CHAPTER 14. CROOK AND UNDERBARROW CASE STUDY: ENHANCING HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

by Miles Johnson

Introduction

The intention of this case study is to give an example of how an historic landscape characterisation (HLC) might be developed into a more in-depth assessment of historic landscape character at a local, or parish scale. HLC projects are designed to characterise large areas of the landscape in a relatively short period of time. The normal process of doing HLC is therefore rapid, involving the assessment and interpretation of a limited set of map-based sources, often without the benefit of any familiarity with the area 'on the ground'. This case study attempts to flesh out some more detail onto the background of the HLC database in three ways; by undertaking more detailed analyses of the HLC database at the parish scale, by broadening the number of sources used to inform the characterisation, and by using fieldwork to inform the local characterisation.

Two of the more regularly mooted strengths of HLC are its visual impact and its potential for use as a tool for helping to engage people with the historic environment. Whilst it undoubtedly has the potential, in its raw state HLC does not provide a purpose-built tool for outreach. One of the benefits of presenting a case study at parish, rather than county scale, is that the study will inevitably encompass someone's local landscape. The GIS generated maps that are the product of

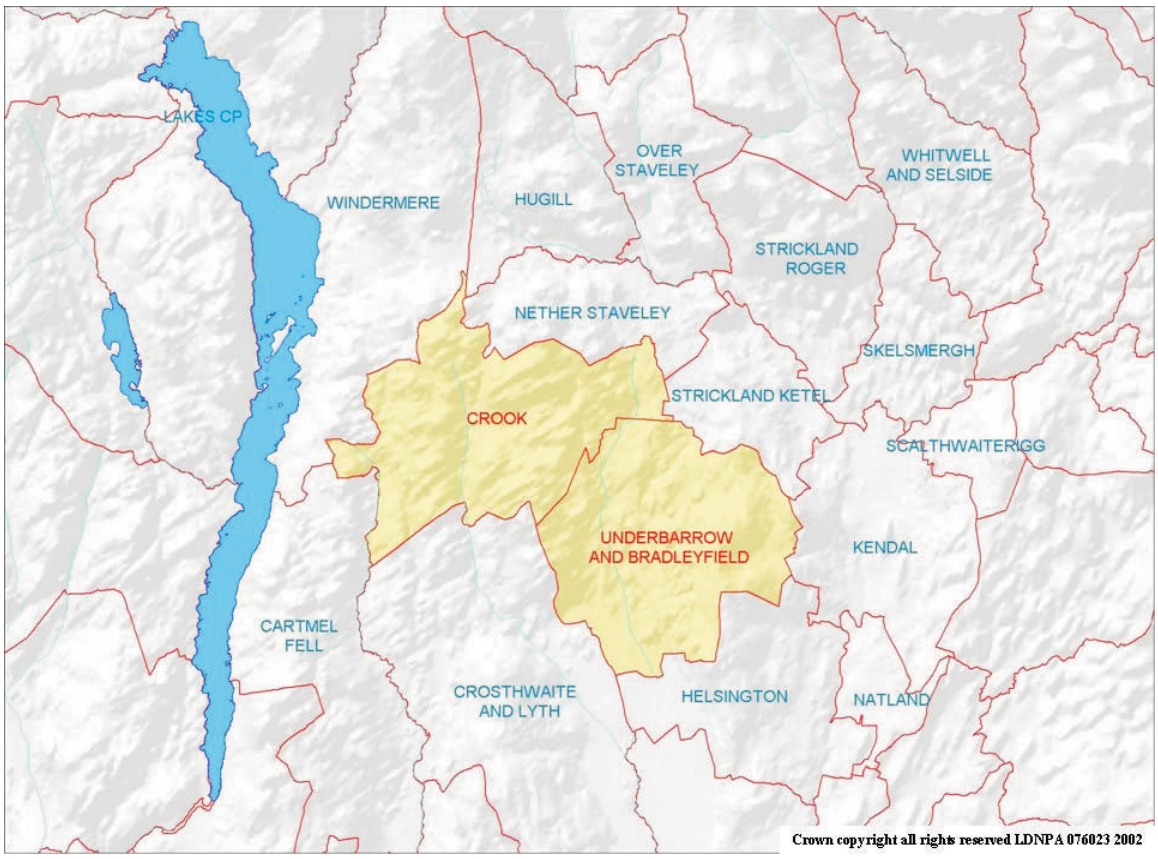


Figure 70: The study area highlighted in yellow

HLC can be shown at a more familiar scale and be backed up by images and detail to which local people will be well accustomed. The end result can create a fresh perspective on their local landscape. The results of the following case study were presented at the 2003 *Archaeology in the Lake District* conference.

The study area

This case study takes two civil parishes as its subject; Crook parish and Underbarrow and Bradleyfield parish. These are in the centre of the Crosthwaite and Underbarrow Low Fells character area. Combined, the parishes cover an area of 40km². They are located in the south eastern part of the National Park, covering much of the ground between Kendal and Windermere. This is a little-researched area of the National Park in landscape terms, which is perhaps understandable given that it is not a particularly distinctive area when compared to the surrounding parishes. Nevertheless, the south east Lake District forms a very distinctive region in its own right, both because of its varied topography, and in that it is (unusually for the Lake District) a completely enclosed landscape.

The time available for fieldwork on this case study was limited and this was a consideration in the choice and size of location, although other factors such as the presence of a large number of bridleways and footpaths, and the easy accessibility of much of the study area by road were also important. The fieldwork was undertaken in November 2003 and involved a little less than two days spent visiting the two parishes. An additional day was spent in the Cumbria Records Office, Kendal to provide more detailed background for the case study.

Analysis of the existing characterisation

The HLC shows very clearly how much the study area has in common with the rest of the south east Lake District National Park in historic landscape terms. As with many parts of south Cumbria, the settlement pattern is dominated by dispersed farmsteads, there being nothing that might be called a nucleated settlement within the study area. The older enclosed inbye land is

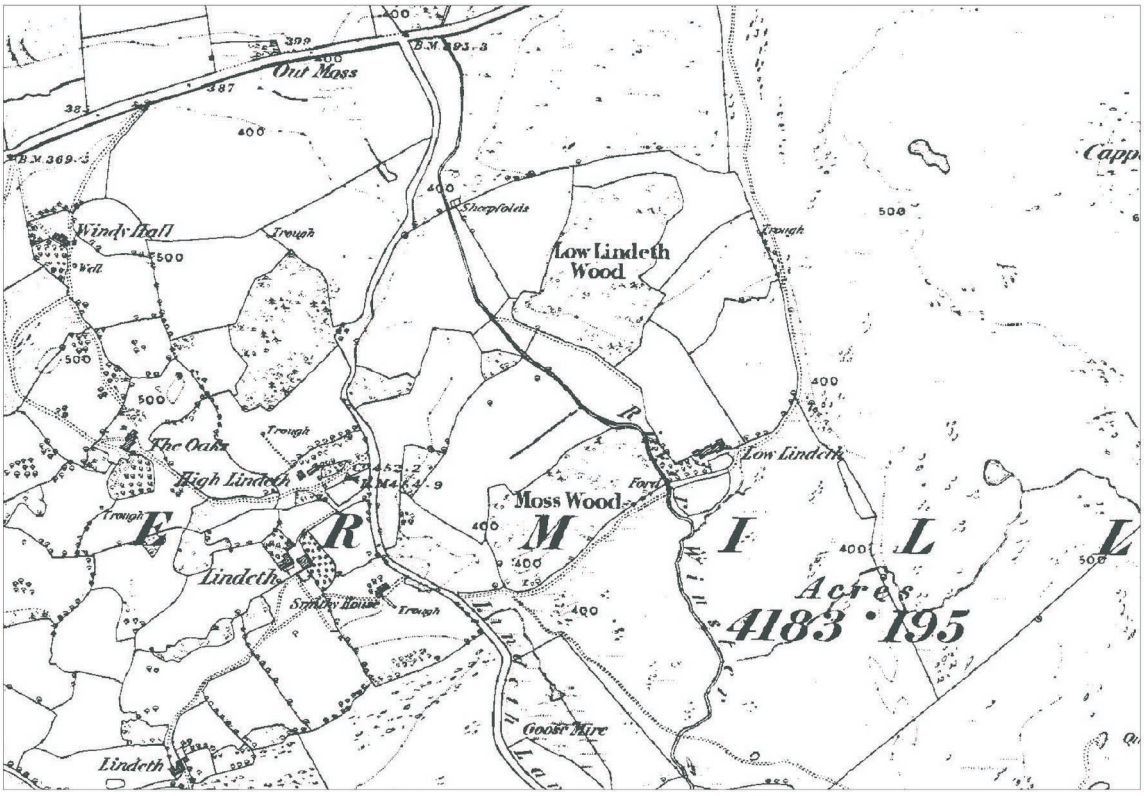


Figure 71: Low Lindeth, as shown on the Ordnance Survey first edition 6" map of 1863. The shaded area indicates the limits of the ring-fenced farm.

characterised by much more irregular enclosure patterns than are found in village landscapes. There are clear examples of single 'ring-fenced' farms with their closes encircled within a single larger enclosure. One example can be seen at Low Lindeth at the western limit of the study area, where there appears to have been a single ring-fenced farm, much of which was formerly surrounded by unenclosed fell.

Most of the inbye land in Crook and Underbarrow is more difficult to interpret in terms of patterns of past land use and land tenure. Research in neighbouring areas has shown that historically, many farmsteads had shares in small common meadows and common arable fields as well as their own private closes located closer to the farmstead.[1] The extremely varied topography would not have allowed for larger units of intensively managed land. There are certainly no examples of the characteristic parallel curving boundaries and large areas of more regular enclosure that are associated with extensive open field systems such as might be found in the Eden Valley, or north west Cumbria. There are, however, a few areas of slightly more regular and more planned looking enclosure within the older inbye of both parishes; the interpretation of these without reference to further sources was problematic. They were thought to possibly represent enclosure of much smaller areas of former common meadow or arable, although they could equally have represented a later reorganisation or subdivision of land in private ownership. Given the impossibility of distinguishing between such areas through normal HLC (where the range of data sources is very limited), much of the inbye was characterised as single pre-enclosure period farms, with the understanding that there would be examples of shared closes within the broader type.

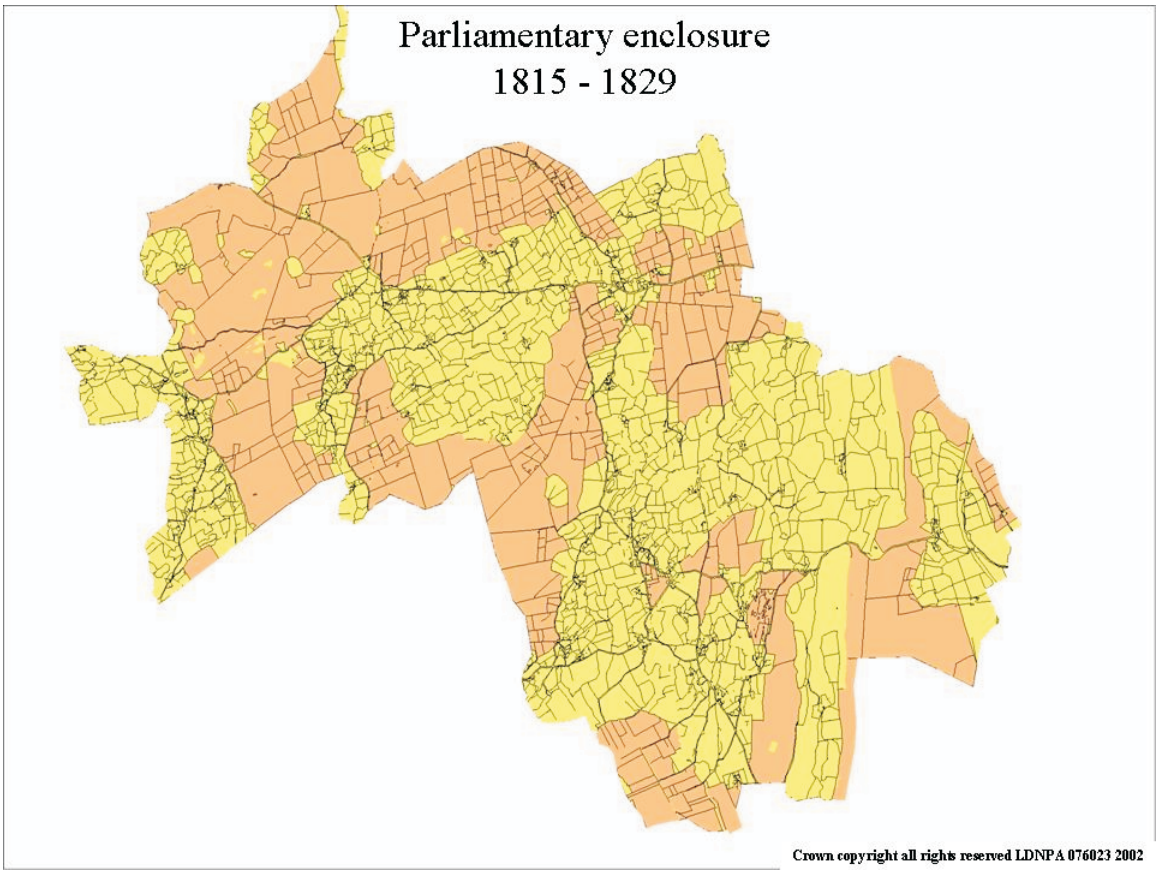


Figure 72: Areas of parliamentary enclosure in the parishes of Crook and Underbarrow, marked in light orange

[1] Winchester 1989

Enclosure patterns certainly appear to have been stable in these older enclosed areas. Despite a significant number of minor boundary changes between the first edition and current OS maps (and noticeably more changes than in areas of later enclosure), severe boundary loss, or the complete reorganization of field patterns appears to have affected only a tiny fraction of the study area.[2] This reflects the general trend in much of the surrounding region, with the overall pattern of enclosure unchanged from that shown on the 1863 map. Minor boundary changes (mostly boundary loss, with occasional boundary insertions), affect a larger part of the study area, and were noted across approximately 20% of the study area and are for the most part confined to the inbye. This trend appears to reflect the needs of later twentieth and twenty-first century farming, where smaller and incidentally older fields are less desirable units for management and consequently more likely to be enlarged.

Some 45% of the land area of Crook and Underbarrow was enclosed by parliamentary award between the years 1815 and 1829. One of the principal sources that the HLC had employed was a series of maps[3] upon which the areas of land mapped from Parliamentary enclosure maps had been transcribed. The distribution of parliamentary enclosure on these maps was included

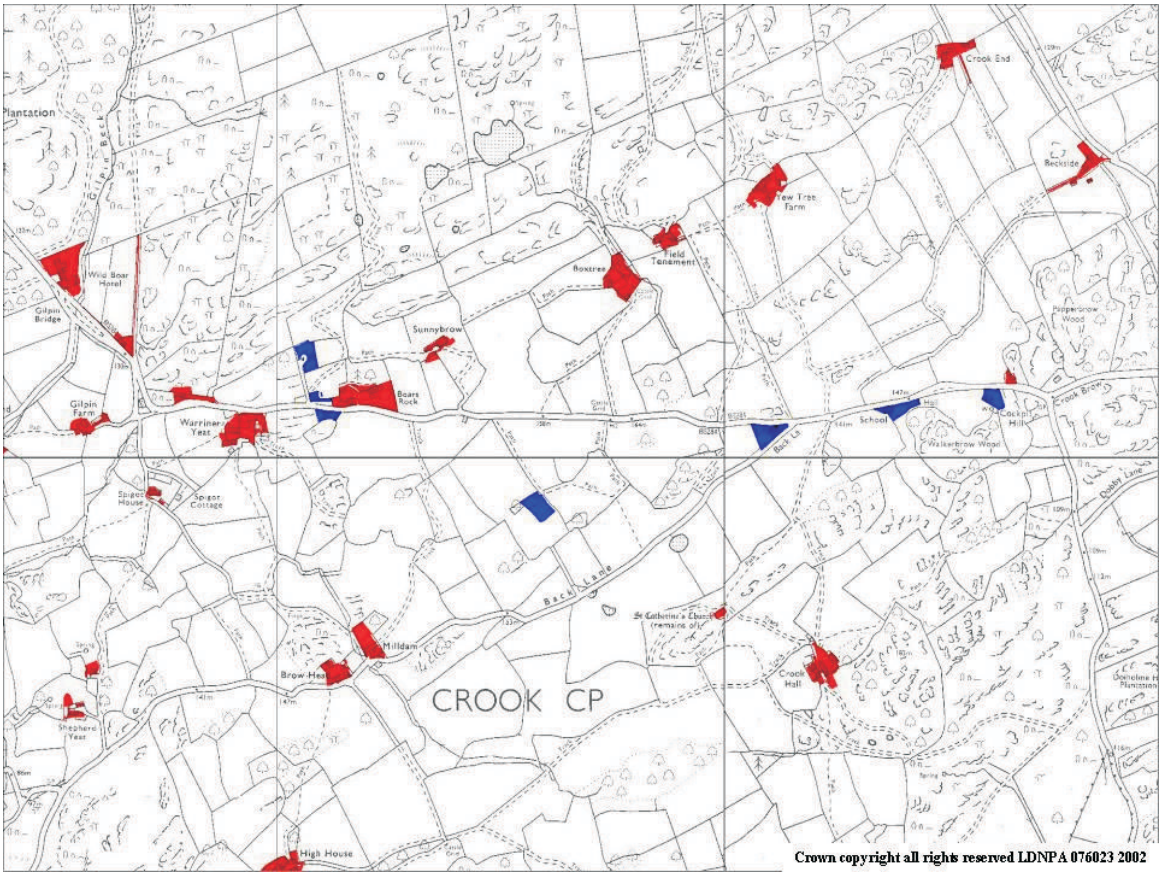


Figure 73: Pre-1863 (red) and post-1863 (blue) settlements in part of Crook Parish. The thematic map shows a possible relationship between post-1863 new builds and the Kendal to Bowness turnpike, which runs east-west centrally through this map . The late nineteenth century successor to St Catherine's church was built along this road. There are numerous older routes in the parish, many of which survive as bridleways, footpaths and farm tracks. One such route exists along the boundary between the old enclosed land, the intakes and later parliamentary enclosure along the diagonal line of farmsteads in the northern part of the map.

[2] see figure 75

[3] helpfully provided by Professor Ian Whyte of Lancaster University

in the interpretation fields of the database, and was very much borne out in the thematic maps of field morphology produced from the HLC.[4] When viewed in plan, the nineteenth century enclosure is visibly different from the earlier enclosure. It is characterised by generally larger fields set within organised patterns with mostly ruler straight boundaries and, as might be expected, covers much more intractable, craggy land. Nevertheless, much of this nineteenth century enclosure has been improved as pasture to some degree, with the poorest agricultural land surviving as some of the largest allotments. The establishment of a number of large broadleaf plantations appears to coincide with the enclosure of the Crook and Underbarrow commons. Several presumably established plantations (eg Cockhag and Summer Grove plantations) are named and marked on the first edition map of 1863. A comparison of the HLC surface types mapped on both the first and second edition maps is included in the appendix[5] and shows very clearly the process of improvement that progressed rapidly from the enclosure of the commons and probably continued into the later twentieth century. Boundary change between the 1863 and current OS maps is generally fairly minimal within areas of parliamentary enclosure. In some places there is evidence of boundary accretion, which may be tied to the general trend for land improvement in these areas.

Numerous earlier woodlands appear within the case study area, many confined to areas of older enclosure. The HLC was able to identify all of the more substantial of these woodlands, and by comparing modern coverage and the Phase 1 habitat map with first and second edition OS maps, was able to show some instances where there had been a major change of character.[6] In interpreting older woodlands in the HLC

Plate 79: Crook End Farm, a pre-parliamentary enclosure farm which was sited on the edge of the enclosed fields. The fields behind it were enclosed by parliamentary act in the early 19th century (© Egerton Lea Consultancy Ltd)

[4] see figure 76

[5] See figures 77 and 78

[6] For example where older woodlands or plantations had been replanted with conifers, but not where older coppice woodland had given way to broadleaf plantation

database, the distinction between those with, for example, plantation names on the first edition maps, and those with names indicating possible ancient woodland, such as 'Hagg' or 'Springs', also played a role. The location of the woodland especially in terms of the type of land and gradient of slope upon which it was sited, and the character of the boundaries or boundary defining it was also key in interpreting possible areas of surviving older woodland.

A general trend was observed when comparing the first edition and current OS mapping in South Cumbria. was a decline in coverage of smaller, older woodlands. This was not especially noticeable in the Crook and Underbarrow area, although there was definitely a small decline in broadleaf coverage, including scattered woodlands, and a change from some formerly dense woodlands into scattered woodlands. A brief examination of the settlement pattern produced some interesting results, particularly in Crook parish where there was a noticeable migration of post-1863 settlement towards the Kendal to Bowness turnpike.

Additional historic sources

The most detailed sources available for the study area were Corn Rent maps of the mid 1830s.[7] These proved exceptionally useful for developing an insight into the areas of older enclosure. A mass of land use and tenure data is contained within these maps and their associated terriers, far more than could be extracted and properly understood within the time available. What was possible was a level of generalised observation and a detailed look at the landscape at a small number of specific locations.

Perhaps the most immediate difference in character that shows on the Corn Rent maps is the presence of significant amounts of arable land, none of which survives into the present. Arable

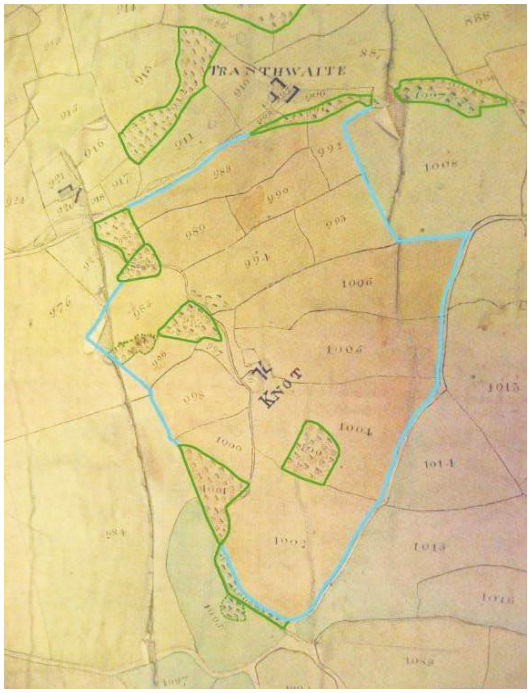


Plate 80: Knott Farm Underbarrow. Detail from the 1836 Corn Rent map, showing numerous small woodlands. Only one of Knott Farms woodlands is marked on current OS mapping. Compare with figure 75, showing Knott Farm in c *1900*

agriculture in this area probably came to an end in the last quarter of the nineteenth century when competition from foreign imports and improved rail links with lowland areas made crop growing unprofitable. This period saw a contraction in arable agriculture nationally, and in many upland areas it was entirely replaced by stock and dairy farming. A significant landscape change that the Corn Rent maps highlighted, but that had not been as effectively picked up in the characterisation was the decline in small woodlands. Many of these would be too small to characterise had they survived into the present landscape, but were numerous on the 1836 map, less frequent on the OS first edition and many were gone by the start of the twentieth century.

Investigation of the Corn Rent maps did suggest that, in terms of land tenure, many of the holdings were very small farms, consisting of a nucleus of small fields surrounding the farmstead. Just one small field, in Crook, was marked as

[7] CROK WQ/R/C/1 and WQ/R/C/22

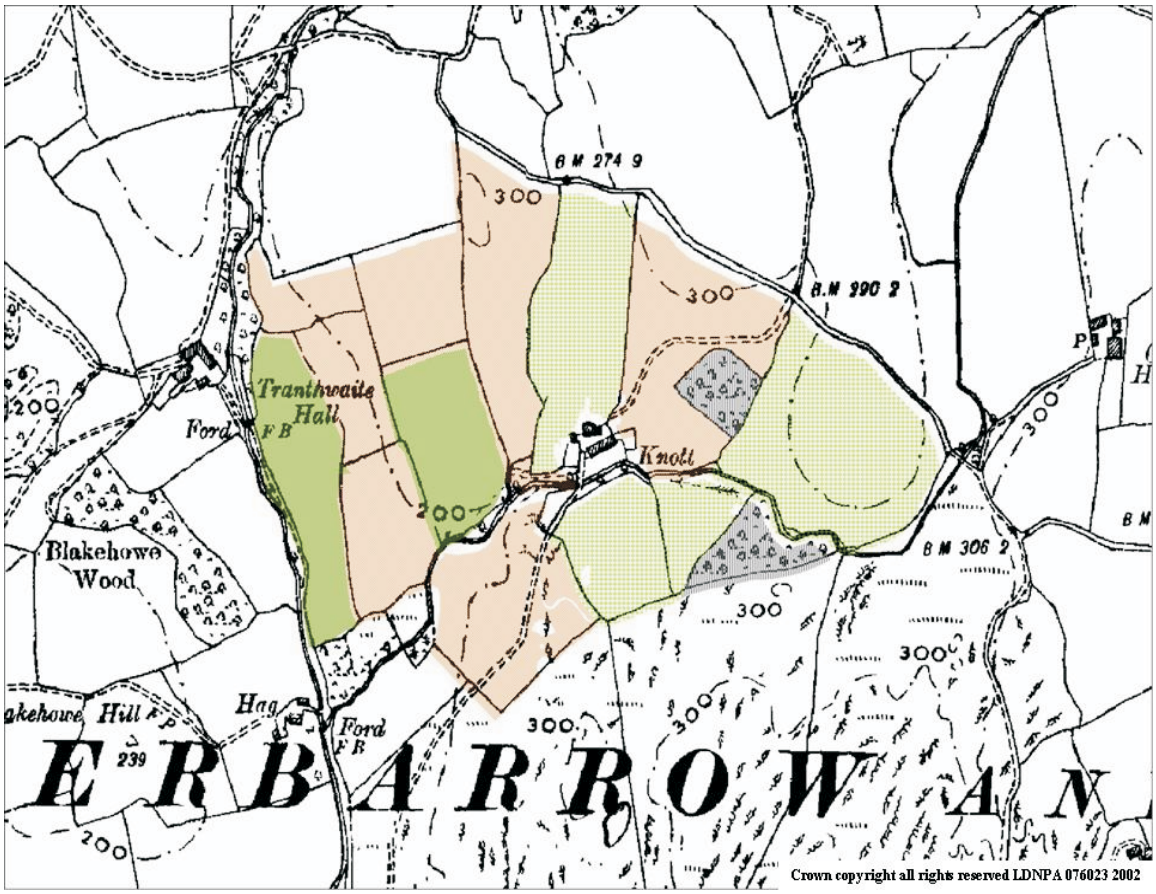


Figure 74: Knott Farm, Underbarrow and Bradleyfield. The limits of the holding transposed from the 1836 Corn Rent map onto an OS second edition background. The land management shown in the terrier has been thematically mapped. Green – pasture, pale green – meadow, pink - arable

containing unenclosed strips (it was not possible to discern whether arable or meadow). This was located just south of Field Tenement Farm; one of the areas of older enclosure characterised by a more regular field pattern. It may well be that the unenclosed strips on the 1836 map are a survival of a slightly larger common field that had been enclosed in piecemeal fashion prior to the 1830's. The 'field' name and the surviving enclosure pattern would tend to suggest this is a possibility, although further research would be necessary to confirm it. Nevertheless, the overriding impression of land tenure given by the Corn Rent maps was one of a mass of compact holdings as illustrated above, and not an area with extensive common fields.

A full interpretation of the origin and development of this older enclosed landscape is beyond the scope of this case study. Nevertheless it seems very likely that elements of the field pattern will be of a significant age. At Powter How, it was possible to relate sixteenth century field names to fields marked on a nineteenth century tithe map,[8] suggesting much continuity to the enclosure pattern. Such a situation seems almost certain in Crook and Underbarrow, where place names such as Tranthwaite and Cunswick are known to feature in medieval and early post-medieval documents. The organisation of the landscape in the study area is also comparable to areas of known ancient enclosure.

Where holdings had parliamentary allotments, many of these appeared to be located on the area of fell closest to

[8] Winchester 1989

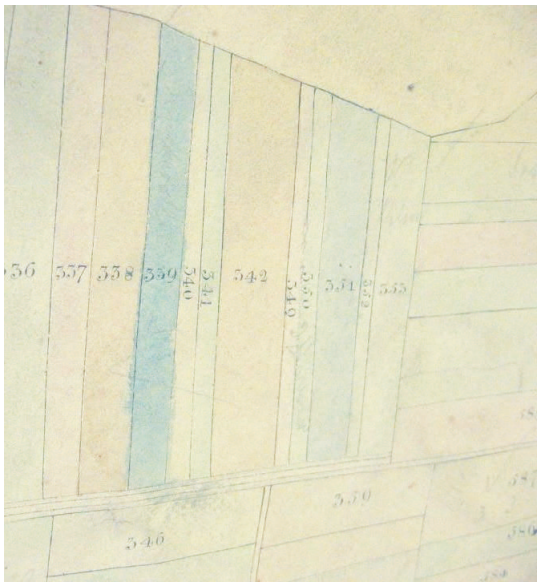


Plate 81: Detail from the 1836 Underbarrow Corn Rent Map showing enclosure of thin strips from the recently enclosed Lyth valley. Some of the strips may have originated as peat cuttings. The colours represent different land ownerships

the main holding. The notable exception with the late enclosures was in Underbarrow where many farms had small shares in the Lyth valley wetlands, some distance from the farmsteads.

Whilst only a small part of the study area was reclaimed from the Lyth valley wetlands, the engineering required for the enclosure of this area was clearly an immense undertaking. The cutting of major drains and creation of large flood banks had to be completed before the individual allotments could be created.

Field based observations

Visiting the two parishes on the ground proved to be an extremely good way of gathering data about local historic landscape character. It demonstrated that historic landscape character is highly visible at a local scale as well as the broad scale used by HLC. Whilst it is not possible within the constraints of this project to produce a 'local characterisation' of the study area, it is possible to highlight specific aspects of the historic landscape character..

Just as historic character reflects in broader enclosure patterns, it shows at a micro level in the composition of individual boundaries. Walls are more numerous than any other type of boundary within the study area, although there are also a large number of hedges in the inbye land and drains within the Lyth valley enclosures.

The archetypal Lake District drystone wall, made from quarried stone with two or three rows of coursed throughstones, can be found in significant numbers and is especially common in areas of parliamentary enclosure. Walls of this type were often stipulated in many of the

Plates 82 and 83: Contrasting walling styles. The photograph on the left shows a wall in Crook with two rows of coursed throughs, quarried stone and neat coping. A typical late enclosure wall resembling many other parliamentary enclosure walls in the study area. 'Late' walls are also a feature of anciently enclosed areas. There are obvious advantages to having a more stable wall structure, and it may well be that in some places older style walls and hedges have been replaced with the 'new style'. The potential for such changes is greater now as stone can be moved so easily around a landholding. The photograph on the right, of a wall near Mountjoy in Underbarrow and Bradleyfield parish, is probably made from clearance stone, suggesting a potentially ancient origin. The fabric of these walls is very unstable and all but the lowest courses will have been rebuilt on many occasions (© LDNPA)

Plate 84: Cumulative piecemeal changes within the inbye. The nearest boundary is a drystone wall with coursed throughs and probably recently rebuilt with funding from the ESA. The second wall is built in an older style with some clearance stone, and behind that is a remnant hedgerow (© LDNPA)

enclosure acts and although they may not have been followed to the letter, this style appears to define the type of enclosure period wall in this area. Of course, many walls have been patched and rebuilt in different ways over the last 180 years. It has been argued[9] that this kind of wall probably evolved out of the need for more stable walling structures as the landscape began to be subdivided in ways that did not respect local topography.

Late walls also feature in areas of earlier enclosure, both in boundaries that have been rebuilt, or added to the field pattern and in areas where boundaries have been rationalised. Late-style walls are certainly more desirable in reducing the need for maintenance, but it is uncertain whether the trend for replacing older boundaries with these continues. Cross-Compliance regulations allow for walling stone to be moved around within a holding in order to repair walls in better condition. Under the former Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme and the Environmental Stewardship schemes, walling projects are supposed to rebuild walls in a style to 'match the existing'. Whether this always happens is open to question.

As might be expected, earlier walls were seen only within areas of older enclosure. The appearance of these walls varies greatly, with some built with degrees of coursing and others where the form of the stone meant that only simpler structures could be attempted. There is clearly the potential for a more detailed project looking at walling styles in relation to historic landscape character and using more in-depth historical research, particularly as the

[9] Lord 2004

oldest and potentially least stable types of drystone wall are likely to be the most vulnerable.

One theory quashed by field observations was that the distribution of hedgerows could be accurately mapped using the Phase1 habitat survey. This proved not to be possible as the Phase1 surveyors must have been limited to particular public rights of way and access land. There were clear differences to the distribution of hedgerows apparent on the ground.

In places there are remnants of the more mixed agricultural landscape that existed prior to the late nineteenth century. Ridge and furrow was observed in a few places, although not as much as was suggested by the extent of arable land on the Corn Rent maps. This may have been for two reasons, firstly, not all farmers may have been using a ploughing technique that produced ridge and furrow. In some parts of the country 'stetch ploughing' was used which resulted in any ridges being obliterated by the next annual ploughing. The other possibility is that twentieth-century ploughing and reseeding of pasture may have removed any evidence of ridge and furrow.

Field based observation also verified the earlier observations made about the loss of small woodlands. In several instances, relict or robbed boundaries surrounding small areas of craggy land were seen, some of which related to small woodlands shown on the OS first edition and Corn Rent maps. There were also examples where these small areas retained one or two mature standard trees, which might be expected to survive if an area of coppiced woodland was grazed over a long period.

Another feature that was apparent in a few areas, both within boundaries, along routeways and (less frequently) within fields, was pollarded trees. Active pollarding of trees appears to be extremely rare , with the only example being the one depicted below. Most of the few examples are confined to areas of probable ancient enclosure, with a small number of impressive oak examples located in Underbarrow.

Plate 85: Ridge and furrow at Help Pot farm Underbarrow. A small area of slight, narrow ridge and furrow, such as might be produced by later post-medieval ploughing. The edge of the former arable is marked by a lynchet suggesting this was produced by more than a casual episode of ploughing (© LDNPA)

Conclusion

This case study provides an overview of the Crook and Underbarrow study area, and outlines some important ways that historic landscape character is reflected at a local scale. A number of key points were raised by this exercise and are listed below:

- Investigation of place name evidence and comparison of field name/field pattern evidence in similar areas (eg at Powter How[10] suggests a long continuity of settlement and enclosure pattern within the project area. Elements of the inbye field pattern are likely to originate in the medieval period.
- Investigation of the Corn Rent Maps showed that the dominant ancient enclosure pattern related to single ancient farms.
- Enclosure patterns were generally very stable, with a moderate degree of boundary loss, occurring mostly within anciently enclosed areas.
- Examination of the Corn Rent maps showed that arable agriculture (now completely absent) was a significant component of the nineteenth century landscape.
- The initial HLC, was not able to fully assess the changing character of woodlands. The project highlights a significant loss of smaller woodlands which were beyond the scale of normal HLC.
- Investigation of the Phase 1 Habitat survey revealed that it was not a reliable source for inferring the distribution of hedgerows.

Given the short time-frame, a substantial amount of data was generated, in many cases confirming and enhancing the observations made by the original HLC exercise. In terms of presenting a local historic landscape, and in generating interest, the localised scale of the case study and the detail that fieldwork produced were crucial.

In its current, limited form, this case study has more modest value as a tool for management of the local historic environment than would be provided by a full survey. However, the project has provided general points that will assist with management. Although it has picked out some of the key characteristics of the local historic landscape, the full mapping and analysis of these would require a longer time frame. The ideal tool in this respect would be a more detailed local characterisation that could analyse a fully mapped distribution of walling styles, types of woodland, ridge and furrow and make use of a full transcription of historic maps such as the 1836 Corn Rent maps.

Plate 86: A rare 'actively managed' Ash pollard, just north of Crook. In most cases , management of these trees is likely to have ceased as modern farming methods negated the need for supplies of emergency winter fodder (© LDNPA)

[10] Winchester 1989

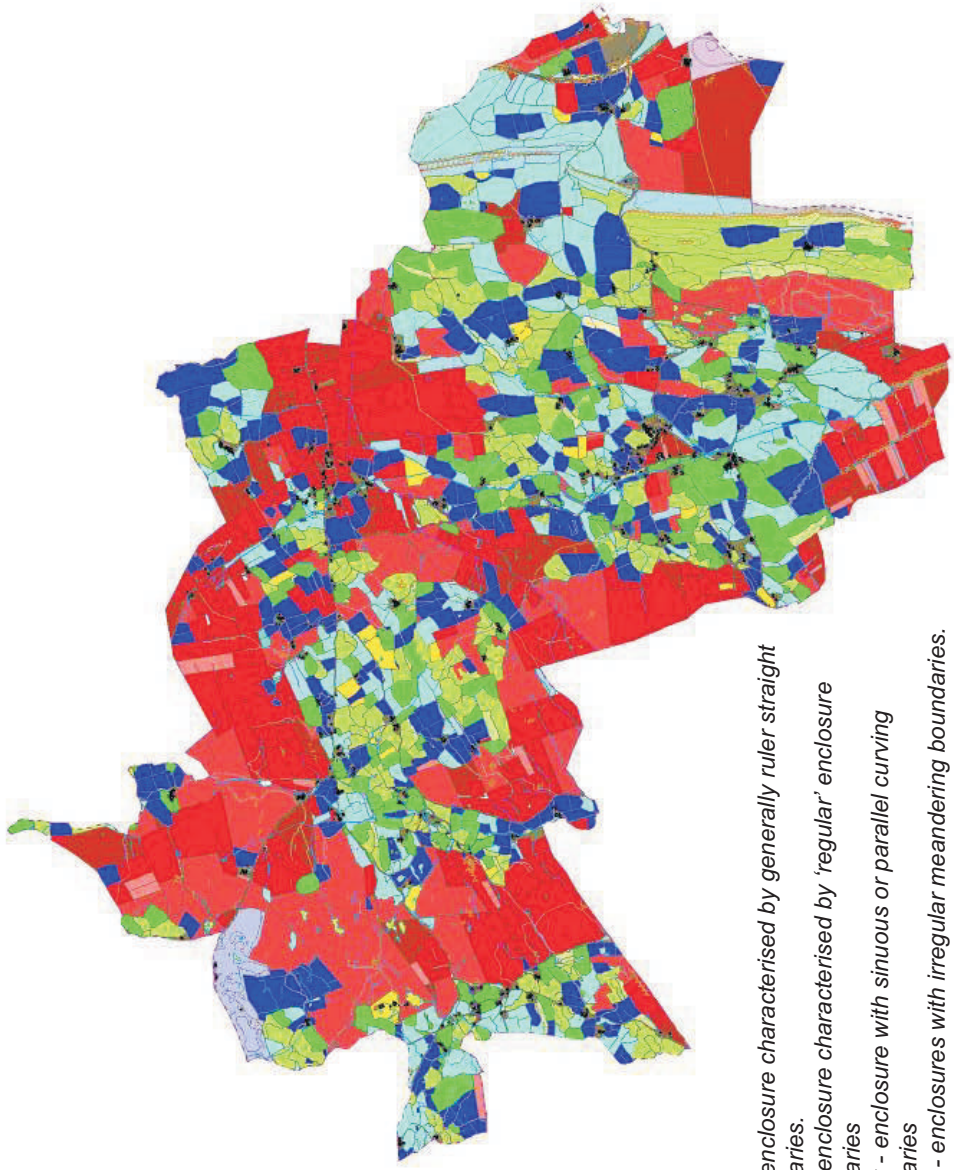


Figure 75: Enclosure field pattern morphology in Crook and Underbarrow

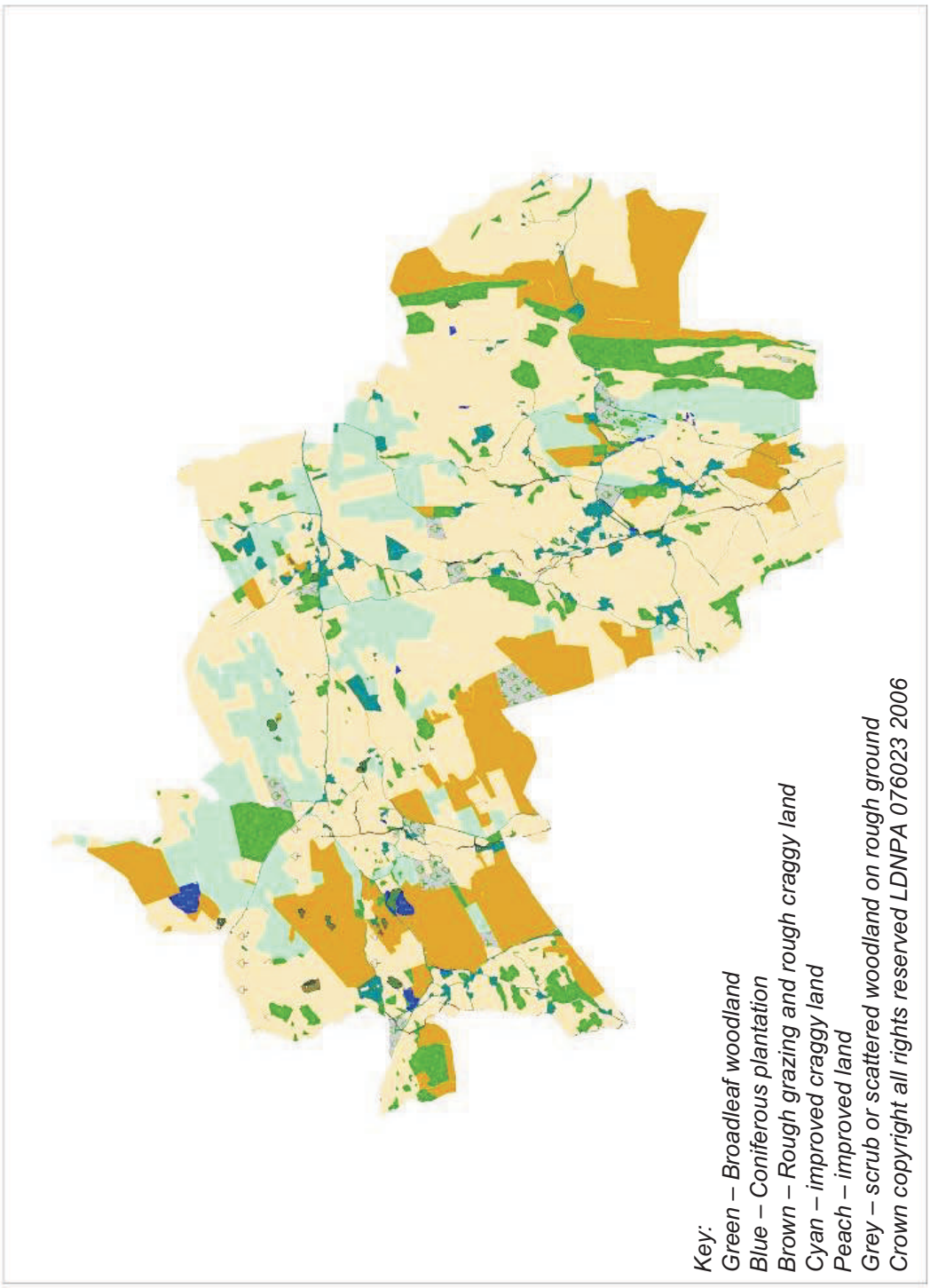


Figure 76: Current surface type in Crook and Underbarrow

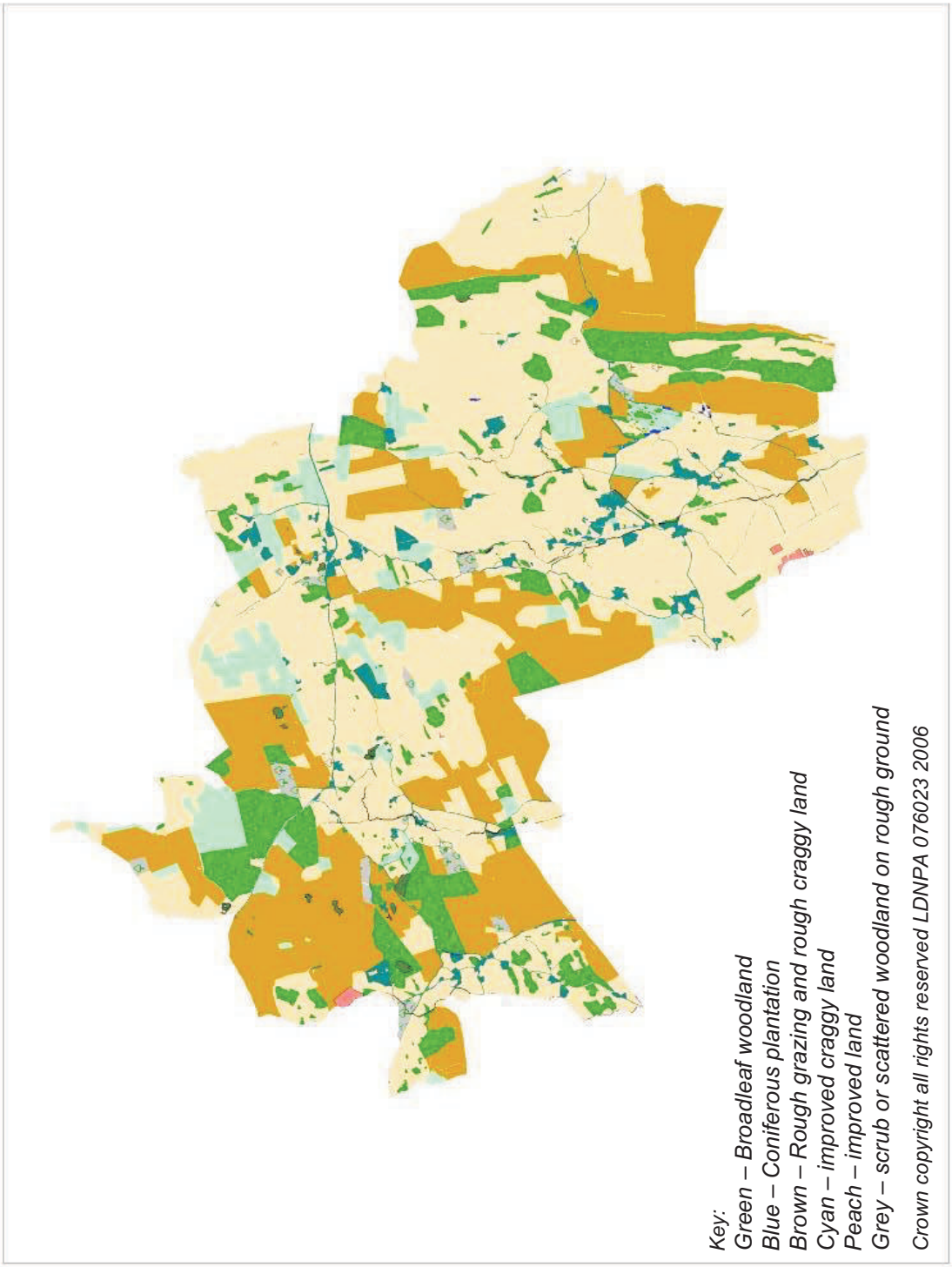


Figure 77: Surface type shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map in Crook and Underbarrow

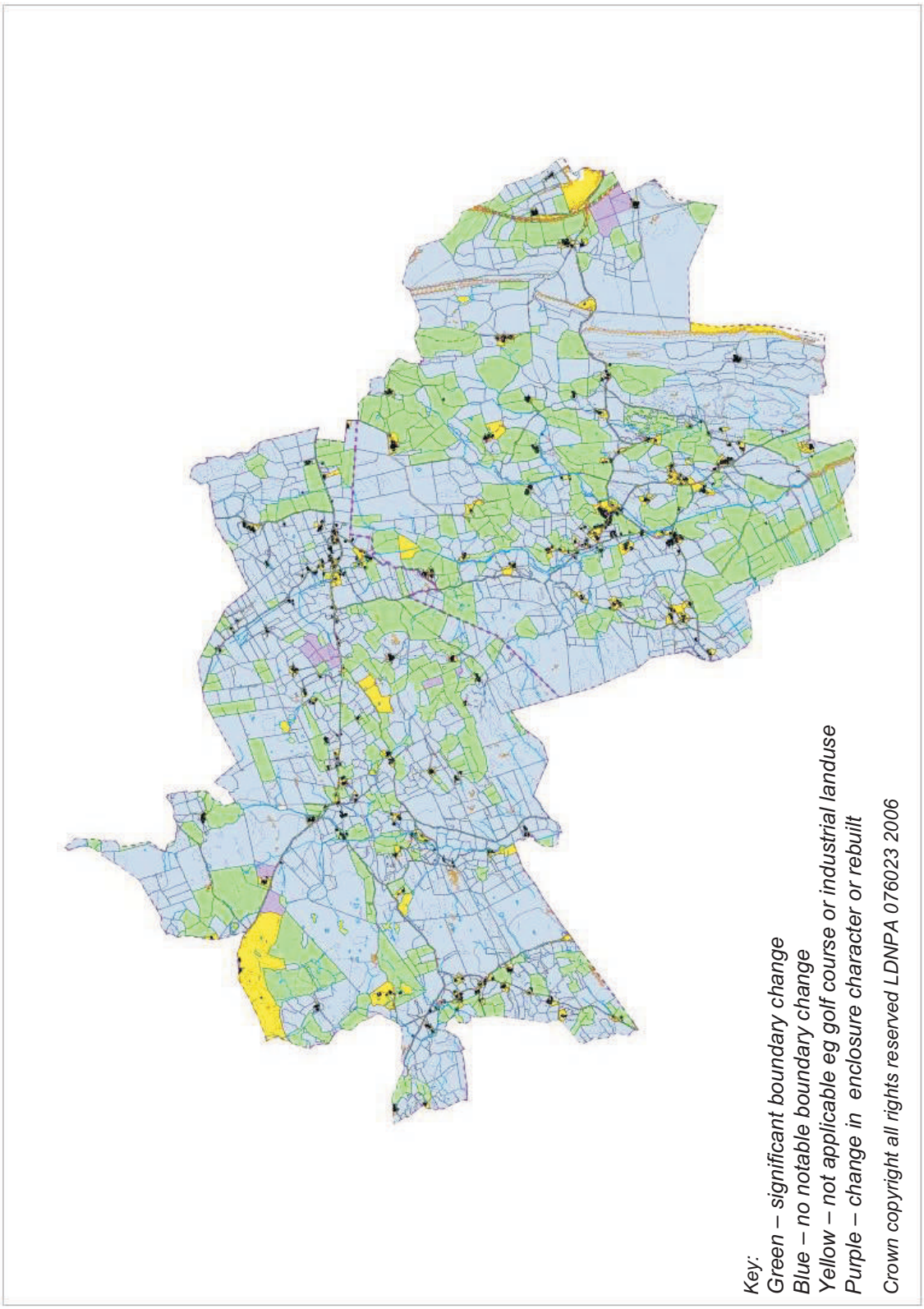
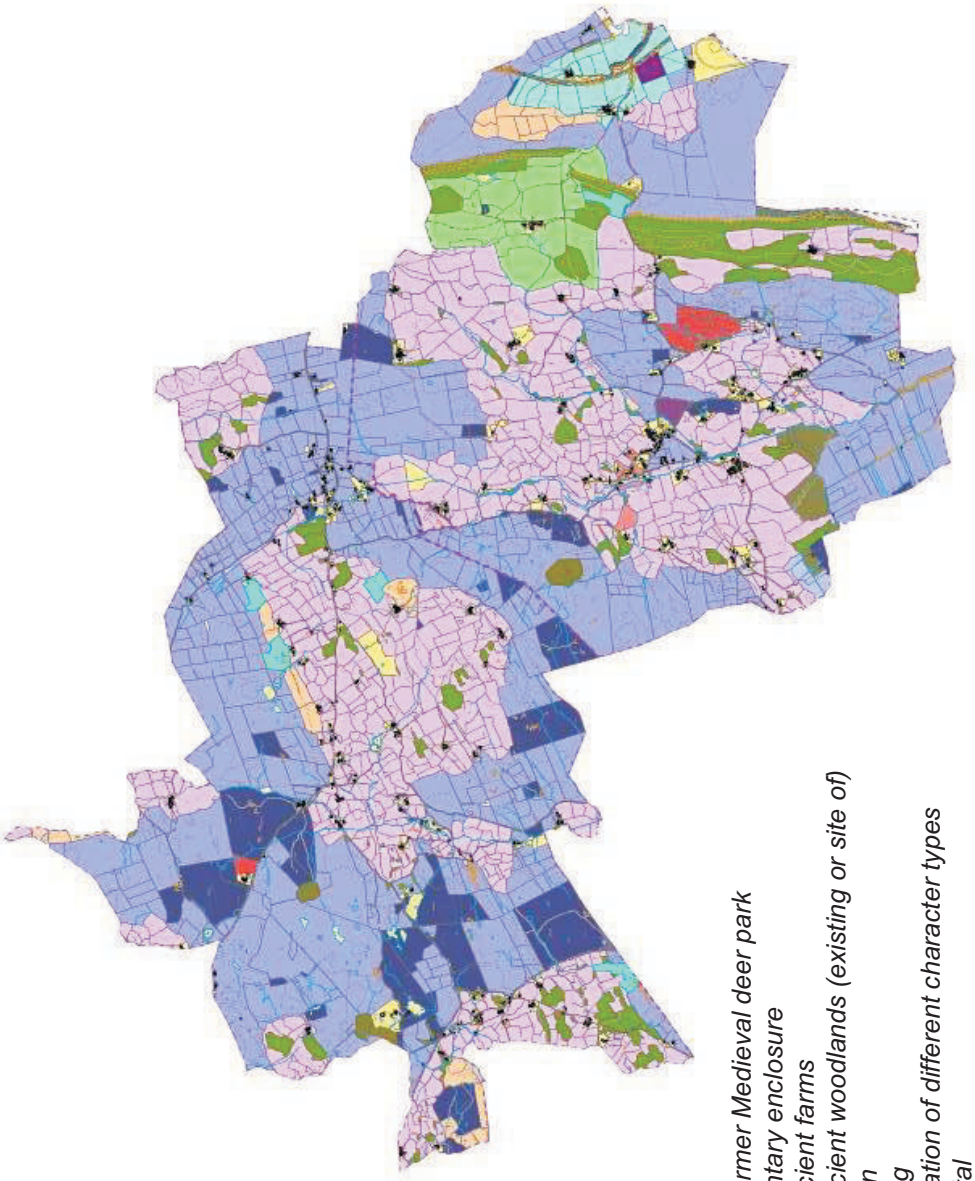


Figure 78: Boundary change since the first edition Ordnance Survey map in Crook and Underbarrow



Key:
Bright green – former Medieval deer park
Blue – Parliamentary enclosure
Pink – single ancient farms
Dark green – ancient woodlands (existing or site of)
Navy – Plantation
Orange – intaking
Cyan – consolidation of different character types
Red – Ornamental

Figure 79: First layer of interpretation in Crook and Underbarrow