scree, where the geology comprises Silurian rocks. This range of fells extends from Broughton in the south to Torver in the

north, and is separated from the volcanic rocks of the central fells along the line of the A593 road.

The mountains and fells of the Lake District, which dominate the unenclosed land, have been one of the main attractions for visitors to the area since the eighteenth century. They form part of an iconic romantic landscape which has always been seen as wild and natural. This view is echoed by many of the early tourists. One of the earliest was Daniel Defoe, who travelled through the area in the early seventeenth century. He thought Westmorland was “*the wildest, most barren and frightful of any [county] that I have passed over in England, or even Wales*”.⁴⁰ In William Gilpin’s description of his 1772 tour of Cumberland and Westmorland, for example, he views the scenery as one of nature, “*Mountains, rocks, broken ground, water and wood, are the simple materials, which she [nature] employs in all her beautiful pictures:*

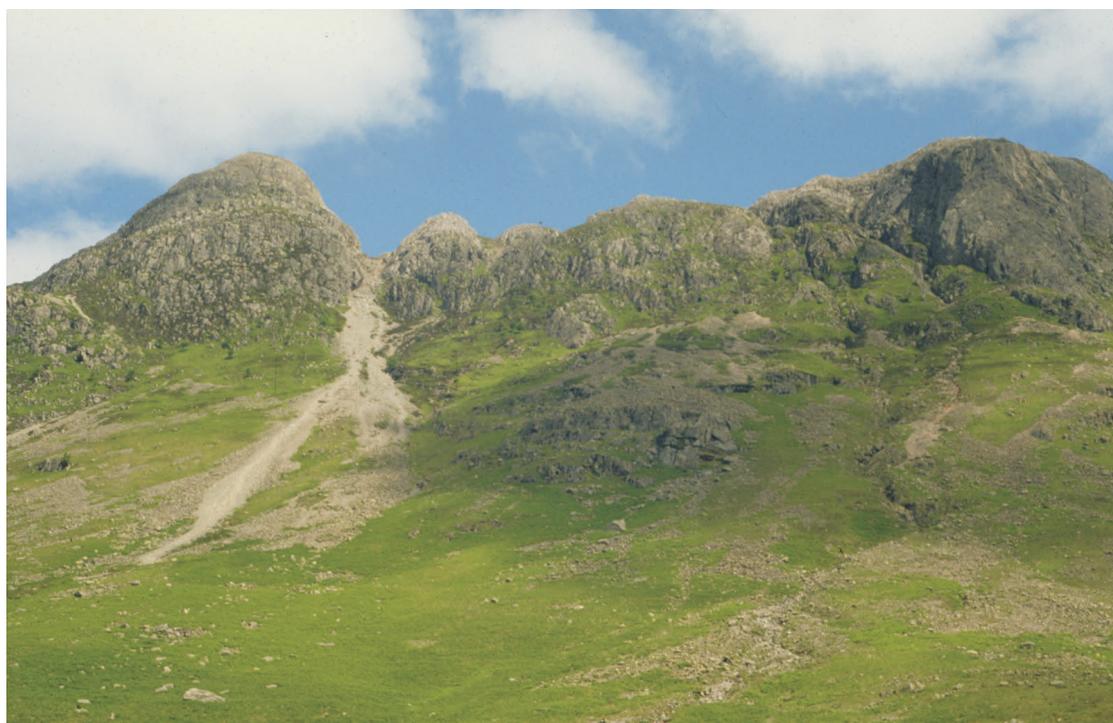


Plate 39: Pike of Stickle, Langdale, one of the sites of stone axe production in the Neolithic period (© LDNPA)

³⁹ Nicholson 1955, 4-7; British Geological Survey 1979

⁴⁰ Whyte 2003, 5

but the variety and harmony, with which she employs them are infinite".⁴¹ The natural majesty of the mountains also dominates Britten and Brayley's descriptions of the fells in 1802, for example, "*This grand assemblage of Nature's monstrous productions...*", was their description of the mountains west of Derwent Water.⁴² This has been explored in more detail in the HLC case study 'Through the Glass Darkly'.

Despite this view of the uplands being places of wild and untamed beauty, they have been shaped by human activity as much as any other landscape type. The earliest evidence for anthropogenic modification in the uplands dates to the early Neolithic period, when communities began to clear and manage areas of forest and heathland for the creation and maintenance of open grassland areas. This process, along with increased rainfall, seem to have led to soil erosion and peat formation in the uplands, for example at Thunacarr Knott where the peat overlies a Neolithic axe working site.⁴³ The best-known example of Neolithic activity within the Lake District is probably the stone axe production sites of the central Cumbria Fells. Several sites in the fells around Great Langdale and Scafell ranges have provided evidence for quarrying and working across a date range that stretches from the early fourth to the mid-third millennium BC. In these fells, some of the large areas of scree consist primarily of prehistoric stone-working debris.⁴⁴

The pattern of land clearance continued throughout the Bronze Age, and extensive programmes of archaeological survey have shown that the open land of the lower fells contain a wealth of evidence for settlement and farming, including prehistoric enclosures. In particular, there are

numerous and extensive sites of clearance cairns, thought to be the physical remains of land improvement for grazing or cultivation in the Bronze Age. They are often associated with relict field systems, in the form of low, earth-fast stone walls. Good examples of these are found across the moorland above Muncaster, on Birker and Ulpha Fells, and further north on the fells above Ennerdale. In some cases, they are also associated with the remains of possible hut circle settlements and funerary cairns. Although there have been few excavations, the extent and quality of the earthwork remains means that most of these sites are considered to be of national importance, and have now been scheduled. One of the best examples is Burnmoor, above Eskdale, where in addition to over 400 cairns, banks, walls, a lynchet, an enclosure and a trackway, 10 funerary cairns and five stone circles have been recorded. The moor, as mapped by the HLC, comprises rough grazing, with some rocky outcrops, but within this is a palimpsest of prehistoric landscapes of more intensive farming, as well as a landscape of ritual significance.⁴⁵ Although these areas are now only grazed extensively by Herdwick and Rough Fell sheep breeds, the ability of these grasslands to have supported more intensive grazing regimes in the past is indicated by the recognition that *Festuca Agrostis* swards provide relatively good grazing.⁴⁶ Bracken invasion in the twentieth century particularly has reduced the grazing quality of these moorlands.

The area of unenclosed land was once much more extensive. Large areas were enclosed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, either through private agreements or later under statute. Although attempts were made to improve this enclosed land, some were unsuccessful and other

⁴¹ Gilpin 1786, 9

⁴² Britten and Brayley 1802, 53

⁴³ Hodgson and Brennand 2006, 31

⁴⁴ Claris and Quartermaine 1989

⁴⁵ Scheduled ancient monument no 23700

⁴⁶ Winchester 2000, 7

areas have since reverted back to moorland. The area of moorland recorded by the Lake District National Park is calculated to cover 104,979 hectares, which means that around 17,500 hectares of former moorland is now in land enclosed from the late eighteenth century onwards. This is dealt with separately in Chapter 5: Planned Enclosure. In some areas, previously enclosed moorland has now reverted to open land, particularly where economic conditions in farming have made it unviable to maintain such marginal land. This is discussed below in the section on reverted moorland. An approximate indication of the extent of moorland in the post

hectares of open land in the post medieval period. In 1800, the unenclosed areas of Westmorland and Cumberland (including areas outside the National Park) covered 79.7% and 50% of each county respectively.⁴⁷

In the medieval period, the extent of unenclosed land, or waste, would have been much greater still. The unenclosed manorial wastes, however, formed a vital part of the farming system. The term waste, although now meaning uncultivated, unproductive, empty or unoccupied, had a generally different meaning in the Middle Ages. Though unsettled, the wastes provided a range of essential resources. The common wastes had an important role



Plate 40: Clearance cairn on Burnmoor, above Eskdale. An extensive and complex landscape of cairns, field systems and stone circles is evidence of more intensive agricultural and ritual use (© English Heritage)

medieval period can be gained by adding together the current extent of open land with land enclosed in the nineteenth century. Around one third of open land was enclosed as part of a planned programme of enclosure, making a total of about 135,340

in upland pastoral farming communities, and were closely controlled and regulated by manorial courts.⁴⁸ In particular, they provided

⁴⁷ Whyte 2003, 5

⁴⁸ Winchester 1987, 87-88

grazing for stock, and were a source of peat for fuel, and bracken for fodder, thatching and for burning into potash for soap.⁴⁹ Much of the uplands had been retained as forests or chases by the feudal lords after the Conquest. These were not necessarily areas of woodland, but royal or seigniorial hunting grounds, which were subject to special laws. The forests of the Lake District were predominantly open moorland, like most of the other forests in the north of England, and suited to extensive demesne pastoral exploitation. The main game would have been red deer, which do not require woodland cover and were carefully managed to produce venison, skins, antlers and bones. Indeed, in the thirteenth century, the Forest of Inglewood (which included the four royal forests of Cumberland) was the biggest supplier of red deer to the king.⁵⁰ The role of forests and chases as hunting grounds became less important in the later medieval period. They were disafforested, and thus became subject only to the control of the manorial courts like the rest of the common waste.⁵¹ Even whilst part of a forest, most of the uplands remained subject to common rights and were grazed by commoners' stock.

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries cattle had become the dominant stock in the forests, reared in *vaccariae* (cattle farms) alongside the deer.⁵² The vaccary centres, with the settlement and associated hay meadows, tended to be located within the enclosed landscapes at the head of valleys, whilst the summer grazing was on the open moorland above.⁵³ In some uplands, particularly on limestone, sheep rearing took place in *bercarii*. The settlement patterns are similar to those of the vaccaries, with sheep folds/sheep shelters still

surviving on the upland grazings.⁵⁴ These were often held by the monastic houses and used as summer grazings as part of a transhumance system, and thus may have been run from seasonally occupied shielings. Horse rearing, too, seems to have taken place in the uplands.

One of the key roles for the common wastes was to provide summer grazing for stock, and there is evidence for the seasonal movement of cattle and sheep to the uplands from the early medieval period.⁵⁵ The practice continued into the early seventeenth century in northern England, and has left evidence in the Lake District in the form of 'scale' place names and the earthwork remains of former dwellings, known as shielings. The term scale, is taken from the Old Norse word *skali*, and can refer both to the grazing grounds and to the hut on the grazing grounds which would have been intermittently occupied. The place name shieling is taken from the Middle English term, *shele* and has the same meaning, but is more commonly used in Northumberland and the Borders.⁵⁶ The remains of shielings are often found on open moorland, though not necessarily distant from an existing settlement, and were probably ancillary accommodation for herdsmen looking after stock at certain times of year. Although often described as temporary structures, excavation has shown that they were more substantial, and should be considered to be permanent structures, occupied intermittently.⁵⁷ This is supported by the many earthwork remains of shielings found on open moorland, such as examples in the Troutbeck valley, where they survive as substantial earth-fast low stone walls. The social and estate context of these settlements also seems to have varied

⁴⁹ Winchester 1987, 90

⁵⁰ Rackham 1986, 316

⁵¹ Winchester 1987, 84

⁵² C Newman 2006, 124-5

⁵³ Winchester 1987, 42-3; Atkin 1985

⁵⁴ McDonnell 1988, 9

⁵⁵ Winchester 2000, 84

⁵⁶ Winchester 2000, 90

⁵⁷ Hair and Newman 1999

considerably. Some were part of long distance transhumance systems where isolated summer grazings were being exploited from distant estate centres. Others lay within the main territory of an estate or township but were too distant from the principal steading for daily movement, for examples shieling sites in Kentmere.⁵⁸

The other resource of the moorland and fells which had a major impact on the character of the unenclosed land was the extraction and processing of minerals. In particular, within the current area of unenclosed land, it was veins of copper and lead ores and other associated minerals. Mining was carried out under manorial control in the Derwent Fells by the mid-thirteenth century, but this appears to have been on a small scale.⁵⁹ It was the formation of the Company of Mines Royal and the introduction of German mining expertise in the sixteenth century

which saw copper and lead extraction undertaken on a serious scale. Techniques such as hushing (the use of water to expose lead-bearing bedrock), open work (exposing veins of ore where it outcrops on the surface) and hand-chipping tunnels (known as coffin levels because of their distinctive profiles) have all left physical evidence of early mining in the fells.⁶⁰ Throughout the post medieval period, and especially through the nineteenth century, as technology improved the scale of mining increased. Ore was processed on site, requiring first water power, later steam and then electricity. On many sites, too, smelt mills were built to reduce the ore to metal. In the case of lead this involved the construction of long flues to carry away the toxic fumes. At Greenside mine, the flue was a mile long.⁶¹ Impressive remains of spoil heaps, processing floors, building complexes, tracks and



Plate 41: The stone foundations of a shieling, in the Troutbeck valley (© English Heritage)

⁵⁸ Atkin 1991, 76

⁵⁹ Winchester 1987, 120

⁶⁰ Tyler 2001, 9-10

⁶¹ Tyler 2001, 58-100

tramways, and water-management systems can be seen at a number of mines which continued in operation into the twentieth century. Amongst the most impressive remains are the former workings of Coniston copper mines, Greenside lead mines and Force Crag mines, where mining have created whole landscapes. Stone quarrying, too, has a long history in the Lake District, with records of surface slate extraction from Sadgill dating back to the late thirteenth century.⁶² Later slate quarrying was carried out on a large scale, and mines such as Honister and Broughton Moor have also left an impact on the unenclosed landscapes of moor and fell. Even though mining can have a dramatic impact on the landscape, they tend to be confined to particular areas and their scale is therefore localised. At the county level, used for the HLC mapping, such areas are often subsumed within wider landscape types.

The Changing Countryside

Lake District National Park Plan policies⁶³ cover landscape character and seek to protect and enhance the character while resisting inappropriate change. Policies which might be most appropriate to the unenclosed uplands include:

1.6 Protect and enhance the qualities of tranquillity, wildness and remoteness

1.9 Protect and enhance the distinctive open fell landscape and its diverse habitats and promote a balance between elements of the cultural and natural landscape.

This holistic approach to managing a landscape type is exemplary and ensures that the open moorlands are recognised for their historic and ecological assets.

Commons management is an important feature of the Lake District

and communal grazing with hefted flocks has long sustained unenclosed land and its tradition of access. This access arrangement has recently changed with foot access to open and common land. Since the 1990s the Lake District National Park Authority has participated in Integrated Common's Management of its own commons through small joint committees consisting of commoners, members, parish councillors and nature conservation and recreation specialists. As part of its commitment to achieve an enhanced level of management of the commons, the Lake District National Park Management Plan⁶⁴ contains a number of policies on land management including:

F2 Develop and run agri-environment schemes that enhance the special qualities of the Lake District National Park

F7 Secure sound commons' management by lobbying for effective legislation and encouraging grazing on the fells at levels that are ecologically sound, practical and economically viable.

F8 Manage the commons and fells in ways which avoid the need for new fencing and accelerate the removal of redundant fencing.

These policies outlines the Park's intention to conserve the open moorland through proactive management, however the policies on common land make little reference to their historic importance.

It is well known that moorland is vulnerable to over-grazing and erosion, but the impact of bracken on the landscape type is perhaps one of the greatest and most immediate threats, exacerbated by the removal of cattle from the fells and the lack of labour to cut the bracken. Bracken makes large areas of moorland inaccessible, alters the character and

⁶² Tyler 2001, 168-9

⁶³ LDNPA 2004, 19

⁶⁴ LDNPA 2004, 31

hides earthwork remains. The bracken rhizomes form dense mats which penetrate archaeological layers and damage fragile stratigraphy. The plant is considered to be carcinogenic and can cause diseases in cattle and sheep⁶⁵ and it inhibits other moorland plants from growing. If bracken control does not take place on the unenclosed landscapes then the character of this landscape type will change within a short time and buried deposits will be damaged beyond repair.

Some forms of erosion caused by grazing animals also threatens archaeological remains, but is less of an impact on the overall landscape type, as damage tends to be localised. However overgrazing also leads to the loss of moorland vegetation such as heather and associated wildlife which in turn leads to a change in character. The loss of heather can also encourage bracken infestation. Therefore the very qualities which visitors to the Lake District seek to

admire and explore, may be threatened by over grazing or the infestation of bracken. Erosion caused by polluted peat around former industrial sites can also lead to the exposure of prehistoric occupation layers and a change in hydrology can lead to peat drying out with similar results. Dehydration can be caused by drainage, peat extraction and tree planting.

The landscape type is affected by the current changes in farming practice. A number of agricultural crises (Foot and Mouth, BSE and increased regulation) have led to farmers finding it increasingly difficult to sustain living from the land. The numbers of farms have decreased and full time farmers are reducing in numbers. Farming on the uplands is labour intensive and so it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the landscape type through traditional farming activities such as sheep gathering and commons' grazing. Increasingly retaining



Plate 42: A sheep fold on unenclosed moorland (© LDNPA)

⁶⁵ University of Liverpool 2005

traditional management is going to rely on support from the government and the Lake District National Park Authority. The National Park is already involved in a number of initiatives to retain traditional farming skills without which the open moorland may be threatened by forces which would alter the landscape character.

Visible landscape features within moorlands consist of sheep folds, historic trackways and boundary walls. Despite being unenclosed land discrete sections of walls can be found in areas such as Great Langdale⁶⁶ which appear to have been used for guiding livestock away from precipitous crags, or possibly on to their own heaf/pasture. Walls of this type appear near the Stake Pass, to the east of Tarn Crag and below Raw Pike. These features should be protected from deliberate destruction, although it may not always be possible to conserve extensive fellside walls which can run for miles across open moorland and steep fells. The lack of intensive farming and development on this landscape type has resulted in excellent survival of prehistoric remains and these should be conserved. An accidental fire resulting from heather burning at Fylingdales in the North York Moors National Park⁶⁷ exposed a wealth of hitherto unrecorded archaeological remains on the peat surface. This emphasised the high potential for buried remains on moorland. There has recently been a move away from heather burning, however in the event that burning was to take place within the Lake District National park moorlands, a site walkover survey will often result in new discoveries. Buried remains within peat beds can be well preserved and any newly exposed peat beds or actively eroding areas of peat should be monitored.

Shaping the Future: Recommendations

- Improve management regimes to minimise the threat of overgrazing and erosion, and damage through the spread of bracken growth, particularly where there is known archaeology. Positive management should be encouraged through the implementation of agri-environment schemes. Bracken should be controlled by spraying or cutting, rather than burning which may damage the archaeological resource. Stone clearance and the use of cairns and buildings as sources of building material must be avoided.
- Visible historic elements which may be found within this type and which contribute towards its character include sheepfolds and historic trackways and these should be conserved either through maintenance or through agri-environment schemes. High altitude stone walls can often be seen climbing vertical fellsides marking property or township boundaries. These are significant landscape features, they are often no longer used, are relatively late but the presumption should always be to repair and reuse wherever practicable. Elsewhere, a process of natural deterioration after recording may be more appropriate. In some cases it may be acceptable to retain only the footings and lower courses and use the remaining stone to repair walls which have a greater contribution to make towards landscape character.
- The role of humans in the creation and management of moorland is not well appreciated. Opportunities for increased and improved interpretation should be taken whilst at the same time deflecting visitors from sensitive historic attributes.
- Moorland often contains the best surviving examples of ritual, land use and settlement evidence.

⁶⁶ Lund and Southwell 2002, 45

⁶⁷ Blaise Vyner pers comm

These remains should be conserved. Areas of peat erosion should be monitored.

- Much of this HLC type falls within the Lake District ESA, SSSIs and other nature conservation designations, and is subject to the requirements of the relevant legislation, guidance and policy. Attention should be given to emphasising the historic dimension to such designated areas, and to ensuring that it is always considered alongside the 'primary' natural attributes.
- Large areas of tree planting, mineral extraction or land improvement would result in potential damage to buried deposits and an unacceptable change in character and this should be reflected in policy documents. Where the impact is less clear an impact assessment should be carried out which will include an

assessment of the impact on landscape character, potential damage to buried remains, and impact on possible organic deposits within buried peat beds.

- The impact of open access on archaeologically sensitive areas should be monitored.

Moorland Reversion

Within the area of unenclosed land, there is just under 5000 hectares of land which was previously enclosed but has since been abandoned and reverted back to open moor. In Lancashire, reverted moorland occurs on the fringes of the unenclosed land, and represent a withdrawal from the most marginal farmland. In the Lake District, however, reversion is limited to discrete areas.

These areas are all in the east of the National Park, west of the A6 road and north of Kendal. They cover part of the western Shap Fells and include the



Plate 43: Intakes in the early stages of moorland reversion, showing the gradual decay of drystone walls and the deterioration of pasture quality (© Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd)

hills around Bannisdale and Longsleddale, such as Sleddale Fell, Bannisdale Fell, and High House Fell. A discrete area of High Street Fell is also included. High Street, the area of the Shap Fells, Harter Fell and the moors above the head of Longsleddale were enclosed by Act of Parliament in the nineteenth century. The fells above Bannisdale were also enclosed around the same time, but apparently by private agreement, resulting in a landscape of extremely large, straight-sided but irregularly shaped enclosures. In general, many of the boundaries appear to relate to administrative boundaries, such as townships. The land is high, much of it being over 400m, with rocky outcrops and wet ground conditions. The enclosures were unlikely to have been undertaken with a view to radical improvement, and the large scale of the enclosures suggests that they were used only to demarcate rough pasture allotments. On the west side of Bannisdale is a large irregularly shaped enclosure, which is a former intake. It is named Dryhowe Pasture and was probably made as a cow pasture in the eighteenth century. The area to the east of Bannisdale is still known as Fawcett Forest. This was a legal forest granted to Byland Abbey by William de Lancaster in the thirteenth century⁶⁸ and would have been typical of the open moorland forests of the region.

The Changing Countryside

The greatest threat to this landscape type derives from its long term redundancy and lack of maintenance. The drystone walls which define the former enclosures are now ruinous

and the enclosed interiors are faced with the same management issues as open moorland. Where they are still visible the enclosures should be recorded on the Historic Environment Record, and further information gathered on their date and longevity before deciding whether field walls should be conserved or allowed to fall into further disrepair. Many are now obscured by bracken and can remain as visible components of this landscape through bracken control.

Redundant enclosures are often located on the contour line immediately above anciently enclosed land and on the lower edges of moorland. There are some indications that along this contour line there is a high potential for archaeological sites which may have been preserved by the former enclosures. Further research into the correlation between HER sites and their distribution may increase our understanding of survival within formerly enclosed land.

Shaping the Future: Recommendations

- Management guidelines should follow those for open moorland
- Further research into the distribution of HER sites within former enclosures may highlight the trend for good preservation conditions along the contour line above anciently enclosed land.

⁶⁸ Whellan 1860, 869