

LANCASHIRE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE

ANCIENT ENCLOSURE COMMON FIELD

Definition:

Seven percent of **Ancient Enclosure** originated from the division of open fields prior to c AD1600, which remain in the landscape today either as fossil strip fields (with their boundaries usually formed by hedgerows) or as a distinctive pattern indicative of the enclosure of bundles of strips and other elements of previously open field.

Typical historical and archaeological components

The principal archaeological components of **Ancient Enclosure** are the boundaries that define the enclosed land, the predominantly dispersed settlement pattern and the pattern of roads and trackways that connect them. Hedges (typically mixed in nature compared with the single species, usually quickset hawthorn, increasingly found in **Post-Medieval Enclosure** and, particularly, **Modern Enclosure**), walls, banks (and mixtures thereof) and drainage ditches typify the boundaries of small to medium irregular fields, most of which appear to derive from the enclosure of individually farmed holdings. Occasionally the remains of early ridge and furrow survive, indicating a past use as part of an arable regime. The settlement pattern is focused upon the individual farms and hamlets which, alongside churches, tend to be the oldest buildings (generally 16th century and later), although they are seldom the first on each site. Buildings tend to be predominantly brick- or stone-built, but some may retain the timber framing of earlier periods. Building types are varied and include farms (438 listed examples), domestic houses (244 listed) and barns (98 listed). In places modern infill and augmentation has expanded the original hamlet to create commuter villages (such as Woodplumpton or Grimsargh). Connecting the farms and hamlets both to their fields and to other resources, such as woodland, mossland and nearby market towns, are a network of roads and tracks. Occasionally, on higher ground these have eroded down into the subsoil to create holloways, whereas on the lower, wetter ground they have been placed upon low causeways. Most are hedged and tarmaced, but some survive as farm tracks, green lanes and footpaths. Many are irregular in form and are complemented by an extensive network of irregular footpaths and bridleways. The type is characterised by a large variety of archaeological features (visible and hidden) from all periods, including medieval moats (27, or 87% of those registered on the SMR), deserted medieval settlements (28, or 55%), deer-parks (40%), quarries, limekilns and crosses.

Enhancing and safeguarding the type

Strategies for conserving or enhancing the **Enclosure** types will vary according to the historic processes of landuse, land management and land gain within each chronological type (i.e. within **Ancient Enclosure**, **Post-Medieval Enclosure** and **Modern Enclosure**). Consequently the measures for enhancement and safeguarding recommended in this section are first described generally, where they apply across the chronological type, and then specifically where they apply to a subtype (for example to enclosed land brought into agricultural production from upland moor or from lowland moss).

- *Encourage* the retention of smaller, irregular fields and the maintenance of the boundaries and associated structures (walls, hedges, ditches, gateposts and stone stiles) that define them.
- *Encourage* the retention of areas of surviving ridge and furrow through the maintenance of an appropriate pastoral regime.
- Further information and surveys are required to understand this HLC type, its origins and development.

In particular assessments are needed to quantify and qualify historic farm buildings, surviving boundaries and historic routeways and particular patterns of interrelationship of these elements to each other. This information can then be used to guide future management proposals and appropriate conservation measures and to target scarce resources.

- The importance of this HLC type as the remnant of a much more extensive and commonplace landscape in the Lancashire area should be borne in mind when planning for new development and in determining planning applications.
- Enclosed from former common field with/without fossil strips. *Retain* and, where appropriate *restore* common field boundaries. The presence of former common field, reflected in the boundary pattern of today, is rare in Lancashire, both in historical terms and in terms of survival, and priority should be given to its retention. Within the subtype the highest degree of protection should be accorded to key enclosure boundaries, usually hedged, reflecting the separate common fields. These form the original boundaries, probably present during the medieval period, and are associated with other key features for retention such as historic trackways and footpaths, pinfolds, ancient farmsteads and barns. A further objective is the retention of characteristic reversed-S field boundaries that represent the later subdivision of individual common fields, usually in the late medieval or early post-medieval periods.
- Enclosed from former common field with/without fossil strips. *Conserve* areas of ridge and furrow, giving priority to those areas that are extensive, unfragmented and which correspond with the key features outlined above.