

LANCASHIRE
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE
CHARACTER TYPE

ANCIENT ENCLOSURE
LOWLAND MOSS

Definition:

Only a small amount of **Ancient Enclosure** was reclaimed from the draining of lowland moss, representing part of a more widespread landscape that has been changed in more recent times (post 1850). Most lies south of the Ribble with a small amount to the north. The type is characterised by an irregular enclosure pattern with sinuous or wavy edged field boundaries and winding lanes or tracks connecting a dispersed settlement pattern.

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 lowland moss. *Retain* the characteristic pattern of early lowland moss enclosure. This historic landscape subtype is rare since the scale of ancient enclosure from mossland was originally limited and because later reorganisation has often destroyed or masked evidence for it. The subtype retains important evidence for medieval drainage and settlement, the first serious attempts to bring the wetland landscape into arable and more formal pastoral production, and is a precursor to the massive reclamation schemes that characterise the post-medieval period.
- Enclosed from lowland moss. *Manage* and *highlight* evidence for time depth within the landscape. The subtype will contain important relic landscape features, both buried and visible, relating to earlier landuses and environments. The location of early mossland reclamation, on the fringes of the former mossland extent, often corresponds with those areas most accessible to earlier populations. Consequently these will contain evidence for mossland fringe activities, including those related to ritual use, to processing and to accessing the resource. In addition, these fringe areas also correspond with zones where climatic and hydrological change is at its most dynamic (for example the effects of sea incursion or regression, or mossland shrinkage) – and hence the potential for buried land surfaces is high.