

# The Shropshire Landscape Typology



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# Part I

## Setting the Scene

“For the personality of a man reacting upon the spirit of a place produces something which is neither man nor the place, but fiercer and more beautiful than either”

*Mary Webb. The Golden Arrow*



© Gordon Dickens

# Introduction

Shropshire possesses one of the richest and most varied landscapes of any of the English counties. It offers a diverse range of scenery: from the lakes and rolling pasturelands around Ellesmere in the north, to the gaunt moorlands of the Cleve Hills, with their stark industrial ruins, in the south; the densely wooded scarps of Wenlock Edge; or the straight, sandy lanes of the north-eastern heathlands, with their large arable fields and 'big skys'. Shropshire's countryside has inspired, and continues to enthuse, generations of writers, poets and artists, whose works have in turn shaped our perceptions of the county's landscape.

Shropshire's landscape has been shaped by a broad range of factors. No other area of equivalent size in the UK exhibits the same degree of geological variation. This 'geodiversity' has in turn given rise to a complex array of soils and a range of different landforms. The county's ecology is correspondingly varied, and includes a broad assortment of nationally important habitats, such as the calcareous grasslands on the limestones of Wenlock Edge and the Oswestry Hills and the lowland raised bog at Whixall Moss.

In terms of its historical development, Shropshire straddles the boundary between what the landscape historian Oliver Rackham terms the 'ancient countryside' of western England and the 'highland zone' landscapes that predominate in Wales, northern England and Scotland. Inevitably, these broad, national classifications mask





detailed local distinctiveness. Many of the more fertile soils have been cultivated since later prehistory, and have a present day character that has been deeply influenced by the gradual, informal

enclosure of the medieval open fields between the 14th and 17th centuries. Where conditions are less favourable, either because of altitude and/or the infertile nature of the soils, cultivation has been more sporadic, and the present day landscape has often developed from once extensive commons. Some of the latter locations, which today represent some of most tranquil corners of the county, bear the scars of frenetic 18th and 19th century industrial operations: a legacy of rich mineral deposits within the underlying rocks. The aim of this document, therefore, is to define and describe the different types of landscapes that occur within Shropshire, and to explain how and why these distinctions have arisen.

Because of these factors, Shropshire's landscape forms an integral part of the county's unique environment. It is vital to the county's economy, not only because of the farming industries it sustains but also because of the tourists and investors it attracts. In addition, the landscape forms part of the surroundings in which we all live and work, and therefore makes an important contribution to our quality of life and sense of place.

The importance of the landscape of the Shropshire Hills has long been appreciated and is formally recognised through its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This ensures that around 25% of the county continues to receive added protection from unsustainable development.





© Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

The character of the landscape, as we see and experience it today, represents the product of past changes. Some of these changes – such as the slow weathering and erosion of rocks, or gradual changes in soil conditions -

operate over such a long timescale that they are imperceptible to most of us. However, the majority stem directly or indirectly from peoples attempts to modify and adapt their surroundings, in order to secure a living from the land. In the past change often occurred quite slowly; for instance, the ongoing clearance and enclosure of woodland during the medieval period. On other occasions it was rapid and socially disruptive: such as the attempts of rival landowners to drain and enclose parts of the Wealdmoors, to the north of Telford, during the later 16th century. Some parts of the landscape, such as the network of small irregular pasture fields, winding lanes and scattered farms on the floodplain of the Severn around Melverley, are truly ancient and have remained largely unaltered for centuries. In other places, like the higher parts of the Clun Forest, apparently timeless patterns of hedged fields and isolated farmsteads are sometimes less than 150 years old.

Change, therefore, forms an integral part of all landscapes. Over the past five or six decades, however, the scale and pace of change in the landscape has been unprecedented. The result has often been the erosion of landscape character that has been centuries in the making, and the removal of the factors that make one landscape different from another. The challenge facing us today, then, is to ensure that future changes occur in a way that is sympathetic to landscape character, allowing it to be maintained for future generations to enjoy. In other words, we need sustainable management of landscape change.

To achieve this aim, Shropshire County Council, in partnership with English Heritage, English Nature, The Countryside Agency, the Living Landscape Project and the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, has been engaged over the past seven years in analysing the landscape character of the county. Together the methodologies and results of the assessments which the County Council have produced are known as the Shropshire Character



Framework. This document describes the context of this work and presents some of the results. Firstly, it will outline the process of identifying landscape types. The factors that define the types will then be explained and the typologies themselves described.

The Shropshire Character Framework provides a powerful tool that planners, landscape and countryside managers, developers, communities and other decision makers can use to ensure that sustainable management of change is achieved. Over the coming years Shropshire County Council will work with local communities and partners to build policies that will safeguard and strengthen the unique character of our county's landscape.

# The Shropshire Character Framework in Context

During the mid 1990s, the Countryside Agency worked with English Nature and English Heritage to produce The Character Map of England. This provided an analysis of landscape character at a broad, national scale and resulted in the definition of 159 different Regional Character Areas. Following on from this initiative Local Authorities were encouraged to undertake more detailed assessments, in order to provide a finer degree of definition. In 1999 the Countryside Agency commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) from Shropshire County Council for the pre-1996 county of Shropshire.



English Heritage also commissioned an Historic Landscape Character (HLC) assessment from the County Council in 2001. This project, which ran for three years until the end of 2004, formed part of

English Heritage's national HLC programme. The aim was to undertake a rapid analysis of the historical development of the whole of the county's landscape, using a limited but consistent range of sources (e.g. historic editions of Ordnance Survey maps etc).

In 2005 the additional information about the historical development of the landscape, which the HLC assessment provided, was integrated into the Landscape Character Assessment. The results were then used as the basis for defining the Landscape Types described within this document.

# Assessing Landscape Character

Landscape character is determined by six elements – Geology, Landform, Soils, Settlement, Tree Cover and Land Use - each of which can be represented in different ways via a series of different ‘attributes’. In Shropshire a broad range of attributes are present for each of the six elements.

The first set of elements – geology, landform and soils – represent the **physiographic** component of landscape character:-

- **Geology** is a primary determinant of landscape character, since it significantly influences the other two physiographic elements. No other area of comparable size in Britain can rival the degree of geological variation found in Shropshire, and rocks from eleven of the thirteen geological periods are present in the county. During the 19th century, some of the stratigraphic sequences in the county were studied by a number of the pioneering figures of British geology, including Sir Roderick Murchison and Charles Lapworth.
- **Landform** is largely determined by the underlying geology. The older, harder rocks are more resistant to erosion and usually form areas of more prominent and dramatic topography. In contrast, younger, softer rocks tend to underlie areas of lower ground. Shropshire exhibits a wide variety of different landforms; from the low lying wetlands, low sandstone hills and rolling pastures of the Shropshire plain in the north; to the dramatic hills and valley systems of the Shropshire Hills in the south.





- **Soils** are formed through the weathering and breakdown of the underlying rocks and drift deposits. The key attributes that determine what kind of vegetation a soil will support and how it is utilised by farmers are its chemistry – its fertility and acidity – its depth and its drainage. The physical and chemical properties of the underlying parent material strongly influence those of the resulting soil. Land use can also initiate changes in the properties of a soil. For example, cultivation of some areas with light sandy soils in later prehistory depleted them of nutrients and helped to increase their acidity, resulting in the formation of heathlands.

All of these elements are subject to only very gradual changes and, in terms of human perception, can be regarded as permanent (although human activity can, and has, had a significant effect on soils). Whilst not necessarily determining peoples actions, they have played a significant role in constraining it, particularly with regard to the agricultural practices they have employed over time.

Settlement, tree cover and landuse make up the cultural elements of the landscape:-

- **Settlement** comprises two variables – dispersion (scattered farmsteads/ isolated dwellings) and nucleation (towns, villages and hamlets). A strongly nucleated settlement pattern exists where most dwellings are clustered together in villages or hamlets, whilst in highly dispersed settlement pattern dwellings are scattered throughout the landscape. Invariably settlement patterns reflect the broader history of the landscape. In Shropshire, the origins of many settlement patterns lie in the medieval period. Others result from the colonisation of formerly unsettled areas of common land between the 16th and 19th centuries. Some locations, such as The Long Mynd and the upper slopes of the Stiperstones remain largely unsettled.

- **Tree cover** is a significant determinant of landscape character, framing or filtering views and shaping our perceptions of scale and degree of enclosure. Conversely, an absence of tree cover usually creates the impression of an open, exposed landscape. The extent and composition of the tree cover within Shropshire has been significantly influenced by several thousand years of human activity.
- **Land Use** in Shropshire reflects the physical factors which affect the agricultural productivity of the land, particularly soil type and relief. However, cultural choice has also played an important role. In particular, the gradual growth of specialised forms of farming between the 15th and 19th centuries, which themselves represented responses to the emergence of an increasingly complex, market-based economy. The changes that have occurred in agriculture since World War II – mechanisation, intensification and agricultural subsidies – have to a certain extent reversed this trend, blurring some of the long established distinctions between land use in different areas.

Whilst the cultural elements of the landscape are shaped to some degree by the physiographical character of the landscape, they are also strongly influenced by socio-economic factors. Because the cultural character of the landscape is the product of human agency, change occurs more rapidly than is the case for the physiographic elements. The descriptions of the cultural patterning of the landscape presented in this volume have been informed by the results of the Historic Landscape Character Assessment.



# Landscape Character

## Cultural Character

### Land Use

- Urban
- Arable Farmland
- Pastoral Farmland
- Rough Land
- Woodland



### Settlement

- Urban
- Clustered
- Dispersed
- Coalfields
- Planned
- Unsettled



### Tree Cover

- Unwooded
- Other Trees
- Coverts & Tree Groups
- Estate Plantations
- Secondary
- Ancient Woods



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## Physiographic Character

### Soils

- Deep Soils
- Shallow Soils
- Impoverished Soils
- Gleyed Soils
- Bog/Fen Peat



### Landform

- Vales & Valley Floors
- Rolling Lowland
- Upstanding
- Sloping
- High Land



### Geology

- Fluvial
- Drift
- Tertiary & Mesozoic
- Upper Palaeozoic
- Caledonian



# Part II

## The Typology

“It was one of those places where the spirit of aboriginal England still lingers, the old savage England, whose last blood lingers still in a few Englishmen, Welshmen and Cornishmen.”.

D.H. Lawrence. St Mawr



© Peter Wakely/English Nature

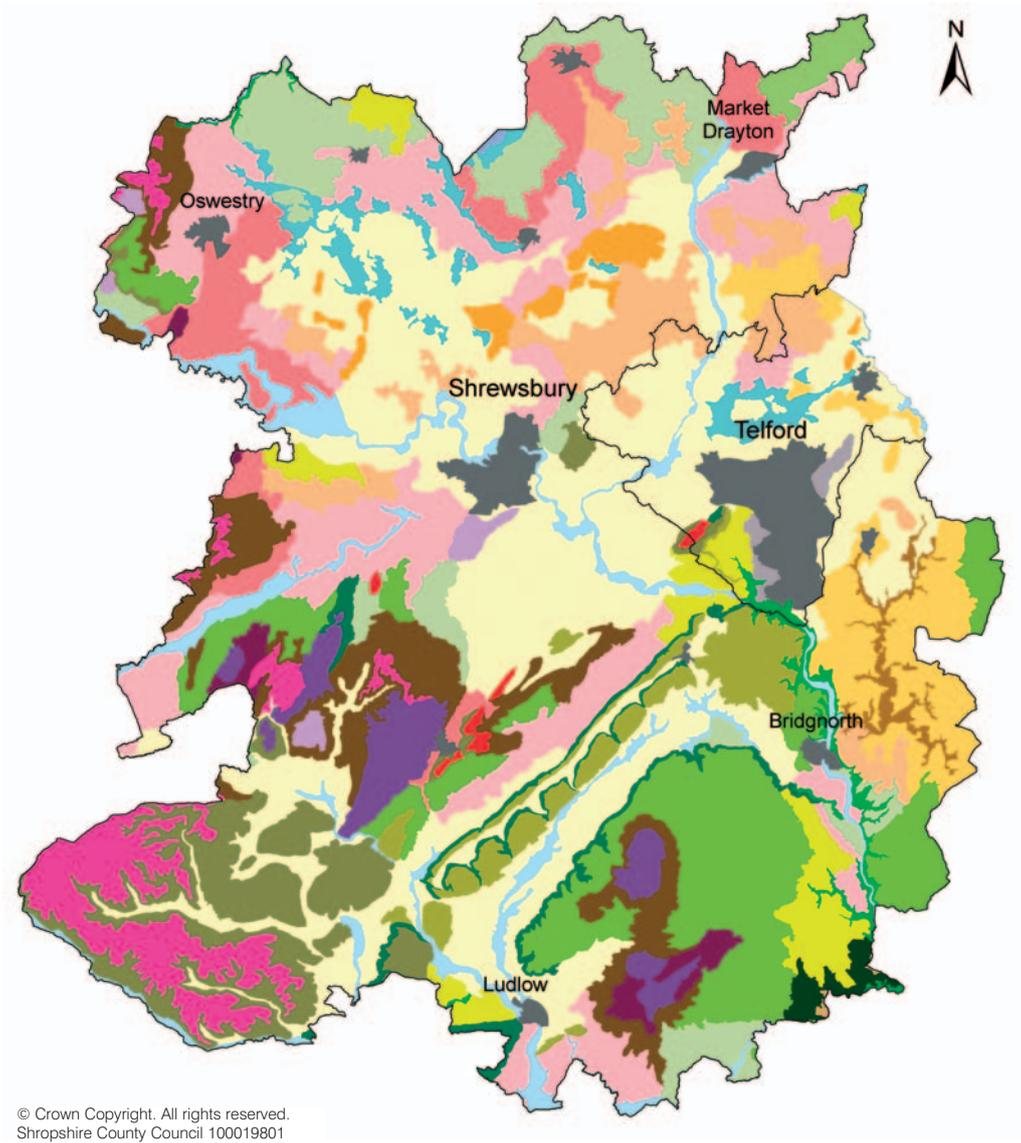
# Defining Landscape Types

The methodology for assessing landscape character outlined in Part I makes it possible to identify the factors that make the landscape in one area different from that in another. These distinctions result from the different combinations in which the various attributes occur. Wherever a particular set of attributes occurs repeatedly they give rise to a 'landscape type'.

Landscape types are therefore generic: a given landscape type occurs wherever a particular set of attributes exists, but all of the areas assigned to that type will have a similar character. For example, in Shropshire the Stiperstones, much of The Long Mynd, and the tops of the Clee Hills have all been assigned to High Open Moorland landscape type. Whilst each of these areas have certain unique features (such as the exposed 'stacks' of quartzite rock on the Stiperstones), they have a number of factors in common with one another, which lends them the same character. Thus, they are all exposed areas of upland that provide panoramic views over the surrounding countryside, they contain large tracts of unenclosed moorland which remain unsettled, and all are open, large scale landscapes.

In Shropshire 27 different landscape types can be recognised. Some of these, such as the Forest Smallholdings or Lowland Moss types, have a very limited distribution and are present in only one or two locations. Others, like the Estate Farmlands or the Principal Settled Farmlands, occur widely in the county.

Each of the following landscape type descriptions sets out the key characteristic and describes the broad character of the type, defines its distribution within the county, and provides a visual example of what they look like 'on the ground'.



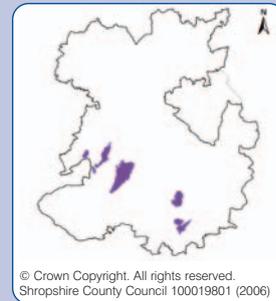
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 (2006)

Landscape Types			
	High open moorland		Wooded river gorge
	High enclosed plateau		Timbered plateau farmlands
	High volcanic hills & slopes		Principal timbered farmlands
	Upland smallholdings		Timbered pastures
	Upstanding enclosed commons		Wooded estatelands
	Pasture Hills		Estate farmlands
	Principal Wooded Hills		Settled pastoral farmlands
	Wooded hills & farmlands		Principal settled farmlands
	Wooded hills & estatelands		Enclosed lowland heaths
	Sandstone hills		Lowland moors
	Sandstone estatelands		Riverside meadows
	Incised sandstone valleys		Lowland moss
	Wooded forest		Coalfields
	Forest smallholdings		Urban

# High Open Moorland

## Key Characteristics

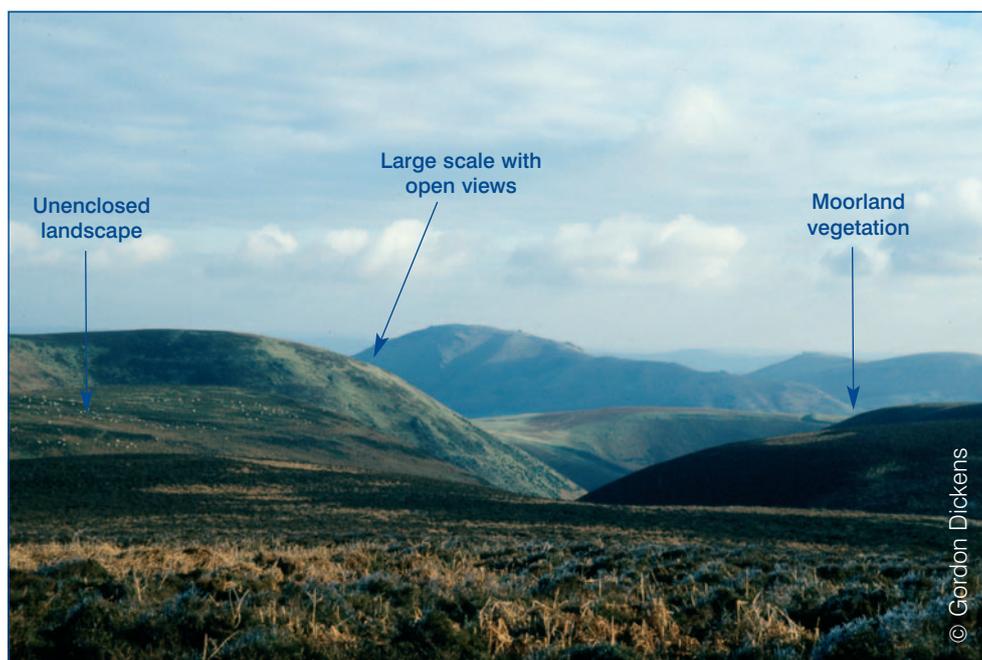
- Upland plateau and slopes with extensive tracts of heathland
- Largely unenclosed landscape with few signs of habitation
- Large scale landscape, offering open views
- Scattered prehistoric barrows and other earthworks
- Narrow, steep sided valleys



## Description

This landscape type is found only within the Shropshire Hills; on the tops of the Clee Hills, across much of The Long Mynd and the Stiperstones ridge, and to a more limited extent on Heath Mynd, Cefn Gunthly and Stapeley Hill. These are largely unenclosed upland landscapes, notable for their extensive tracts of moorland. They derive from harder rocks including Precambrian and Ordovician sedimentary rocks and, on the summits of the Clee Hills, igneous Carboniferous dolerites. These give rise to shallow, impoverished soils, including peat, and block scree, which support a mosaic of heathland and rough grassland plant communities. Typical species include Heather and Common Bell

Heather, Bilberry and grasses such as Red Fescue and Common Bent. Further ecological diversity is added by the localised bogs and wet flushes, which often form stream sources. Tree cover is restricted to limited areas of scrub on some slopes, and regular blocks of conifer plantations towards the southern end of The Long Mynd and the eastern flanks of Brown Clee Hill. Consequently these landscapes have a large scale and open character, which means that, from the ridge crests and gently undulating plateau tops, there are panoramic views. On the lower slopes, and particularly within the narrow steep sided valleys that occur in some places, known locally as 'batches' or 'beaches', views are often framed and the scale of the landscape is smaller.



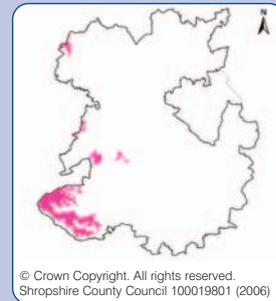
Within the open moorland, barrows and other prehistoric earthworks survive well, as a result of the low intensity of historic land use. During the Middle Ages all of the areas where this type occurs within Shropshire were covered by forest law, which reserved the right to keep deer for the king. In most cases the moorland associated with them were intercommoned by the surrounding settlements. These common rights survived their eventual 'disafforestation' (i.e. the removal of their legal status as a forest) in the 14th century. Although some parts of the Long Mynd were temporarily brought into cultivation between the late 17th and early 19th centuries, they remain largely unenclosed. However, limited areas of ancient

fields and later smallholdings sometimes occur towards the edges of these landscapes, especially lower down the slopes and within some of the batches. Signs of habitation are restricted to the scattered cottages and small farms associated with these field systems. On the Clee Hills these landscapes also contain extensive industrial remains associated with mining and quarrying. These industries first emerged in the Middle Ages and exploited the areas coal and ironstone deposits and, latterly, the local 'dhustone' (dolerite). Mining remains, related to the south-west Shropshire lead industry, can also be seen in places on the Stiperstones ridge and, to a more limited extent, on Cefn Gunthly and Stapeley Hill.

# High Enclosed Plateau

## Key Characteristics

- High, upland plateau
- Regular, planned field pattern
- Relict thorn hedges
- Medium to large scale landscape with open views
- Dispersed settlement pattern



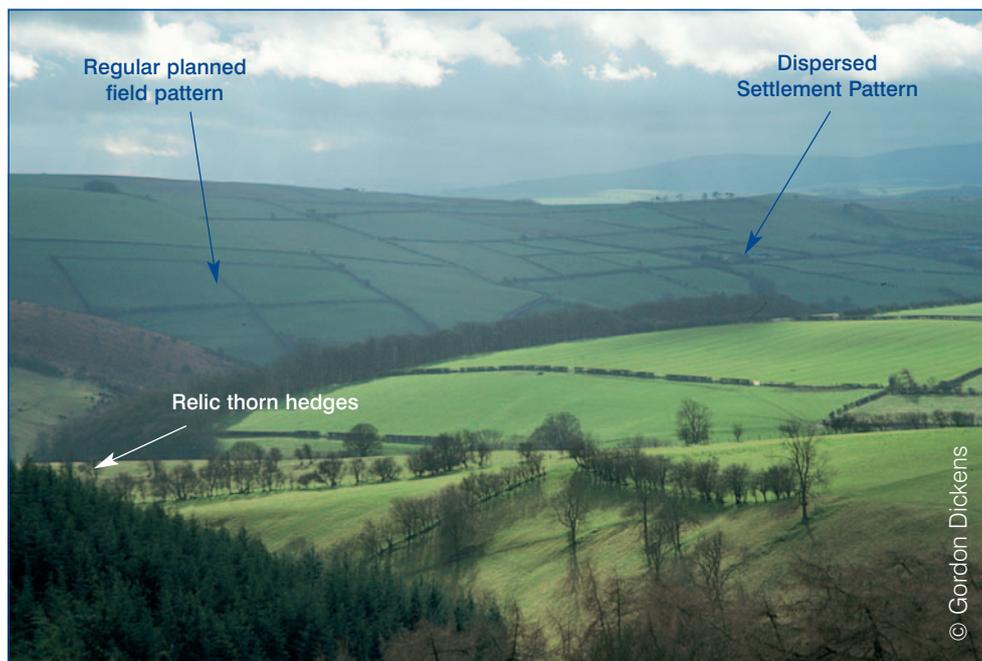
## Description

Located mainly in the upper reaches of the Clun Forest and elsewhere in the west of the county, these are high, rolling, medium to large scale, upland landscapes with predominantly open views. The exposed conditions and impoverished soils mean that the dominant land use is moderate to low intensity pastoral farming.

Localised patches of semi-natural vegetation are apparent in some places. An exception occurs on Long Mountain, however, where areas of better quality soils also permit high intensity arable production.

A regular pattern of geometric fields, and a low density, dispersed pattern of isolated brick farmsteads and wayside cottages, exists in most areas. Straight thorn hedges once formed the majority of field boundaries, although in the Oswestry uplands drystone walls were also used. On the lower slopes, however, the field systems tend to be older and more irregular, and the cottages and associated pattern of small fields provide additional diversity in some areas.

Tree cover is generally sparse, with woodland largely confined to regular forestry plantations.



These landscapes have evolved from areas of moorland and wood pasture and, with the exception of the northern Oswestry hills, all lay within medieval forests. The more irregular field patterns – for example, around Shelve and on parts of Long Mountain – represent early enclosure from ‘waste’ (common rough pasture), dating to the later medieval and early modern periods. On the western slopes of the Stiperstones, around Pennerley, miners working in the local lead industry established cottages and smallholdings from the 16th century onwards.

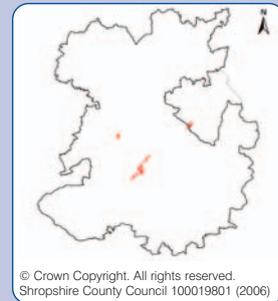
However, the dominant, geometric field patterns in these landscapes are result of the planned enclosure of these former woodland and wastes during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Enclosure and improvement of some of the highest areas did not take place until the later 20th century. The introduction of arable cultivation into these landscapes also dates to this period.

# High Volcanic Hills and Slopes

## Key Characteristics

- Precambrian volcanic geology
- Prominent hills with notable steep slopes
- Unsettled, unenclosed landscape with few signs of habitation
- Rough grazing



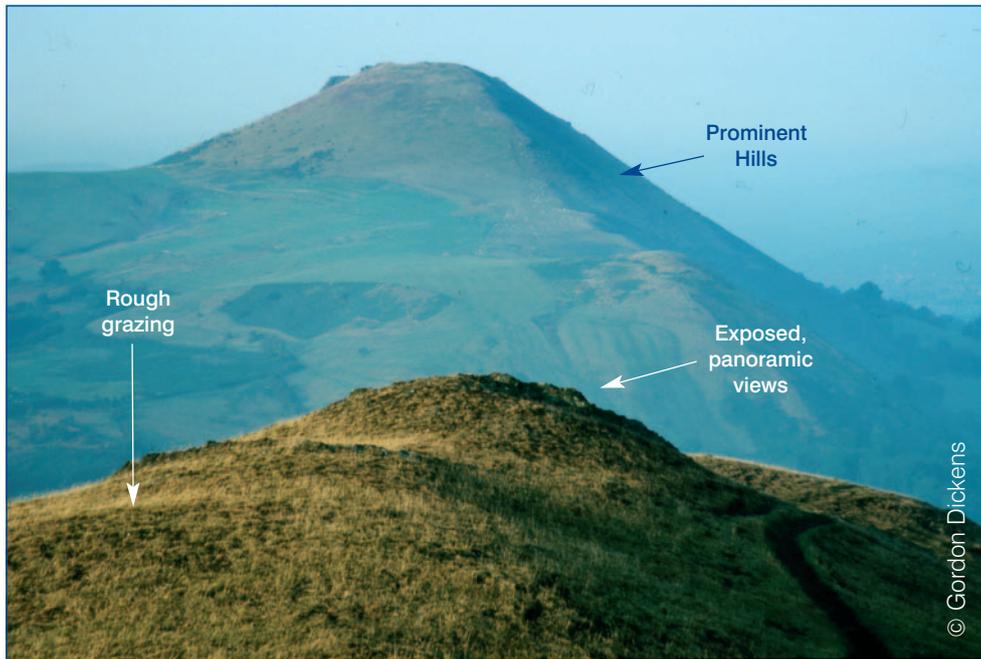
## Description

This landscape type is associated with some of the most prominent landmarks of the Shropshire Hills – The Wrekin, Earl’s Hill, The Lawley, Caer Caradoc, Hope Bowdler Hill and Ragleth Hill – which are all characterised by a dramatic, steeply sloping landform. It occurs solely in relation to a series of outcrops of hard Precambrian volcanic rocks, of the Uriconian series, though the hills are formed from volcanic deposits rather than being remnants of volcanoes themselves.

The shallow, impoverished soils that have formed over these rocks support botanically rich acid grassland plant communities, although bracken is widespread throughout and scrub is present in some places.

Although the type is predominantly open, the lower slopes of The Wrekin are heavily wooded. The corresponding variations in landcover create a range of views: open and large scale in areas of open grassland; more confined and intimate where views are filtered by tree cover.

There are few signs of habitation, and what settlement there is generally comprises dispersed cottages located at the foot of the slopes. The principal land use remains a mixture of low intensity pastoral farming and forestry.



Traditionally these landscapes would have been utilised for common rough grazing and wood pasture and, with the exception of Pontesford Hill/ Earl's Hill, all lay within medieval forests or chases. The low intensity of historic land use means that archaeological earthworks generally survive in good condition, and well preserved Iron Age hillforts exist in a number of locations.

Ancient woodland once occurred more widely but gradual clearance over the centuries, and recent planting of conifers, means that it is now restricted to The Wrekin.

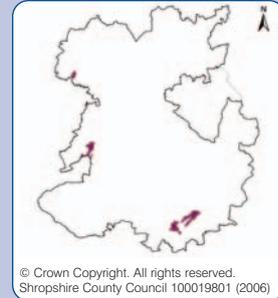
Encroachment by squatters around the margins of these former commons occurred in some places from the 17th century onwards, resulting in the creation of localised areas of small, irregular fields. Whilst these landscapes remain unenclosed, field banks dating to the later 18th and 19th centuries are present on Hope Bowdler Hill and Pontesford Hill.

In the later 20th century conifer plantations were established on The Wrekin and Pontesford Hill.

# Upland Smallholdings

## Key Characteristics

- Prominent, sloping topography
- Dispersed settlement pattern of wayside cottages
- Small hedged pasture fields
- Areas of unenclosed moorland



## Description

These landscapes mainly occur around the fringes of high moorland in the Shropshire Hills, such as Catherton Common in the Clee Hills and the area around Bentlawnt and Hemford, to the south-west of Minsterley. They are generally characterised by poorer soils that favour moorland and rough pasture habitats, which occur extensively in those areas which remain unenclosed.

Small irregular fields, mainly used for pastoral farming, form the main element within the field systems; some of which remain unimproved hay meadows. Their boundaries are defined by mixed hedgerows, often containing holly, rowan and gorse, as well as hawthorn and blackthorn. These fields mesh together with a

network of narrow winding lanes and dispersed wayside cottages with associated farmsteads. Such areas contrast strongly with a secondary, planned component in the field patterns, defined by straight thorn hedges and associated with a thin scattering of farmsteads.

These variations in landcover create differing views: open, medium to large scale within areas of unenclosed land and planned enclosure; small scale and intimate within the areas of smallholdings.

Along the edges of higher ground, particularly on the Clee Hills and around White Grit and Hemford, many of the least productive areas within both types of field systems are in the process of reverting back to moorland and scrub.



During the Middle Ages these landscapes consisted of extensive areas of moorland and unimproved grassland which were used for common rough grazing. Those on the Clee Hills and at Bentlawnt/ Hemford also lay within private chases.

The mineral wealth of many of these areas – limestone around Llanymynech Hill, lead around White Grit, coal and ironstone on the Clees – was exploited, in the latter two cases at least, from the medieval period onwards. These extractive industries expanded in the early modern period, and those employed within them began to establish smallholdings on the surrounding commons. These settlements achieved their maximum extent when the local

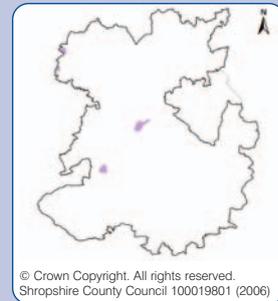
mines and quarries reached their peak in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Their decline over the course of the 20th century mirrored that of the industries upon which many of the smallholders were dependant, with the most marginal locations being abandoned altogether.

# Upstanding Enclosed Commons

## Key Characteristics

- Upstanding, sloping topography
- Regular to sub-regular pattern of hedged fields
- Medium to large scale landscapes
- Dispersed settlement pattern



## Description

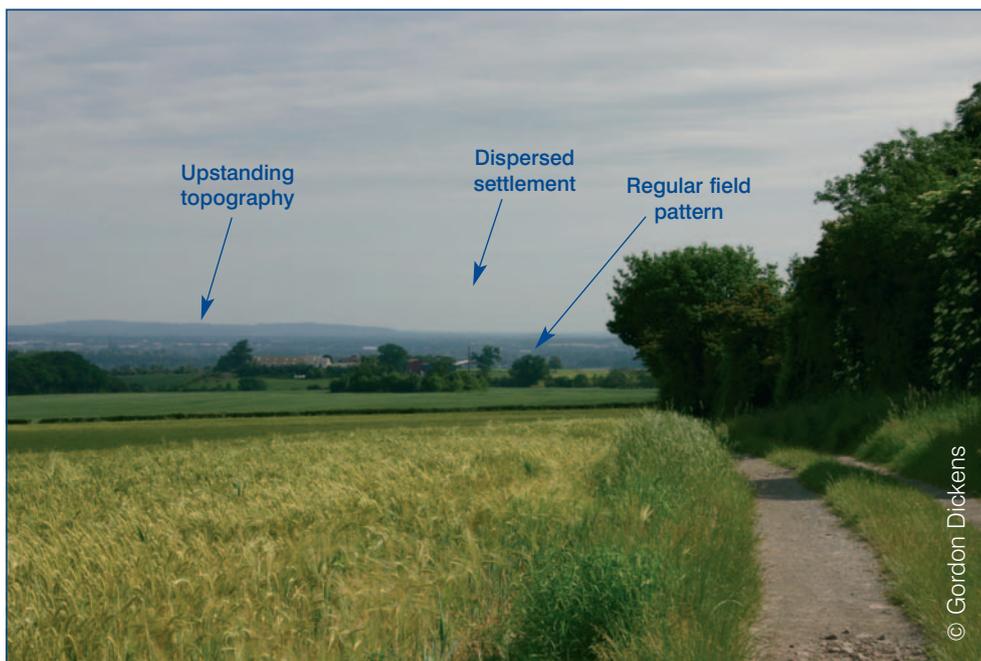
This landscape type occurs in a limited number of locations in central, western and north-western Shropshire, and is distinguished from the previous landscape types by the lower altitudes at which they occur. They are formed of a mixture of Precambrian (Norbury Hill, Lyth Hill and Bayston Hill) and igneous (Mynd y Bryn) and sedimentary (Rhydycroseau) Ordovician rocks. These strata give rise to landscapes with prominent, upstanding topographies and predominantly poor soils.

Pastoral farming of improved grassland represents the most widespread land use, although on Lyth Hill mixed farming is more prominent. Relict patches of rough or acid grassland and

moorland survive in places – for example, on the crest of Lyth Hill - and in more marginal locations the landscape is beginning to revert to a pre-enclosure state.

The predominant field pattern consists of regular or sub-regular hedged fields, associated with a dispersed pattern of farmsteads. However, a secondary component comprised of small irregular fields associated with cottages and smallholdings can be seen in places.

Woodland is largely confined to coverts and tree groups, with some relic ancient woodland on Lyth Hill, whilst additional tree cover is provided by scattered hedgerow trees.



These various elements create medium to large scale landscapes, which because of the sloping landform, generally offer open views, even where hedgerow trees are present.

The field systems and settlement patterns within this type are characteristic of landscapes derived from former upstanding commons and, in the case of Lyth Hill, woods and commons. Lythwood lay within the medieval Long Forest and was retained by the Crown after 1301, when the extent of Shropshire's forests was drastically reduced.

The irregular and planned field systems were created through successive phases of enclosure between the 16th and 19th

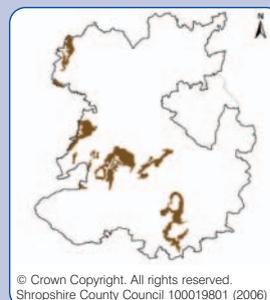
centuries. The sub-regular field patterns tend to be earlier, with irregular hedgerows that contain greater numbers of trees. The later planned field systems are characterised by straight hedges with few, if any, hedgerow trees.

The areas of smaller fields, associated with cottages and smallholdings, result from 'encroachment' onto these commons between the 16th and 18th centuries. The village of Bayston Hill, between Lyth Hill and Sharpstones Hill, originated in this way, although later 20th century housing developments have modified the historic settlement pattern.

# Pasture Hills

## Key Characteristics

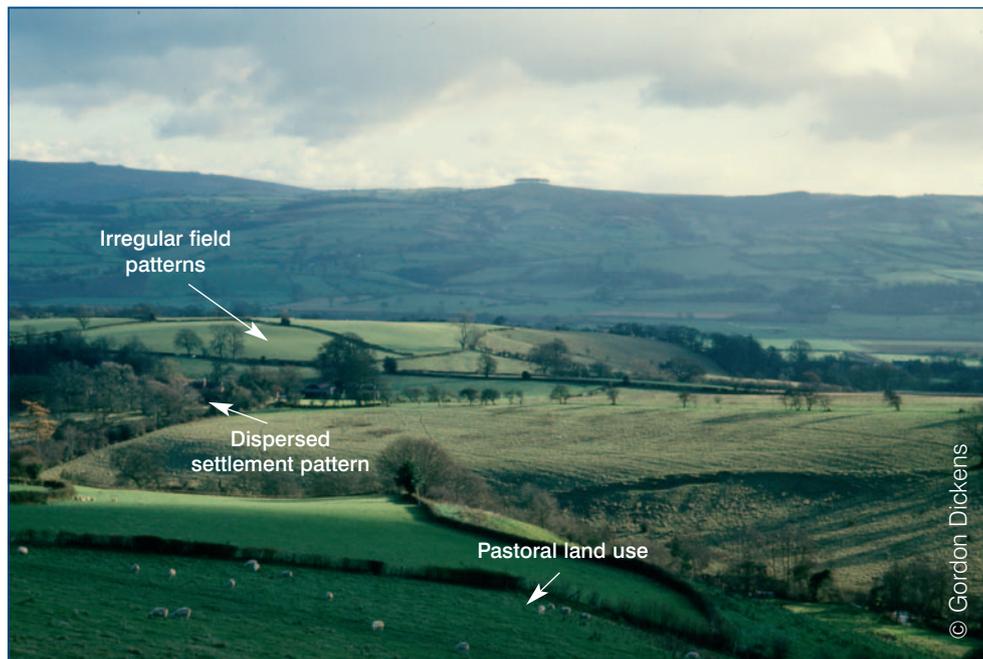
- Prominent, sloping topography
- Hedge fields with mainly ancient origins
- Pastoral landuse
- Dispersed settlement pattern
- Medium to large scale landscape with filtered views



## Description

The Pasture Hills are prominent, sloping landscapes that occur around the fringes of higher ground in parts of the Oswestry Hills, on Long Mountain, the northern and western flanks of The Long Mynd, along Yell Bank north-east of Church Stretton, on the north slopes of the Kerry Ridgeway, and on the Clee Hills. The mixed but generally impoverished soils are used for pastoral production. Some hillsides retain areas of unenclosed moorland and rough pasture, which often support good populations of ground nesting birds. Relict ancient woodland is found throughout most of these landscapes, particularly along watercourses and on the steeper slopes. Regular blocks of conifer plantation also exist in some

places, particularly on the eastern side of Brown Clee Hill. Further tree cover is provided by scattered hedgerow trees, mainly Ash or oak, set within species rich hedgerow networks that define ancient, irregular field systems. Unimproved hay meadows, associated with species such as Common Knapweed, Betony and Devil's-bit Scabious, survive more frequently than in other landscapes types. The settlement pattern is primarily one of dispersed farmsteads and wayside cottages, although a number of small hamlets and villages also exist in some areas, particularly on the northern slopes of The Long Mynd. Together these elements combine to form small-medium scale landscapes, which offer filtered views through hedgerows and trees.



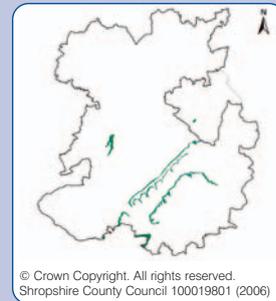
These landscapes have complex, varied histories. During the medieval period, small open fields existed in a number of places, particularly around the older settlement foci on the slopes of The Long Mynd and the Cleve Hills. The field patterns in these areas indicate that the enclosure of these fields was undertaken on a piecemeal basis; a process that was largely complete by the beginning of the 17th century. In the early Middle Ages the areas of woodland and open rough pasture were much larger. The 'assart' field patterns (i.e. those cleared and enclosed directly from woodland) present in some areas - for example, on the steep eastern slopes of Linley Hill - suggest that woodland clearance was underway by the later medieval period. The extent of the common

rough grazing land was also reduced through successive phases of enclosure. The earliest are represented by rectilinear or irregular 'intake' fields on the upper slopes, which were enclosed from the margin of the common in the early modern period. Partially contemporary with these are the squatter encroachments, with their associated cottages and smallholdings, which were established from the 16th century onwards. The final phases of enclosure took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, and are represented by relatively localised areas of geometric fields subdivided by straight thorn hedges. Examples include Prolley Moor, to the east of Wentnor, Smethcott Common, near Picklescott and the upper slopes of Yell Bank.

# Principal Wooded Hills

## Key Characteristics

- Prominent, sloping topography
- Interlocking pattern of large blocks of mixed broadleaved woodland with ancient character
- Wooded land use with occasional hedged pasture fields
- Low density dispersed settlement pattern



## Description

This landscape type is located on the The Ercall, Eastridge Wood near Snailbeach, the scarp slopes of Wenlock Edge, the Clee Plateau and View Edge/ Weo Edge near Leintwardine, Coxall Knoll near Bucknell, and the ridges of the Mortimer Forest, to the west of Ludlow. The character of these prominent, wooded landscapes is heavily influenced by landform, mostly comprising scarp and folding features in sedimentary rocks.

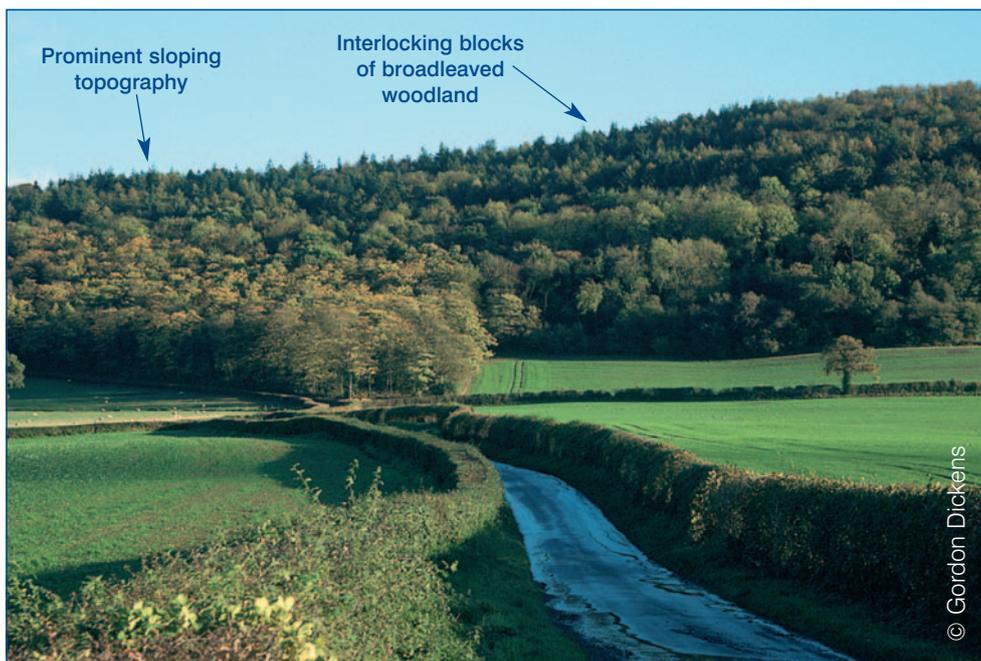
In many places the steepness of the slopes makes them unsuitable for agriculture. As a result they remain largely uncleared and retain a significant cover of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland, associated with species such as Bluebell, Dogs

Mercury, Ramsons and Sanicle. Conifers have, however, been planted in place of broadleaved species in many locations.

Where the slopes are less steep, limited areas of pasture do occur, many of which are associated with a pattern of irregular fields with a woodland origin. On Wenlock Edge these include fragments of unimproved limestone grassland, a habitat that is rare in Shropshire.

These landscapes vary in scale from small and intimate with framed views inside the woodlands, to medium scale with filtered views in more open areas.

The type is very sparsely settled, with a highly dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages.



During the medieval period many of the woodlands within these landscapes were held in common and managed for coppice or wood pasture. A number of the areas in the county where this type occurs lay within medieval forests or private chases. In the early Middle Ages many of the woods were probably much larger.

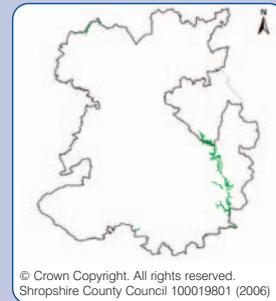
Progressive clearances from the medieval period onwards gradually reduced the extent of the tree cover to something near its current extent, creating the irregular woodland boundaries and areas of 'assart' fields (woodland clearance) we see today.

On Wenlock Edge, in particular, the underlying Silurian limestones have been extensively quarried since at least the medieval period.

# Wooded River Gorge

## Key Characteristics

- Steeply sloping valley sides
- Interlocking woodlands of ancient character
- Small scale, intimate landscapes with framed views
- Linear shape to areas with this character



## Description

Principally located along sides of the Ceiriog/ Dee valley, on the Welsh border, and the Severn valley, between Ironbridge and Highley, these are steeply sloping, heavily wooded, linear landscapes. The woodlands are primarily ancient and of significant ecological interest, because of their humid, overgrown character, although many have been heavily replanted with conifers.

Deeply eroded by glacial meltwaters, the steep valley sides have localised rocky outcrops, some of which have been accentuated by quarrying and mining activity, especially along the Ironbridge Gorge. As with Principal Wooded Hills, the steepness of the slopes has

inhibited clearance for agriculture in the past. Where fields do occur, however, they are mainly associated with pastoral production, with some mixed farming in places.

Overall these landscapes remain sparsely settled with a highly dispersed pattern of farmsteads and wayside cottages. The Ironbridge Gorge forms a noticeable exception, with a densely clustered settlement pattern.

Historically, these landscapes have been managed for the timber resources they provide. Where fields exist within this type their form is usually suggestive of assarting (woodland clearance).



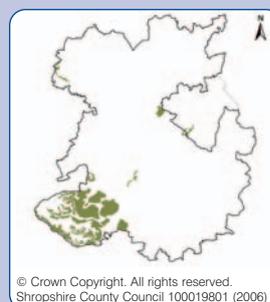
Within the Ironbridge Gorge the readily accessible mineral resources, managed woodland cover and the presence of the River Severn facilitated the development of coal and iron industries from the medieval period onwards. These industries reached their peak between the 17th and the 19th centuries, during which period the settlements within the Ironbridge Gorge expanded rapidly.

Around Quatt, to the south of Bridgnorth, parts of these landscapes were also incorporated into the parkland around Dudmaston Hall, which gives the woodland in this area an estateland quality.

# Wooded Hills and Farmlands

## Key Characteristics

- Prominent, sloping topography
- Hedged fields with predominantly ancient origins
- Large discrete woodlands with ancient character
- Mixed farming land use
- Dispersed settlement pattern
- Medium scale landscapes with framed views



## Description

This landscape type is most prevalent in the hills of the lower Clun valley, with two significant outliers on Haughmond Hill, near Shrewsbury, and around the fringes of the Wrekin, in the centre of the county. They are broadly similar to the Principal Wooded Hills, although the slopes in the Clun valley are more rounded due of the softer underlying Silurian sandstones, mudstones and siltstones. As a result farmland tends to be more extensive, with large, discrete blocks of woodland of ancient semi-natural character on the steepest slopes. Some of these woods have been significantly enlarged through the planting of conifers, particularly on the eastern side of the Clun Forest.

Limited areas of unimproved rough grassland and heathland also exist, such as Hopesay Common in south Shropshire, and the western side of Haughmond Hill near Shrewsbury.

The field patterns are predominantly ancient and irregular, with species-rich hedgerow networks. However, areas of planned fields with straight thorn hedges occur in some places, for example on the eastern slopes of Haughmond Hill, and on Brandhill to the east of Clungunford, in south Shropshire.

The settlement pattern within this type is one of dispersed farmsteads, although a scatter of smaller hamlets also exists around the fringes of the Clun Forest.



The sloping topography gives rise to medium to large scale landscapes that offer framed, and sometimes filtered, views.

These landscapes have complex and diverse histories. During the medieval period many of the woods were held in common and managed for coppice or wood-pasture. At this time there was also more open rough pasture land. These commons were gradually reduced by successive phases of enclosure, and by the establishment of coniferous forestry plantations in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The older, irregular field patterns have varied origins. Around the hamlets, the form of the field boundaries indicates that they

ultimately derive from small medieval open fields.

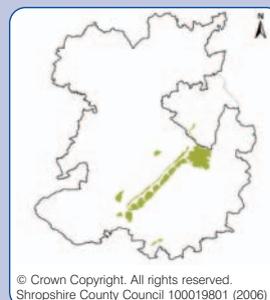
Elsewhere, the pattern of fields and woodland, the winding network of roads, and dispersed pattern of farmsteads are the product of 'assarting' (woodland clearance). Perhaps the best example of this can be seen to the north of Wart Hill, northwest of Craven Arms.

In other places, particularly in the upper reaches of the river valleys in the Clun Forest, the pattern of irregular fields systems and dispersed farmsteads probably represent a mosaic of small closes, assarts and intakes from the commons, the creation of which began in the medieval period if not before.

# Wooded Hills and Estatelands

## Key Characteristics

- Prominent, sloping topography
- Large discrete blocks of woodland with ancient character
- Mixed farming landuse
- Clustered settlement pattern of hamlets and villages
- Medium-large scale landscapes offering filtered views

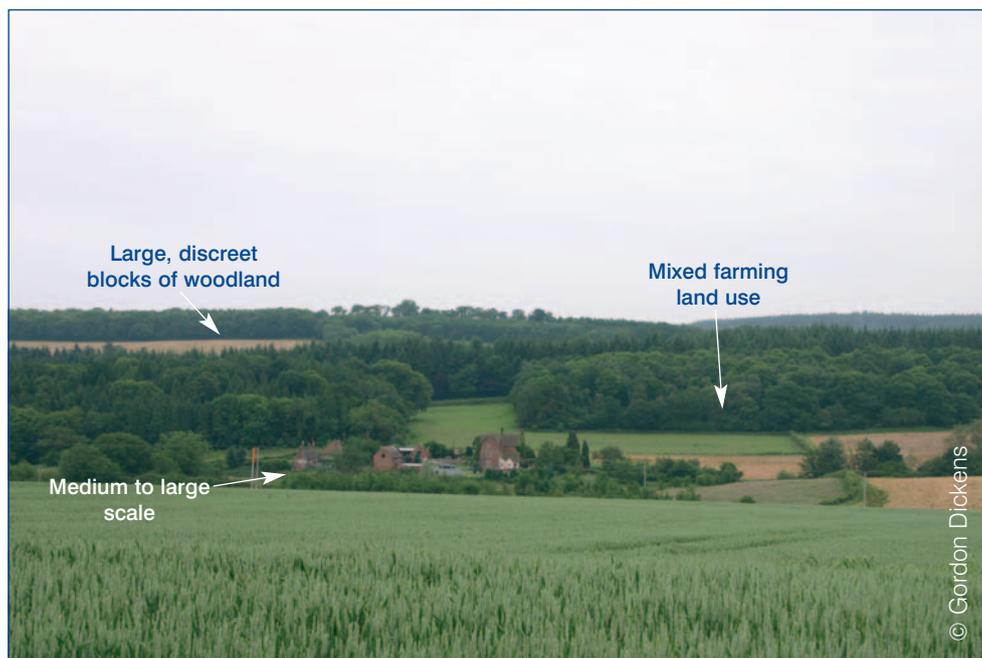


## Description

Wooded hills and estatelands are medium to large scale, agricultural landscapes with sloping topographies. They only occur in southern Shropshire, particularly along Wenlock Edge and around the former Shirlett Forest, to the east of Much Wenlock. Mixed farming, on a range of shallow clays and sandy or loamy free draining soils, forms the most prominent landuse. Large, prominently located blocks of woodland, with irregular or partially irregular boundaries and an ancient semi-natural character, form one of the defining characteristics of the type. Game coverts also occur widely, whilst hedgerow trees - predominantly oaks – form an important component of the tree cover in some areas. In places the tree cover creates framed or filtered

views, although generally the landform and the large size of the fields make for open vistas. Parklands associated with large estates can form an important feature within these landscapes, providing a focal point for ornamental woodlands. The field systems within this type are largely ancient in origin and are generally bounded by mixed hedgerows. A clustered settlement pattern of hamlets and villages predominates, some of which reflect the influence of the estates.

In the Middle Ages most of the larger blocks of woodland were held in common. 'Assart' field patterns occur in places, for example on the north-western slopes of Hope Dale and to the south of Broseley, indicating that the extent of these woodlands was reduced through successive episodes of clearance and



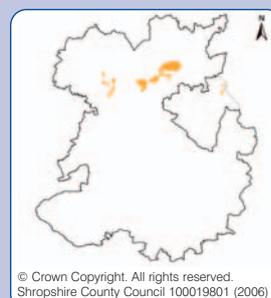
enclosure. Wood pasture also existed in the medieval and early modern period in some places, particularly on the highest parts of Wenlock Edge and around Shirlett, both of which lay within medieval forests. These areas were gradually enclosed in the early modern period: between the 16th and 18th centuries small holders established encroachments in some parts of Shirlett forest, whilst enclosure of the remaining areas came in the 18th and early 19th centuries and are associated with regular, planned field systems. During the Middle Ages many of the villages and hamlets within these landscapes were surrounded by medieval open fields. These had been largely enclosed in piecemeal fashion through informal agreements by the beginning of the 17th century. The estates of the landed gentry played an

important role in shaping the character of these landscapes. They achieved their greatest influence in the 18th and earlier 19th centuries, during which period most of the associated parklands reached their maximum extent. 'Improving' landlords also established new farms on their wider estates, or partially remodelled existing ones, sometimes as part of a wider scheme of agricultural improvements. Similarly, many estates constructed labourers cottages within the villages. The larger landowners were also responsible for the planting of coverts to provide cover for foxes. The latter half of the 20th century saw a marked increase in the intensity of agriculture, which resulted in the enlargement of many fields to facilitate the expansion of arable production.

# Sandstone Hills

## Key Characteristics

- Upstanding sandstone hills
- Light sandy soils
- Woodland on steeper slopes
- Abandoned stone quarries



## Description

This landscape type occurs on a south-west to north-east axis across northern Shropshire, and in two outlying locations to the north-west of Newport. These landscapes are defined by upstanding, in places steeply sloping, topographies based on a series of low hills formed of ruddy Triassic sandstones. These outcrop at the surface in some places, and have been exposed through quarrying activity. The overlying soils are predominantly sandy and free-draining. Where they are at their shallowest, for example at the top of Grinshill Hill to the south of Wem and The Cliffe near Nesscliffe, they support heathland plant communities. The woodland component comprises mixed secondary and plantation woodland, occasionally on the site

of ancient woodlands. Plantations of Scots Pine are a notable feature of this landscape type, and lend them an estateland quality.

Parklands provide additional focal points of tree cover in some areas. Moderate to high intensity pastoral production represents the main agricultural land use, together with mixed farming on the deeper soils. The field patterns predominantly consist of small to medium sized fields with mixed species hedgerows and scattered hedgerow oaks, trending towards larger fields in those areas with mixed farming regimes.

Settlement patterns vary across the type. For example, dispersed farmsteads and wayside cottages predominate around Ruyton-XI-Towns and to the north-west of Newport. Around Clive and Weston, however, the settlement pattern is more clustered, with



hamlets and villages as well as a moderate-high density dispersal of cottages and smallholdings.

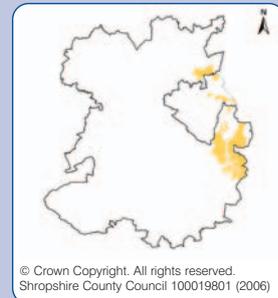
Arable cultivation in these landscapes has probably always been constrained by the sandy soils, although small open fields existed around the villages and hamlets in the Middle Ages. Beyond these fields, the field patterns usually become more regular, and the place names associated with them suggest they were enclosed directly from open heathland and woodland between the 17th and early 19th centuries. Prior to enclosure, these heaths and woods were utilised for common rough grazing, and the small areas of unenclosed land still preserve something of their character. Parklands, associated

with large country houses, were established in some places in the 18th and 19th centuries, most notably at Hawkestone Park. The sandstones which underlie these landscapes are easy to work and have been extensively quarried for building stone, probably since the Roman period. The remains of this industry are widespread and occur throughout the type, although they are often partially masked by woodland. Traces of 18th and 19th century copper mining can also be seen in some places. The labour requirements these industries generated is largely responsible for the dispersed pattern of wayside cottages and associated smallholdings that occur in some locations.

# Sandstone Estatelands

## Key Characteristics

- Arable landuse
- Regular field patterns
- Parkland with associated country houses
- Clustered settlement pattern
- Medium – large scale, open landscapes



## Description

Located on the eastern side of the county, and extending into Staffordshire and Worcestershire, these are gently rolling, open landscapes formed over Permo-Triassic sandstones. Historically, the light, sandy brown soils supported extensive areas of heathland but are utilised for intensive arable and, in some areas, mixed farming. As a consequence of successive phases of agricultural improvements, plant species associated with heathland and acid grassland are now largely confined to hedgerows and roadside verges. Parklands of various sizes, with their associated country houses, occur throughout these landscapes. They frequently contain veteran trees and provide significant focal points of tree

cover more generally. Beyond these areas, the tree cover comprises thinly scattered field and hedgerow trees, together with occasional blocks of planted woodland, some of which may have ancient origins. The settlement pattern principally consists of villages and hamlets, together with a scatter of large estate farms.

During the Middle Ages arable agriculture was constrained by the light soils. Open fields existed around the villages, separated by expansive areas of heathland and 'waste' (common rough pasture) that provided ample rough grazing for sheep and other livestock. They would also have provided cover for game, and a number of the parklands within this type were originally established as deer



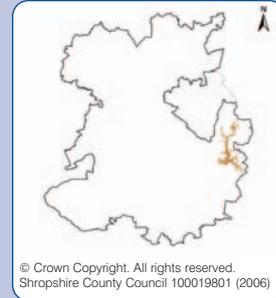
parks. Enclosure of the open fields around the villages had largely been completed by the 17th century, and the extent of the heathlands progressively reduced by a gradual process of informal enclosure. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the establishment of new parks, and the expansion of existing ones, most of which were transformed through formal landscaping schemes into the designed landscapes we see today. Between the mid 18th and later 19th centuries landowners also invested considerable sums in to the agricultural improvement of their wider estates. Consequently, this period also saw the formal enclosure of most of the remaining areas of open heathland, the construction of

new farms in the open countryside, and the laying out of straight new roads. In some places earlier, more irregular field systems were also reorganised. These changes often produced a pattern of regular fields defined by straight hedgerows. The growing popularity of fox hunting in the early 19th century led many landowners to establish plantations to provide cover for their quarry. During the later 20th century these landscapes have undergone a period of rapid change. Mechanisation and agricultural subsidies have favoured the intensive arable regime evident today, creating the current pattern of the enlarged fields and open vistas.

# Incised Sandstone Valleys

## Key Characteristics

- Shallow, steep sided valleys
- Planned woodland character – interlocking estate plantations
- Linear tree belts along watercourses
- Clustered settlement pattern
- Parklands
- Small-medium scale landscape with filtered views



## Description

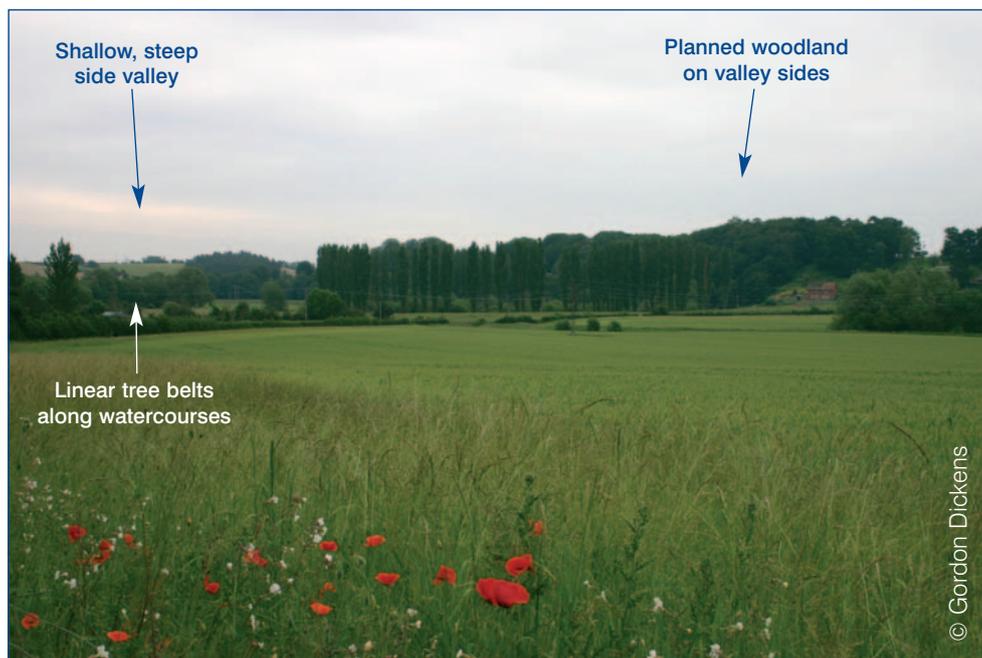
This landscape type is confined to the valley of the River Worfe and its tributaries, in eastern Shropshire. Here the watercourses have cut shallow, steep sided valleys through the underlying Permo-Triassic sandstones, producing a landscape that contrasts markedly with the surrounding rolling plateauland.

The flat valley floors were traditionally utilised for wet pastureland, whilst the thin sandy soils on the steep valley sides support semi-natural acid grassland. On the upper valleys sides much of the land is utilised for intensive arable farming, which prevails in the surrounding Sandstone Estatelands.

Planned woodlands with an estateland character form a notable element within this landscape type. On the valley floor wet woodland species associations predominate but the woods on the drier valley sides contain significant amounts of beech. In addition, many of the watercourses are lined by dense belts of trees dominated by willow.

A clustered settlement pattern, which largely avoids the valley floor, exists throughout the type, with a low density dispersal of other dwellings, many of which represent former mills.

In addition, parts of this landscape have been incorporated into the parklands surrounding large country houses.



Taken together, these factors result in a small to medium scale landscape with views that are filtered by woodland.

Historically, the wet pastures and meadowland on the valley floors would have been a highly valued resource, particularly given the light, sandy nature of the soils on the surrounding plateau. In this respect many of the older settlement centres within this part of Shropshire appear to be located on the edge of this landscape type, permitting ready access to the valleys and the resources they provided.

It is clear, from the nineteenth century map depictions of mill leats and water meadow systems, that by the early modern period water had become a carefully managed resource within this landscape.

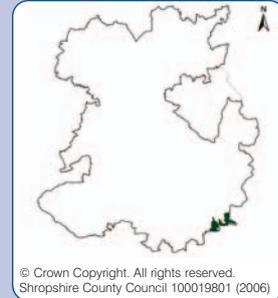
In the 18th century, this combination of sheltered valleys and carefully controlled watercourses attracted the eye of a number of the landscape gardeners working for local land owners. As a result, a number of locations have been transformed through formal landscaping schemes. In the 19th centuries this landscape was further transformed through the planting of woodland on the valley sides.

In their upper reaches the valley floors are still dominated by small wet pasture fields with elm hedges, although in the lower Worfe valley significant areas are now under cultivation. On the upper valley sides field amalgamations in the later 20th century have also created more open and irregular field systems.

# Wooded Forest

## Key Characteristics

- Near continuous woodland cover
- Woodland of ancient character
- Unsettled landscape of small, intimate scale.



## Description

In Shropshire this landscape type occurs solely in relation to the Wyre Forest, on the south-eastern county boundary. The rolling topography, composed of rocks of the Carboniferous Coal Measures, is dissected by the narrow, steep sided valleys of the Dowles Brook and its tributaries. This landscape is dominated by dense woodland, of ancient character, typically associated with species such as Bluebell, Dogs Mercury, Ramsons and Sanicle.

This gives rise to very limited framed views and creates a small, intimate scale. It remains largely unsettled, with a very sparse scatter of farms and wayside cottages that are associated with small pastoral, 'assart' type, fields.

These factors impart a sense of remoteness to this landscape.

The prehistory and early history of the Wyre Forest remains obscure but after the Norman Conquest it was placed under forest law, and by the 14th century had become a private chase.

Parts of the forest were managed for timber from the later Middle Ages onwards, and supported industries such as charcoal burning and bark peeling for tanning until the early 20th century. The fast flowing streams also provided water power that enabled an iron industry to develop in the Wyre Forest in the early modern period. In some areas around the fringes of the forest the underlying coal deposits were also mined.



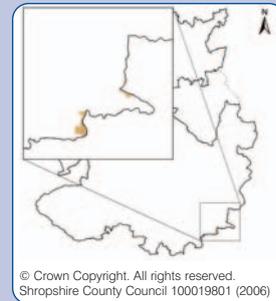
The limited numbers of fields within these landscapes have been cleared directly from the forest, probably in the medieval and early modern period. Orchards occupy some of these fields, particularly along the stream valleys.

In the later 20th century significant areas of broadleaved woodland were felled and replanted with conifers for commercial forestry purposes.

# Forest Smallholdings

## Key Characteristics

- Small pastoral fields with hedged boundaries
- Scattered hedgerow and garden trees
- Small blocks of woodland
- Dense pattern of wayside cottages and small farms
- Small scale landscapes with framed views



## Description

Within Shropshire, limited areas of Forest Smallholding landscapes occur in two locations around the edge of the Wyre Forest, on the county boundary with Worcestershire. They have upstanding, gently rolling topographies, with free draining brown soils that have developed from the underlying Carboniferous Coal Measures.

Small pastoral fields with tall mixed species hedgerows are particularly characteristic of these landscapes. They nestle into a closely worked pattern of small farms and wayside cottages, with associated smallholdings, and narrow winding lanes.

Scattered hedgerow trees, small blocks of woodland and significant numbers of garden trees impart a wooded feel. These elements combine to form small scale, intimate landscapes, with views that are framed by hedges and woodland.

The Forest Smallholdings developed from areas of early medieval woodland. Clearance and enclosure (or 'assarting') began in the Middle Ages, producing a pattern of older dispersed farmsteads, irregular fields and winding lanes.



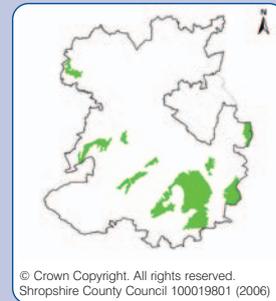
From the 16th century onwards cottages with associated smallholdings were also established as 'encroachments' on the remaining areas of open common land, probably by those engaged woodland industries.

Around the Wyre Forest, orchards also represent a distinctive feature of these landscapes.

# Timbered Plateau Farmlands

## Key Characteristics

- Upstanding plateau with rolling relief, dissected by valleys
- Linear ancient woodlands in valleys and dingles
- Mixed farming landuse
- Ancient pattern of irregular hedged fields
- Medium scale landscape



## Description

This landscape type occurs widely in the Shropshire Hills and is mainly associated with sedimentary Ordovician rocks and Devonian Old Red Sandstones, with one outlier on the Carboniferous limestone of the Oswestry Hills.

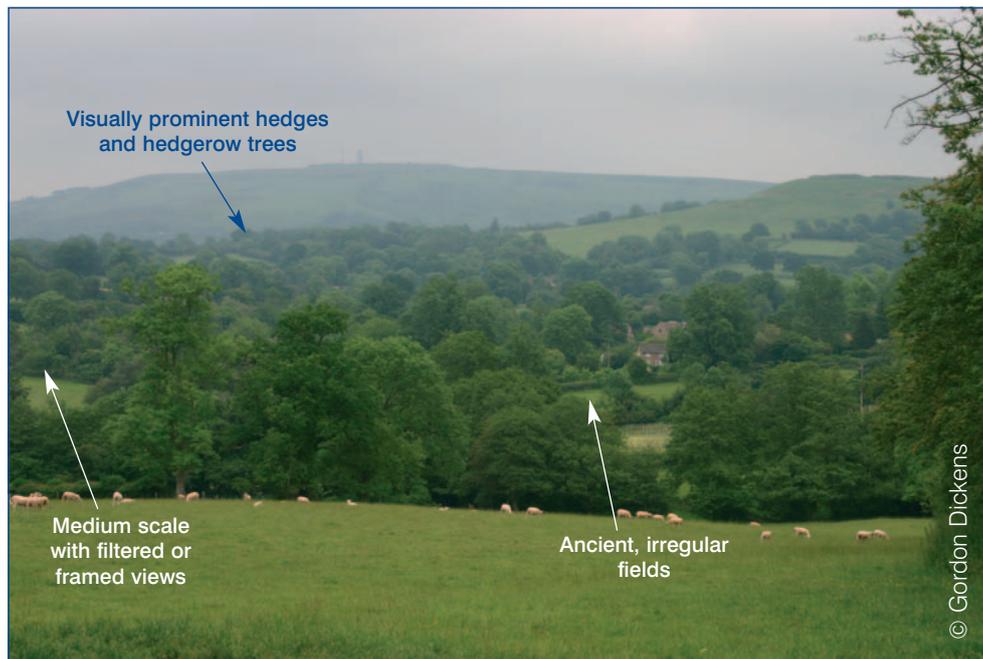
The upstanding, rolling topography increases the visual prominence of the hedgerows and woods, and creates a range of different vistas; from open views on plateau tops to framed views within the valleys. The woodlands essentially have an ancient semi-natural character, although much has been replanted. They vary in size, with wooded stream valleys being particularly characteristic of this

landscape type. Additional tree cover is provided by scattered hedgerow trees.

Farming tends to be mixed, with pasture – sometimes of unimproved character - dominant where the terrain is more difficult.

The settlement pattern consists primarily of dispersed farms, wayside cottages and hamlets, although small villages are present in some areas creating a more clustered pattern.

The Timbered Plateau Farmlands have a varied history of development. Small open fields existed around many of the hamlets and villages in the Middle Ages, which in most cases had been enclosed through piecemeal agreements by the beginning of the 17th



century. A particularly good example of such a field system can be seen around Clee St Margaret, on the western slopes of the Brown Clees.

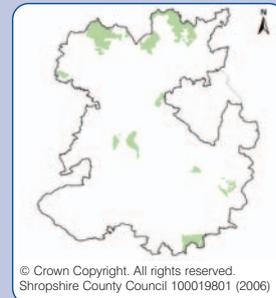
Much of the land beyond the open fields was enclosed directly from woodland or 'waste' (common rough pasture) in the medieval period, creating an organic pattern of hedged fields, winding lanes and scattered farmsteads. Examples include the area around Hope, south-west of Minsterley, and the area to the east of Alveley, on the eastern bank of the Severn.

Expanses of rough pasture and woodland appear to have persisted into the early modern period at higher elevations and along some watersheds. In these areas, the creation of smallholdings between the 17th and 19th centuries means that wayside cottages are more frequent, whilst 18th and 19th century enclosure of the remaining commons has created a more regular field pattern.

# Principal Timbered Farmlands

## Key Characteristics

- Rolling lowland with occasional steep sided hills
- Relic ancient woodland
- Hedged fields with scattered hedgerow trees
- Predominantly dispersed settlement pattern
- Small to medium scale landscapes with filtered views



## Description

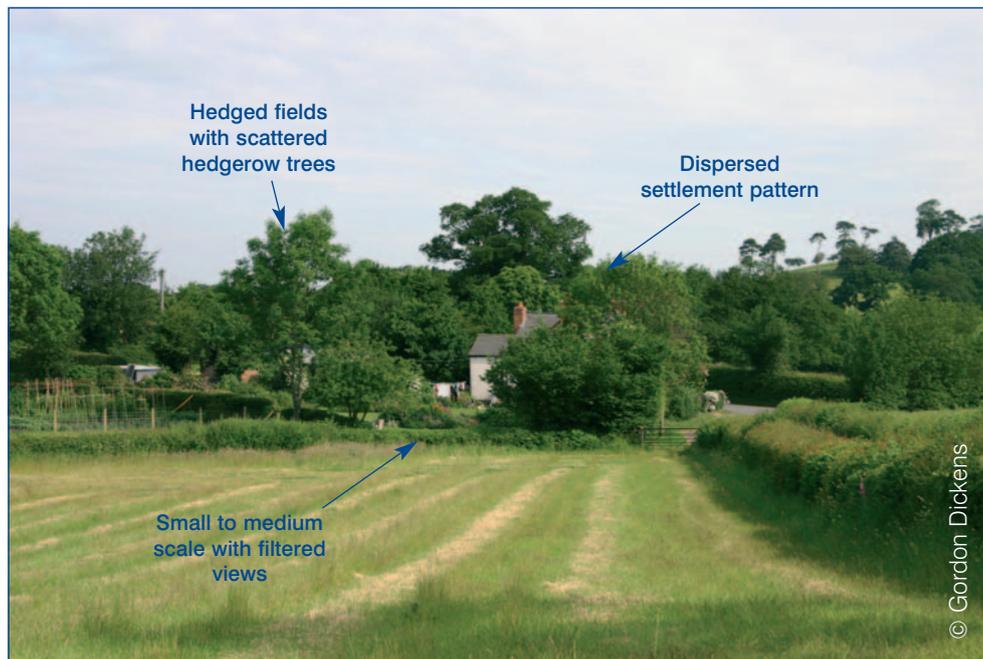
This landscape type occurs throughout much of Shropshire, with notable concentrations along the northern boundary with Cheshire, and to the south of Shrewsbury. They are predominantly rolling lowland landscapes, with occasional steeply undulating valley sides, and are characterised by a mosaic of agricultural land.

Tree cover, in the form of dense stands of streamside trees, scattered hedgerow trees, and small to medium sized woodlands play an important role in structuring these landscapes, creating a small to medium scale and filtered views. Much of the woodland has an ancient

character, although some woods have been replanted with conifers. Oak and Ash represent the main hedgerow tree species, whilst alder and willow dominate along watercourses.

The settlement pattern typically comprises of a medium to high density dispersal of farms and wayside cottages, with occasional hamlets and small villages.

Like the Wooded Farmlands, much of the agricultural land within this type was gradually enclosed from extensive tracts of woodland and 'waste' (common rough pasture) during the medieval and early modern periods. This has produced an intricate countryside, characterised by a network of



winding lanes, scattered farmsteads, and small irregular fields. Examples include the areas around Buttonbridge, on the edge of the Wyre Forest, and Coptiviney, to the north-west of Ellesmere.

Localised open fields existed around the larger settlement foci, the piecemeal enclosure of which had generally been completed by the 17th century.

In some places, for example around Exfords Green and Longden Common, to the south of Shrewsbury, and Ebrewood to the north-east of the town, sizable areas of common wood pasture and rough grazing land survived into the early modern period. Encroachment by smallholders around the edges of

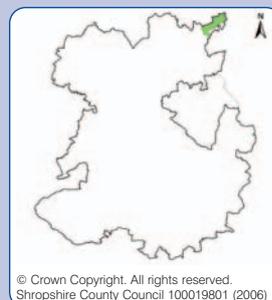
these areas, between the 16th and 19th century, account for the small concentrations of wayside cottages that occur in some places. Enclosure of the remaining area of common land was completed in the 18th and 19th centuries, creating a regular pattern of rectilinear fields and straight roads.

During the later 19th and 20th century, conifer plantations were established in some locations, occasionally on the site of older woodlands. Where more favourable soils exist, the introduction of intensive arable farming in the later 20th century has resulted in field enlargement, creating more open conditions and a larger scale landscape.

# Timbered Pastures

## Key Characteristics

- Rolling lowland
- Dense network of hedgerow trees
- Ancient woodland character
- Pastoral landuse
- Small-medium scale landscape with filtered views



## Description

Occurring only in the extreme north-eastern corner of Shropshire, in the area around the village of Woore, this is a lowland landscape of rolling glacial tills, where the heavy overlying soils support medium intensity dairy farming.

Dense lines of trees along hedgerows and watercourses represent one of the defining features of this landscape type. Oak forms the dominant hedgerow tree species, although Ash is also common in some areas, and willow predominates along the watercourses. A number of blocks of ancient woodland, widespread wet flushes and numerous small field ponds, many of which probably occupy former marl pits, add

further ecological value. The nature of the tree cover also plays an important role in structuring the landscape, creating filtered views and a small-medium scale.

This landscape is also characterised by varied field systems and a complex settlement pattern of dispersed farmsteads and wayside cottages with occasional villages.

These landscapes have complex histories. Field systems derived from localised medieval open fields exist around the villages. Beyond them, extensive areas appear to have been cleared and enclosed ('assarted') from woodland/ wood pasture and 'waste' (common rough pasture), creating a pattern of dispersed farmsteads set within a matrix of winding lanes and irregular fields.



A number of deer parks were also established during the medieval period, such as the one that once existed to the south of Bellaport Old Hall, north-west of Norton in Hales.

Dairy farming became increasingly important in north Shropshire during the 16th and 17th centuries, and was dependent upon careful stock breeding and grassland management. Enclosed pastures provided the best means of meeting these requirements and, partially for this reason, enclosure of the open fields had been largely completed by 1600.

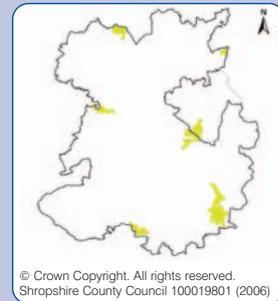
The clusters of cottages and associated smallholdings, which exist in some locations, suggest that encroachment onto the remaining commons also occurred during this period. Enclosure of the last pieces of common land was completed between the 18th and early 19th centuries, creating regular geometric fields subdivided by straight thorn hedges.

During the later 20th century intensification of the traditional dairying regimes has resulted in amalgamation of some fields.

# Wooded Estatelands

## Key Characteristics

- Rolling landform
- Large blocks of ancient woodland
- Large country houses with associated parklands
- Mixed agricultural land use

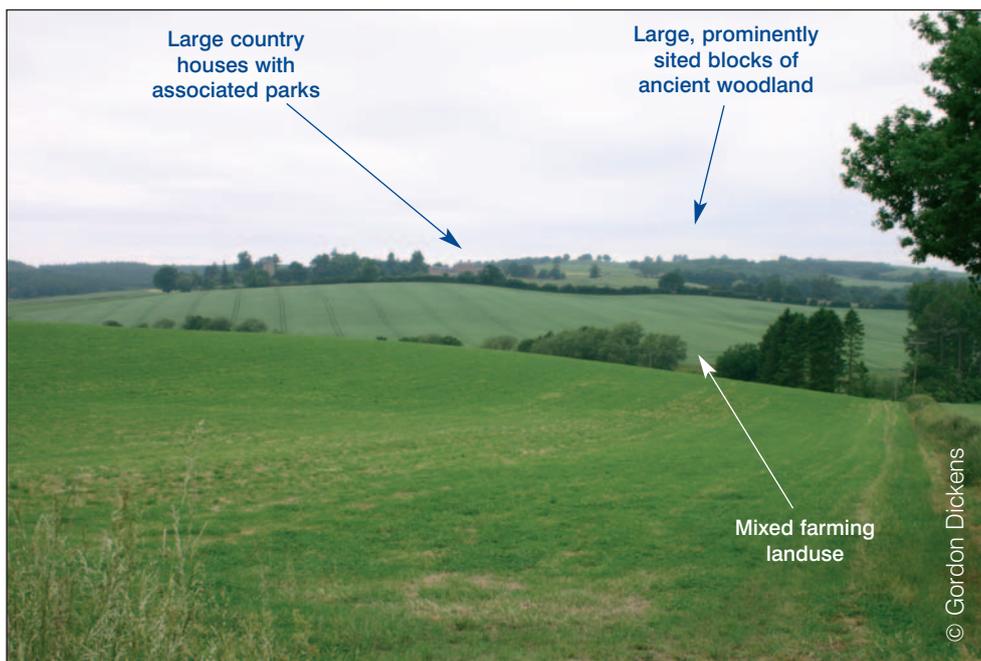


## Description

The lowland equivalent of 'Wooded Hills and Estatelands', Wooded Estatelands are rolling landscapes with occasional wooded wet dingles. In Shropshire they mainly occur to the west and south-west of Telford; on the Coal Measures to the north of the Wyre Forest; on the county boundary with Herefordshire to the west of Ludlow; around Alberbury in western Shropshire; to the north-east of Ellesmere; and on the Shropshire/ Staffordshire county boundary around Bishop's Wood. The varied but often impoverished soils are associated with high intensity mixed farming. Large, often prominently located woods of ancient semi-natural character form one of the defining characteristics of this landscape type. These woodlands represent the dominant structural component, creating framed views and medium to large scale landscapes. Dense stands

of trees along water courses and scattered hedgerow trees, with oak as the predominant species, provide additional tree cover. Parklands associated with country houses constitute another important element and represent focal points for tree cover in some places. The settlement pattern comprises occasional villages together with dispersed farmsteads and wayside cottages.

Many of the parklands within the type originated as medieval and early modern deer parks. A number were significantly extended between the 17th and 19th centuries, and reworked through formal landscaping schemes. The mixed field patterns within this type have a varied history of development. During the Middle Ages relatively limited areas of open field land surrounded the villages and hamlets. As elsewhere in Shropshire, the



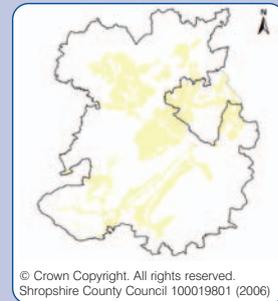
piecemeal enclosure of these fields had largely been completed by the middle of the 17th century. Beyond the open fields, extensive areas of common woodland, wood pasture and waste existed in the earlier medieval period. The enclosure of these areas began before the 14th century and continued into the early modern period, producing a pattern of irregular fields and dispersed farmsteads. Between 16th and 18th centuries small holders encroached onto some of the larger areas of common land; particularly on the Coal Measures to the west of Telford and around the margins of Chelmarsh Common, near Highley, where the expansion of coal mining provided an additional draw. Between the later part of the 17th century and the early 19th century the

remaining commons were enclosed, resulting in the creation of regular field systems subdivided by straight hedges. The largest example of this kind of planned field system can be seen to the west of Bishop's Wood, in north-east Shropshire. In the later 19th and early 20th centuries the heavy industry on the eastern coalfield went into decline, and by the 1960s much of the area was derelict. Some of the ancient woodlands were also partially replanted with conifers during this period, whilst agricultural intensification after World War II has resulted in field amalgamation in many areas. The development of Telford new town from the 1970s onwards means that to the west of the town these landscapes are now situated on the urban fringe.

# Estate Farmlands

## Key Characteristics

- Mixed farming landuse
- Clustered settlement pattern
- Large country houses with associated parklands
- Planned woodland character
- Medium to large scale landscapes with framed views



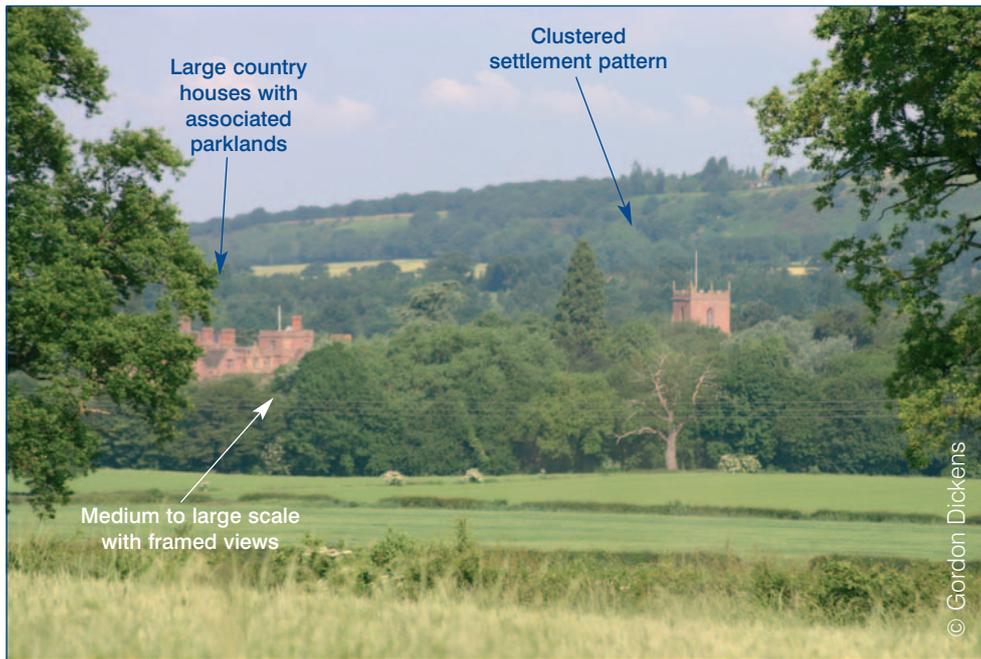
## Description

Estate farmlands are gently rolling lowland and valley floor landscapes that occur across large areas of Shropshire. The lower ground is usually underlain by softer, more easily eroded rocks such as shales, sometimes in sharp contrast to nearby ridges of harder rocks. Glacial drift deposits form the basis of most soils and these landscapes include some the best agricultural land in the county, which have traditionally been associated with mixed farming. As with the Sandstone Estatelands, landscape character is largely determined by an ordered pattern of fields and woods, although the prevailing pattern of medium to large sub-regular fields means that they lack their strong, planned aspect. The majority of the woodlands have a

planned appearance, although some plantations occupy the sites of older woods and small stands of ancient woodland occur in some places. They tend to create framed views within medium to large scale landscapes.

Parklands, with their veteran and specimen trees, are a particular feature of the type. The settlement pattern is predominantly one of villages and hamlets and large estate farmsteads.

The Estate Farmlands have varied histories of development. To the south-east and east of Shrewsbury, along the Tern valley, and within Ape Dale and Corve Dale, the density of Iron Age archaeological sites suggests that a carefully managed agricultural landscape had existed for some considerable time prior to the Roman Conquest. By the later medieval period arable open fields



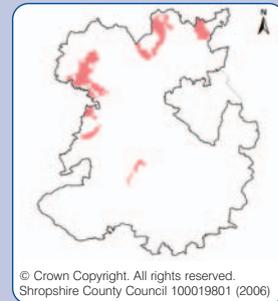
extended across a considerable proportion of most parishes in these areas, and they exhibit some of the strongest settlement nucleation within the county. Beyond them, arable land was less extensive and the intervening areas of woodland, rough grazing land, meadows and pastures are correspondingly larger. The gradual informal enclosure of the open fields was under way by the late medieval period and largely completed by the 17th century. Although some deer parks were created in the medieval period, the 18th and 19th century saw the establishment of many new parks. Within Attingham Park, for example, evidence of an earlier agricultural landscape, in the form of ridge and furrow, exists in some parts of the 18th century parkland. Many of their owners also spent considerable

sums on the agricultural improvement of their wider estates. As a result, the 18th and 19th century saw significant rationalisation of pre-existing field patterns and the formal enclosure of the remaining areas of unenclosed rough grazing lands. This period also saw the construction of new estate farmsteads in the open countryside, as well as labourers cottages and schools within some of the villages. As a result of the growing interest in fox hunting during the 19th century, many of the larger land owners planted game coverts on their estates to provide cover for their quarry. Since World War II agricultural intensification has introduced considerable change, and field enlargements in particular have created a larger scale and more open views.

# Settled Pastoral Farmlands

## Key Characteristics

- Heavy, poorly drained soils
- Pastoral land use
- Scattered hedgerow trees
- Irregular field pattern
- Small to medium scale landscapes



## Description

Located mainly in the northern and western parts of the county, Settled Pastoral Farmlands are lowland agricultural landscapes. Heavy, often poorly drained soils are one of the defining characteristics of this landscape type and have traditionally been associated with livestock farming. This land use means that the historic pattern of small to medium, sub-regular, hedged fields has been retained in most places.

Whilst small, relict pieces of ancient woodland are present in some areas, tree cover is largely provided by scattered hedgerow oaks and Ash trees, along with linear bands of willows and alders along watercourses. Although these are not as densely distributed as they are in

the Timbered pastures, they can be present in significant numbers and, combined with the field size, generate a small to medium scale landscape with predominantly filtered views.

A medium to high density dispersal of farmsteads and wayside cottages, linked by a sinuous network of lanes, represents the prevailing settlement pattern. However, occasional hamlets and small villages also exist in some areas, for example around Kinnerley, south-west of Oswestry.

The irregular field patterns within these landscapes have varied origins. Where the settlement pattern is more clustered, many of the fields derive from the informal, piecemeal enclosure of open fields during the late medieval and early modern



period. This process may have been encouraged by growing specialisation within the agricultural economy, particularly in northern Shropshire where dairying farming became increasingly important during this period.

Beyond the open fields, for example around Winnington Green, near Middletown, and to the south of Maesbury, near Oswestry, the field patterns derives from a mixture of woodland clearance, together with intakes and encroachment in areas of former common rough pasture.

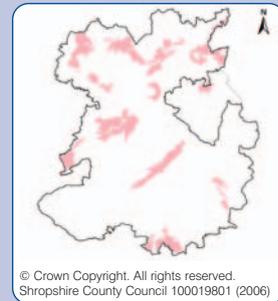
Between the mid-17th and mid-19th centuries rural industries became important in some areas, for example limestone quarrying around Llanymynech.

During the later 20th century agricultural intensification has resulted in widespread pasture improvement and the introduction of intensive arable cropping in some places. Overall, however, the historic field patterns remain largely unchanged.

# Principal Settled Farmlands

## Key Characteristics

- Mixed farming land use
- Varied pattern of sub-regular, hedged fields



## Description

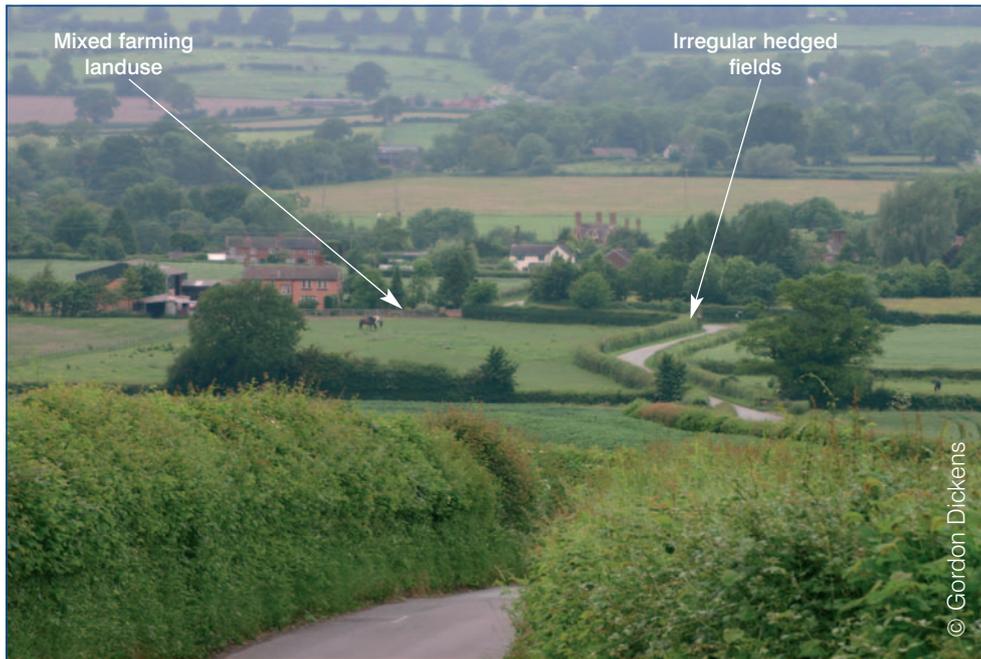
Principal Settled Farmlands are prevalent throughout northern Shropshire, mainly in association with Permian and Triassic sandstones, together with the Rea Valley, the Vale of Montgomery, the northern end of Ape Dale and the areas to the south of both Ludlow and Bridgnorth. These are settled lowland landscapes of small villages and hamlets, scattered farms and relict commons, with varied soil conditions that are predominantly utilised for mixed farming.

Around Ellesmere, this patchwork is further enriched by a series of natural lakes and mosses, which occupy kettle holes within the rolling glacial tills that cover this part of the county.

Like the Settled Pastoral Farmlands, this landscape type lacks significant woodlands, although small pieces of ancient woodland and plantation occur in some areas. Characteristically, however, tree cover comprises scattered hedgerow and field trees (mainly oak and Ash), amenity trees around settlements, and denser linear stands of alder and willow along watercourses.

The Principal Settled Farmlands are also defined by a clustered settlement pattern of hamlets and smaller villages and a medium to high density dispersal of farmsteads and wayside cottages.

Together with the relatively small, sub-regular fields, these elements combine to create medium scale landscapes with predominantly filtered views.



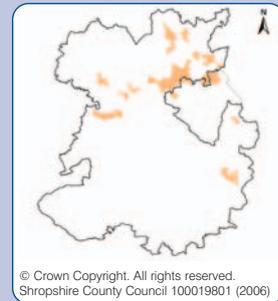
The Principal Settled Farmlands also have a varied history of development. During the Middle Ages many of the villages and hamlets were surrounded by open fields, the enclosure of which occurred on an informal basis during the later medieval and early modern period. Beyond these areas the field patterns often become more irregular and appear to have been enclosed directly from woodland or rough pasture. In some places in north Shropshire relict commons can also be identified, distinguishable by the associated clusters of wayside cottages and smallholdings. Such encroachments were established between the 16th century and beginning of the 19th century. Examples include Barkers Green,

to the south of Wem, and Hengoed, north of Oswestry. In some places the growth of these settlements was linked to the development of rural industries, most notably coal mining in the Rea valley and the area around St. Martin's, north of Oswestry. The 18th and 19th century saw the rationalisation of pre-existing field systems in some areas, such as the Vale of Montgomery, as improving farmers adopted new husbandry practices. In the Teme valley, to the south of Ludlow, orchards also become a particular feature, although many are no longer actively managed. A general intensification of farming practices occurred in the later 20th century, resulting in the amalgamation of fields in some areas.

# Enclosed Lowland Heaths

## Key Characteristics

- Undulating lowland
- Impoverished, freely draining soils
- Planned woodland character
- Dispersed settlement pattern

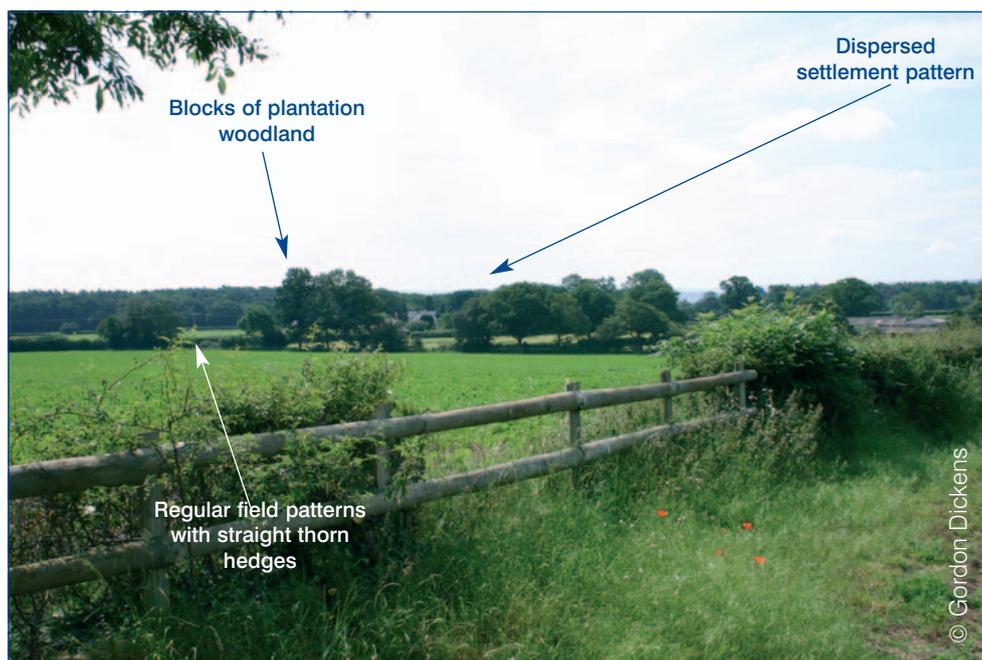


## Description

Enclosed Lowland Heaths are gently rolling lowland landscapes that occur throughout northern and eastern Shropshire, in areas with predominantly sandy, impoverished soils. Localised areas of semi-natural heathland vegetation survive in a small number of locations, for example on Prees Heath in north Shropshire, where the only population of Silver-studded Blue butterflies in the West Midlands is found. Overall, however, these are medium to large scale agricultural landscapes, which have evolved from extensive areas of open heathland and 'waste' (common rough pasture) over the past three or four centuries. They are characterised by an ordered pattern of rectilinear fields with thorn hedges, straight roads and scattered brick farmsteads. Clusters of wayside cottages, with

associated blocks of smallholdings, are also common. Regular plantation woodlands form the most significant woodland component. Hedgerow trees are generally fairly sparse, although in some places linear bands of trees along water courses also make an important contribution. This pattern of tree cover creates a mixture of framed and lightly filtered views. Settlement largely comprises a low to medium density dispersal of farmsteads and cottages, although occasional villages and hamlets are present in some locations.

The origins of the extensive tracts of open heathland, woodland and wood pasture, which existed until the early modern period, probably extended back to the Bronze Age. Common rights of access to the important resources that such areas of waste and woodland provided- such as rough grazing



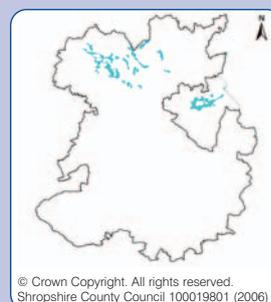
for sheep, timber and fuel – were maintained by the communities in the surrounding townships. In addition, the area to the east of Bridgnorth formed the core of the medieval royal forest of Morfe, although by the 14th century grazing pressures on the associated commons had significantly reduced the browse available for the king's deer. Limited areas of open fields existed around some of the villages and hamlets, the enclosure of which was underway by the later medieval period. Enclosure of the surrounding waste also began by this period, most notably on the extensive tract of heathland between Ford and Westbury, to the west of Shrewsbury. Both forms of enclosure produced irregular field patterns, which can still be seen in some areas. From the 16th century

onwards small holders began to encroach on some of the heathlands, creating an intricate pattern of wayside cottages and small, sub-regular or rectilinear fields. Good examples occur at Halfway House, to the West of Shrewsbury, and Prees Green, north-east of Wem. Very substantial expanses of open heathland remained, however, and the enclosure of these areas was completed during the 18th and 19th centuries. This process gave rise to the characteristic pattern of geometric fields, plantation woodlands, straight enclosure roads and new brick farmsteads. During the later 20th century, intensive arable cultivation replaced traditional mixed farming practices on many of the Enclosed Lowland Heaths, resulting in the enlargement of many fields.

# Lowland Moors

## Key Characteristics

- Flat, low-lying topography
- Peaty soils
- Wet ditches and drains
- Open, unsettled landscape



## Description

Lowland Moors occur throughout northern and north-eastern Shropshire; most extensively along the southern edge of Whixall Moss, around Baggy Moor, to the north of Ruyton-XI-Towns, and the Weald Moors to the north of Telford. They are flat, low-lying, wetland landscapes, which occupy shallow hollows in the glacial drifts deposits.

Tree cover consists of scattered willows along the drains and other water channels, which also represent one of the defining characteristics of this landscape type, together with regular estate plantations.

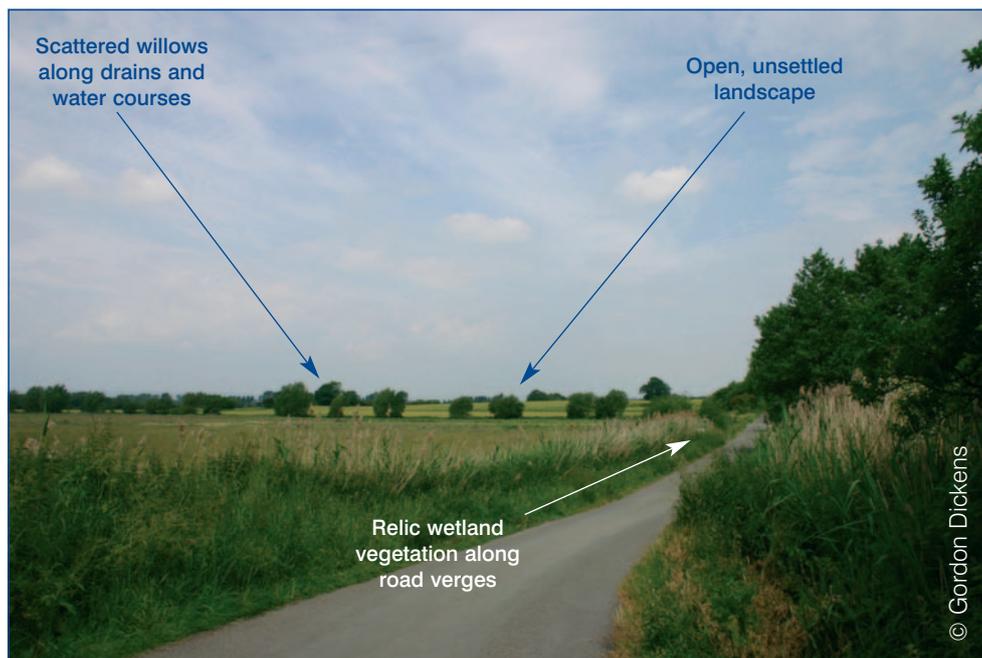
Patches of wet rough pasture survive where current land use is less intensive, and in some places, such as Fenemere near Baschurch and Crose Mere north

of Cockshutt, small natural meres provide further ecological diversity. Elsewhere relic patches of wetland vegetation can be found along road verges.

The historical wetness of the soils means that these landscapes remain largely devoid of settlements, whilst the few roads within them were created as part of the drainage schemes.

A small number of wayside cottages are, however, present in some places, most notably around the edge of Whixall Moss. Together with the medium-large scale and open views, this lends these landscapes a secluded quality.

After the end of the last Ice Age the depressions which the Lowland Moors occupy began to gradually silt up, eventually resulting in the formation of thick beds of fen peat. Recent research on Baggy Moor,



suggests that these peats were covered by wet woodland during later prehistoric and Roman periods. This woodland cover appears to have been cleared during the early medieval period, creating more open conditions.

By the later Middle Ages these landscapes provided extensive commons, which provided an important variety of resources, including peat (for fuel), fish, particularly eels, wildfowl and seasonal rough pasture. In some locations, small holders established cottages around the edges of these commons between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Improvement of the Lowland Moors was undertaken by the larger landowners from 16th century onwards, culminating in the large,

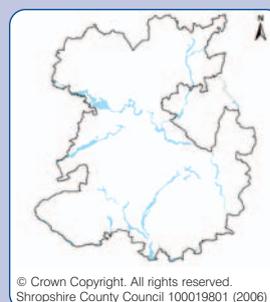
capital intensive drainage schemes of the late 18th and 19th centuries. The improved pastures that were established as a result enabled some of these wetlands, particularly the Weald Moors, to be used as fattening grounds for cattle and sheep. However, their enclosure often proved contentious, particularly when it involved a curtailment of common rights. Disputes also arose over responsibilities for the maintenance of drains. The consequent neglect sometimes resulted in flooding and the gradual reversion to wetland.

Ongoing drainage works in the later 20th century has permitted intensive arable cultivation in some locations, particularly on Baggy Moor and the Weald Moors.

# Riverside Meadows

## Key Characteristics

- Flat, floodplain topography
- Pastoral land use
- Linear belts of trees along watercourses
- Hedge and ditch field boundaries
- Unsettled.



## Description

These are linear landscapes associated with the well defined floodplains that border the major rivers in the county, the Severn, Vyrnwy, Tern and Teme, and their larger tributaries. The river channels are flanked by extensive areas of waterside meadows defined by hedge and ditch boundaries, which are used for seasonal grazing within a predominantly pastoral farming system. These meadows are often associated with wetland habitats such as floodplain grazing marsh, which support species such as Meadowsweet, Creeping Buttercup and Silverweed and grasses like Perennial Rye-grass and Meadow Foxtail.

Tree cover comprises linear pattern of trees – predominantly Alders and willows - along

watercourses, together with scattered hedgerow and field trees. Woodlands, if present at all, tend to be wet, Alder dominated woods, together with estate game coverts and regular poplar plantations.

Because of the frequency of flooding, the Riverside Meadows remain largely unsettled, with the exception of occasional mill buildings and small settlement clusters around bridging points.

Woodland cover was probably removed from many of the floodplains in the county during later prehistory. By the early medieval period many of these areas were used as common rough pasture and grazing marsh, and the amount of enclosed meadowland remained small until the 14th century.



Towards the end of the medieval period documentary sources indicate that there was a significant increase in enclosed meadowland, enabling specialised livestock farming that was not possible in the common open fields. Although highly valuable, meadowland was sometimes broken up during the later Middle Ages and brought into temporary cultivation. The use of riverside meadowland for fattening beef cattle became increasingly important during the later 16th century, and by the mid 17th century water meadows were becoming widespread in the county. These enabled water to be run over the land during the winter, via a system of dams and sluices that diverted water away from the main river channel. As a

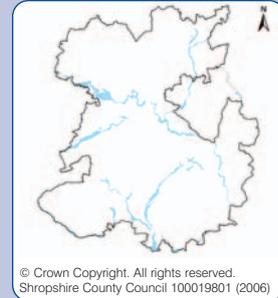
result, nutrient rich slits were deposited, which protected the pastures from frosts and encouraged a rich, early flush of grass in the spring. However, because of the expense involved, the impetus behind their construction often came from the larger landowners. Water meadows remained in use into the 19th century, and were particularly extensive in the Tern valley.

In the later 20th century advances in drainage technologies and flood management techniques made cultivation of the floodplain viable where more favourable soils exist. Consequently, arable farming now extends up to the river banks along parts of the Severn to the east of Shrewsbury, and along much of the Tern Valley.

# Lowland Moss

## Key Characteristics

- Flat, lowland topography
- Large scale with open views
- Peat soils
- Peat cuttings
- Unsettled



## Description

In Shropshire this landscape type occurs solely at Fenn's/ Whixall Moss, along the national boundary with Wales. This is a large scale, open landscape which forms one of the largest and most southerly raised peat bogs in Britain.

Analysis of the underlying sediments has demonstrated that peat began to form around 5500 BC, within a shallow depression in the glacial drift deposits that blanketed this part of north Shropshire. Acid bog/ mire habitats remain dominant and are associated with a broad range of mire vegetation and invertebrate species, as well as good watervale populations.

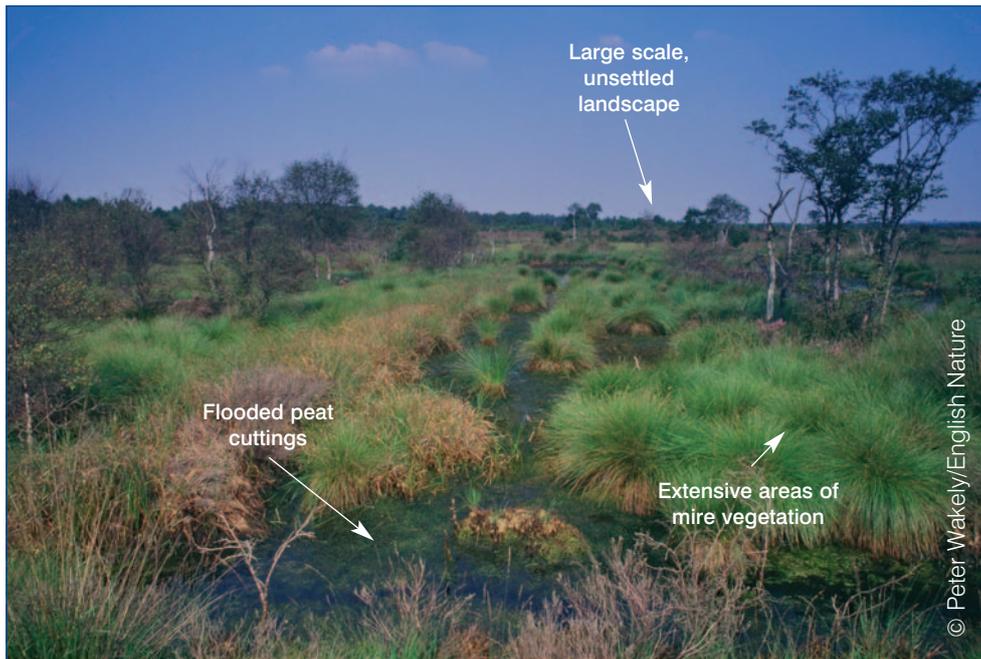
Woodland cover is restricted to a large block of conifer plantation

at the northern (Welsh) ends of the Moss, together with some secondary woodland on the peripheries.

This remains an unsettled, secluded landscape, where peat cuttings provide the main evidence for human activity.

Peat formation at Fenn's/ Whixall Moss appears to have continued until the later Bronze Age, when the moss was colonised by pine forest. However, this episode ended with the return of wetter conditions and the corresponding resumption of peat formation.

The existing unenclosed part of the Moss lay at the centre of a more extensive tract of 'waste' (common rough pasture) during the medieval period. By the late 16th century documentary sources reveal the existence of a



well-developed system of common peat cutting rights, which may well have had earlier origins.

The principal drains appear to have been cut in the 18th century, prior to the construction of the Ellesmere canal across the moss at the turn of the 19th century. The Whixall Moss Enclosure Act 1814 resulted in the cutting of a further series of drains, although some of the land enclosed at this time is now reverting back to mire.

Within the unenclosed parts of the moss, commercial hand cutting of peat for the local market began in the 1850s and continued until the 1920s, after which larger scale operations

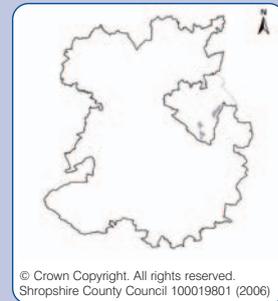
were initiated. Intensive mechanised extraction began after the World War II and forestry plantations were established at the southern and northern ends of the moss.

Peat extraction continued until the site was purchased by the Nature Conservancy Council (now Natural England) in the 1990s. The moss is now managed for its biodiversity value and is subject to a programme of re-wetting, as part of which the incongruous plantation at the southern end of the moss has been felled.

# Coalfields

## Key Characteristics

- Upstanding rolling plateau
- Dispersed pattern of small farms and wayside cottages
- Coal mining remains



## Description

Coalfield landscapes are found in two locations around the fringes of Telford, in eastern Shropshire.

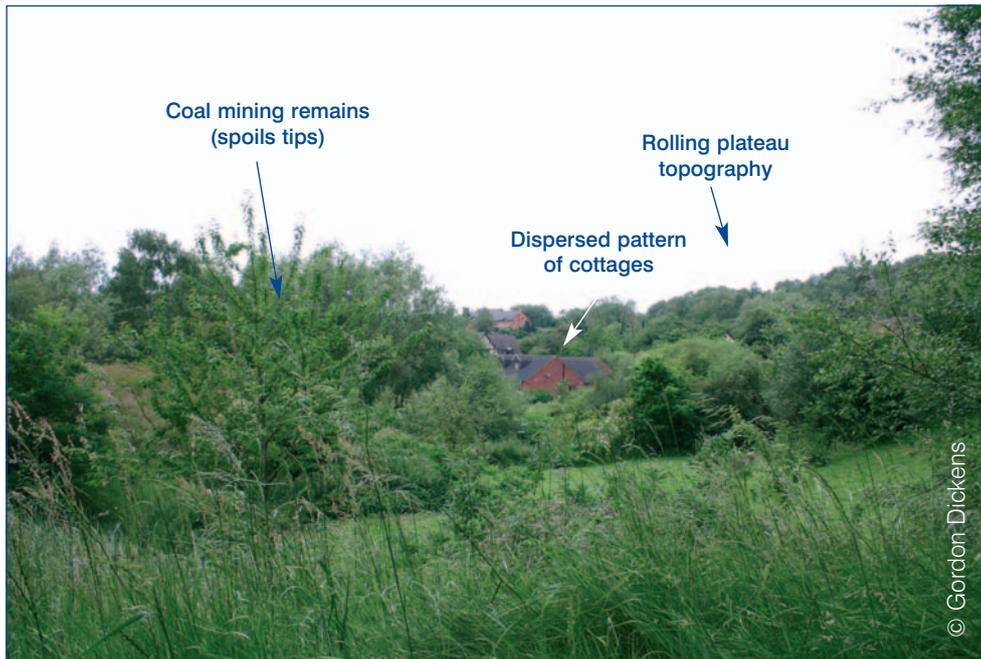
They occur on an upstanding, gently rolling plateau formed of Carboniferous Coal Measures, which is overlain by heavy, poorly drained soils that once supported extensive areas of woodland and rough pasture. The field systems within this landscape type were created through the progressive clearance and enclosure of these woodlands, and small holders encroachments on areas of former 'waste' (common rough pasture).

Apart from the numerous recent amenity plantations, tree cover is largely restricted to hedgerow trees, with oak as the dominant species.

Coal mining occurred throughout the type, creating large spoil tips, some of which now support heathland habitats.

These factors produced an historic settlement pattern of small dispersed farms and wayside cottages.

The extensive tracts of woodland and waste of the earlier Middle Ages were gradually reduced by later medieval clearances: a process that was encouraged by the six monastic houses that existed in the wider area. However, large areas of wood pasture and open rough grazing land remained, and some of that to the north-east of present day Telford was incorporated into Lilleshall Park.



Coal mining activity was initially stimulated by the monastic foundations but intensified during the mid-17th century, reaching a peak in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The local iron industry also grew rapidly during this period, and workers cottages and associated smallholdings were established on much of the remaining open common land.

Following a long period of industrial decline between the late 19th and mid-20th century, these landscapes have been transformed through the establishment of Telford new town. The extensive reclamation of derelict industrial land, which occurred alongside the development of the new town, has resulted in widespread amenity

planting on the site of former spoil tips, significantly increasing the amount of tree cover. The historic settlement pattern has also been modified by housing developments and the construction of an urban road network.

# Glossary

**Ancient semi-natural woodland** – Woodlands that have been in continuous existence since at least 1600, and which are identified as such on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (Provisional) for England. They normally comprise of mixed broadleaved species (although some have been replanted) and often have irregular boundaries.

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** - A statutory designation, under the terms of National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, intended to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape in a given area. The Shropshire Hills AONB was designated in 1958 and covers an area 804km<sup>2</sup> in southern Shropshire. A statutory Management Plan is prepared and overseen by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership; a formal structure between five Local Authorities, with core funding from the Countryside Agency.

**Assarts** – Fields cleared and enclosed directly from woodland, heathland or moorland, usually between the 12th and 17th centuries. Where they survive, they can sometimes be distinguished by their irregular form and association with a pattern of dispersed farmsteads, a network of winding lanes, and blocks of ancient woodland with irregular boundaries.

**Attributes** – the individual variables within each of the six elements that define landscape character (e.g. meozoic rocks, rolling lowland topography, dispersed settlement pattern etc.).

**Characterisation** – the process of creating a broad and generalised appreciation of the character and significance of the environment or landscape (see also Historic Landscape Characterisation, Landscape Character Assessment).

**Closes** - small hedged or walled fields with medieval origins. Some lay beyond the margins of the common open fields and were created through assarting (see 'assarts' above). Others were situated between the ploughlands and the settlements, providing convenient enclosed pastures.

**Coverts** – small planted woodlands established to provide cover for game (particularly foxes).

**Deer parks** – A area of private woodland and/or wood pasture within which deer were kept, which were originally strongly enclosed with earthworks, timber pails or hedges. The creation of such parks reached a peak in the 13th and early 14th centuries.

**Discrete woods** – clearly defined blocks of woodland that are spatially separate from one another.

**Ecology** – the study (and science) of living organisms in terms of their relations to one another and their wider environment.

**Elements** – six individual components which make up landscape character (e.g. Geology, Landform, Settlement etc.).

**Encroachments** – cottages and associated smallholdings established on common land by cottagers and 'squatters' between the 16th and 18th centuries. In some instances cottages were erected close to extractive industries by part-time colliers, quarrymen or lead miners.

**Field pattern** – an inherited configuration of fields, hedgerows, roads and trackways, the form of which is determined by, and indicative of, a particular set of historical processes.

**Geodiversity** – The natural range of rocks, fossils, landforms and soils that exist within a given area, together with the earth processes, both past and present, that have given rise to them.

**Habitat** – Locality where a particular plant or animal normally lives. Also used in a wider sense to refer to a major assemblage of plants and animals that occur together e.g. grassland, woodland etc.

**Heathland/acid grassland** – plant communities that have typically developed on free draining, nutrient poor soils, although localised areas with poor drainage may also be present.

**Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)** – a national programme co-ordinated by English Heritage, which is primarily concerned with mapping the historic dimension of today's rural and urban landscape.

**Intake** – field enclosed directly from common land between the 16th and 17th centuries.

**Intercommoning** – commons to which two or more communities held customary rights of access.

**Interlocking woodlands** – a pattern of conjoined blocks of woodland.

**Key characteristics** – a prominent and recurrent set of elements that define a given landscape type.

**Landscape Character** - a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

**Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)** – an analysis, based upon a predetermined objective methodology, of the various elements that together comprise landscape character.

**Landscape Type** – these are defined by a particular and consistent combination of attributes. They occur wherever such a combination exists and make one landscape distinct from another.

**Moorland** – plant communities developed over peaty soils and/or in areas with impeded drainage. Often used in relation to heathland plant communities in an upland setting, although it also applies to present and former wetlands at lower elevations.

**Open fields** – a communal agricultural system, with early medieval origins, in which a given settlement had two or more large arable fields that were subdivide into separate, unhedged strips. These were shared out between each farmer and mixed together with those of their neighbours, so that each holding was scattered across the territory of the settlement. In Shropshire most parishes had several open fields, the enclosure of which proceeded on an informal, piecemeal basis from the later Middle Ages onwards, such that most had disappeared by the 17th century.

**Parks/parkland** – designed landscapes usually associated with a large country house, which typically contain some or all of the following: ornamental planting, artificial lakes and ponds, kitchen gardens, lodges and other ornamental buildings such as follies, temples and pagodas. Many also contain significant numbers of veteran trees.

**Planned enclosure** – a regular geometric pattern of fields with straight boundaries typically associated with a network of straight roads and dispersed farmsteads. These field systems were generally laid out in the period between the later 17th and 19th centuries. Although some can be attributed to the Parliamentary Enclosure movement, others were created through private agreements between improving landowners. In Shropshire, they largely occur in relation to areas of former common land, although in some instances similar enclosure patterns were produced by the ‘improvement’ earlier field systems in the 18th and 19th century.

**Planned woodland** – woods with regular boundaries, which in most instances have been planted.

**Prehistory** – The period of human history preceding the advent of written records. In southern Britain it is broadly subdivided into the Palaeolithic (3.5 million years BP - 10,000 BC), Mesolithic (10,000 - 4000 BC), Neolithic (4000 - 2300 BC), Bronze Age (2300 - 700 BC) and Iron Age (700 BC - AD43).

**Rectilinear fields** – field systems with a regular form and predominantly straight boundaries (see also planned enclosure).

**Rough grazing** – areas associated with poor soils, which are also characterised by low intensity grazing of unimproved or semi-improved grassland, moorland or heathland.

**Smallholdings** – see encroachments above.

**Sub-regular fields** – field systems with predominantly curving or irregular boundaries. In many cases they will pre-date the 17th century, although encroachments established between the 16th to 18th century also tend to have an irregular form.

**Tree cover** – the overall pattern of woodlands and hedgerow trees within a given landscape type.

**Veteran tree** – a tree that is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition.

**Waste** – unoccupied and uncultivated land, often applied to areas of medieval common rough pasture.

**Wood pasture** – a land use combining trees and grazing animals (stock or deer). Often the trees are old, at low density and managed through pollarding. The underlying herbage, together with open glades occupied by scrub and rough vegetation, provides the pasture component.

# Further information

## **The Shropshire Character Framework**

For further information about the Shropshire Character Framework, or to obtain a copy of the information relating to a specific area, please visit our website, following links to 'landscape':-

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/sustainability.nsf](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/sustainability.nsf)

Alternatively, you can contact the Sustainability Group:-

Telephone:- (01743) 252562

Email:- [sustainability@shropshire-cc.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@shropshire-cc.gov.uk)

## **Landscape Character Assessment.**

For an introduction to Landscape Character Assessment see:-

The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage. 2002.  
Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland. Wetherby. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Further information about Landscape Character Assessment, together with an electronic copy of the above publication and subsequent Topic Papers, can be obtained from:-

[www.landscapecharacter.org.uk](http://www.landscapecharacter.org.uk)

## Historic Landscape Characterisation

For an introduction to Historic Landscape Characterisation, together with examples of how it is being used to manage the historic environment, see:-

Clark, J., Darlington, J and Fairclough, G. 2004. Using Historic Landscape Characterisation: English Heritages review of HLC Applications 2002-03. Lancaster. English Heritage & Lancashire County Council.

Further information about Historic Landscape Characterisation, together with electronic copy of the above publication, can be obtained from English Heritage's website:-

[www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

Follow links to 'Research & Conservation', 'Conservation', 'Archaeology & Buildings' and 'Promoting Characterisation'.

The Shropshire Character Framework was produced in partnership with:-





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