

LANCASHIRE  
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE  
CHARACTER TYPE

POST-MEDIEVAL  
ENCLOSURE  
PARLIAMENTARY ACT

Definition

This type comprises a variety of field forms, size tends to be medium (4 to 16 hectares) but with a significant percentage of small enclosures. Two thirds of the type has an irregular layout while the remainder has a more planned pattern. This is a reflection of the piecemeal private enclosure of land in Lancashire in the period between AD 1600 – 1850 rather than the widespread planned enclosure much more prevalent in other parts of England such as the Midlands. Sixteen percent of **Post-Medieval Enclosure** is interpreted as definitely (9%) or possibly enclosed by Parliamentary Act or some sort of formal agreement, resulting in a regular, straight-edged enclosure pattern.

Typical historical and archaeological components

As with **Ancient Enclosure** the typical historical and archaeological components of the **Post-Medieval Enclosure** type are the boundaries which define the fields, the ditches used to drain them, the roads and tracks which traverse them and the buildings of those living and working within the area. Boundaries include water-filled ditches, quickset hedges, stone walls and fences.

Attributes of the former mossland areas include drainage ditches, causeways, windmills and bridges. There is a possibility of well-preserved archaeological deposits existing under the ground surface where the **Post-Medieval Enclosure** type covers peaty or former wetland soils.

Some of the main ditches are potentially related to an earlier enclosure period, being left in place as they were too large to contemplate changing and because they functioned effectively.

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).

- *Conserve* the character of the **Post-Medieval Enclosure** type giving priority to enclosures from lowland moss and upland moor. The type is broadly characterised by three processes of agricultural improvement: the drainage and enclosure of the mosslands of West Lancashire and the Fylde, the enclosure of upland moor on Bowland and the South Pennines and the more general improvement and reorganisation of much of the earlier ancient landscape. Whilst the latter is important it is the former two processes that provide the most significant contribution of the period to the landscape character of the county – consequently, it is the attributes and timedepth provided by these that should be afforded the greatest priority for conservation and enhancement. In addition, opportunities should be sought for the enhancement and interpretation of post-medieval reclaimed landscapes.
- Land enclosed by Parliamentary Act: Enclosure through Parliamentary Act is rare in Lancashire and primarily confined to areas of poor quality common grazing land, or to the last vestiges of lowland moss

and upland moor ('waste'). Key features of such areas include regular drystone walls or quickset hedges and wide enclosure roads, and occasionally some Napoleonic ridge and furrow. Where stabilisation or restoration is not feasible the base courses and foundation stones at least of enclosure walls should be maintained as evidence of former activity.