

## Wetland Enclosure

### *Areas within this Zone*

*'Junction 33 Meadows, Catcliffe', 'Kilnhurst Meadow Land'*

### *Summary of Dominant Character*



**Figure 1: 'Blue Man's Bower' a medieval moated enclosure near Catcliffe lies within seasonally flooded grasslands.**

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This zone, which is comparatively small in area, is characterised by low relief alluvial landscapes prone to seasonal flooding. The vast majority of the zone consists of enclosed landscapes although within this there are often large areas of fairly open land with few divisions. Parts of the zone contain regular drainage ditches. These areas are under a mixture of arable cultivation although some are utilised as areas of pasture, whilst others support scrub vegetation and woodland.

This zone lies within the historic floodplain of the rivers Rother and Don. Most landscapes are essentially 20<sup>th</sup> century in origin and have resulted from the alteration of earlier enclosed meadowland landscapes (locally known as 'ings') that have been drained, agglomerated or removed from industrial uses. Some relict features can be located.

### ***Relationships with Adjacent Character Zones***

Both the character areas within this zone represent the only stretches of the historic valley floors of the rivers Don and Rother not currently characterised by industrial, extractive, post industrial or urban development. As in Sheffield, alluvial landscapes have proved historically highly attractive locations for urban development, first by the opportunities provided to harness the power of flowing water (from the medieval period onwards), and later by the advantages of large areas of flat open land and developing bulk (canal and later rail) transport systems that took advantage of the gentle gradients into Sheffield.

The valley floor areas are also associated with the sites of former coal mines, particularly along the Rother Valley, where much of the historic meadowland areas were destroyed by opencast coal mining in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Where meadow land has been enclosed, there are often significant similarities in boundary formation compared with adjacent areas of 'Surveyed Enclosure'. Systems of drainage are often laid out in a regular pattern along straight field boundaries creating a landscape similar to the regular enclosures of surveyed enclosure.

### ***Inherited Character***

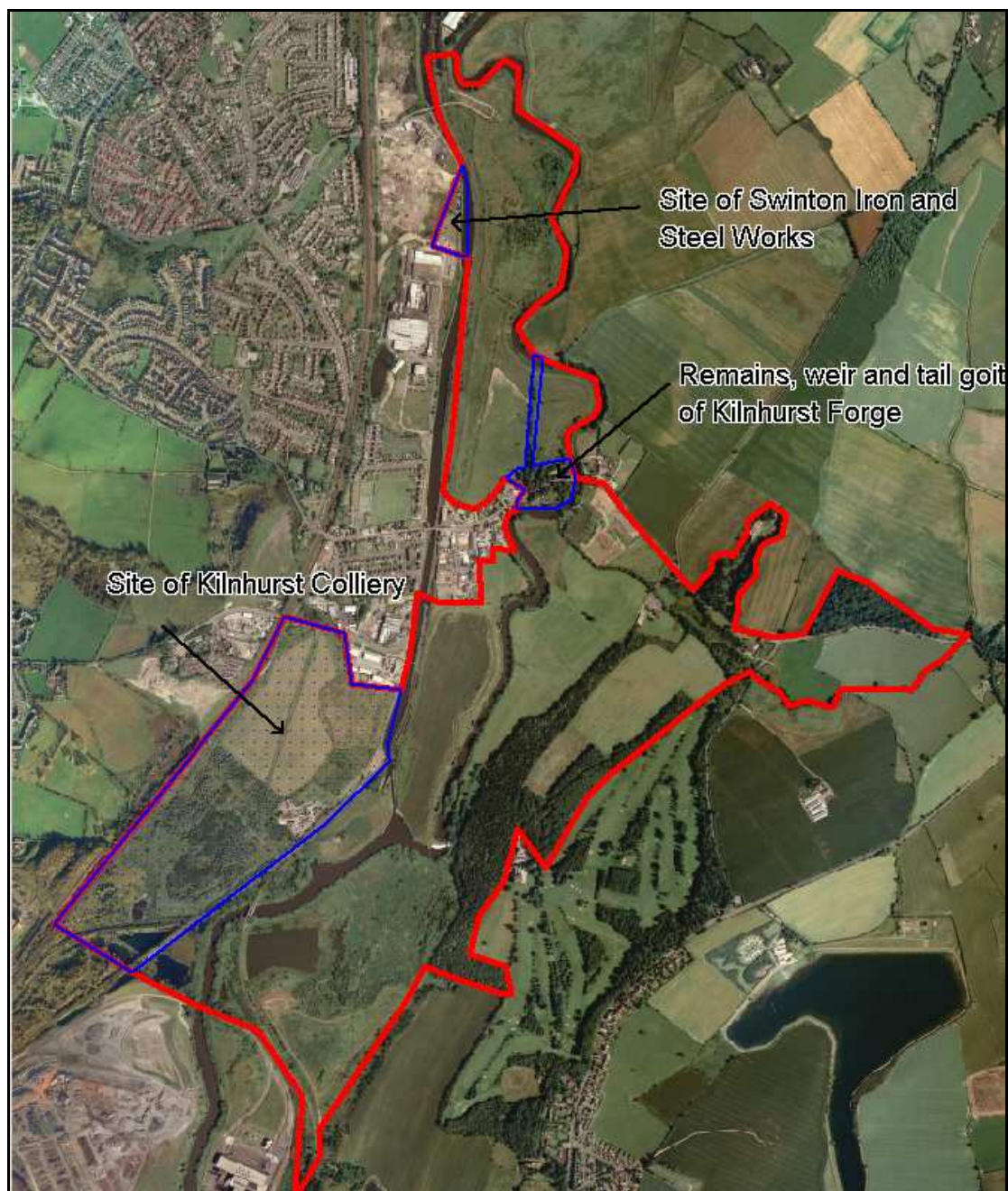
Prior to its industrial development, much of this area was marked by the Ordnance Survey as *liable to flooding*. This flooding, which through its deposition of many layers of alluvial silts, influenced their flat valley bottom landforms is likely to have influenced their historic use as meadow land. Flood plains were eminently suitable for hay making as their propensity to flooding made them simultaneously unsuitable for arable cultivation and highly fertile, due to regular deposits of alluvium. In the medieval period, meadow is considered to have been an essential part of the mix of farmland. Rackham (1986, 332) describes it as providing winter feed for animals during the months when pasture grasslands (kept for grazing) were less productive.

The 'Kimberworth Meadow Land' character area (figure 1) contains a number of relict landscape features which indicate the industrial influences acting on valley floor areas in the post medieval period. The area includes the sites of Swinton Iron and Steel Works (HSY3896), first depicted in 1851 built alongside the South Yorkshire Navigation channel and later a part of Baker and Bessemer Ltd (Munford 2003, 140-143) - the site was cleared between 1967 and 1986; Kilnhurst Forge of which parts of the site including races and weir survive to give partial legibility (HSY 3952) of the water powered tilt forge in operation by 1728 (Raistrick and Allen 1939, 175); and Kilnhurst Colliery, which operated from 1858-1986 (Taylor 2001, 216) its site now cleared and covered with scrub vegetation.

The 'Junction 33 Meadows' character area, represents a small relict area of meadowland. This landscape provides a unique impression of seasonally flooded meadow land along the course of the river Rother through South Yorkshire. A landscape that was to be found much more extensively before flood defence and opencast mining led to the canalisation of so much of its course. The Rother at this point appears to have become a braided channel, with relict courses still evident around the main channel which is now retained by large flood banks. The area also includes the Scheduled Ancient Monument *Blue Man's Bower* (SMR 260) a medieval moated site with well preserved ditches and possibly associated with an outer moat and fishponds.

### ***Later Characteristics***

Boundary loss has impacted on many of the rural character zones within the district of Rotherham in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 'Wetland Enclosure' zone is no exception to this and, as with other zones, this loss is more prevalent in the east of the district. The 'Junction 33 Meadows' character area takes its name from the Junction of the M1 motorway with the A630 Sheffield Parkway which is superimposed upon it. The area is also the home to a massive electricity substation linking Sheffield and Rotherham to the National Grid.



**Figure 2: Relict industrial features in the 'Kilnhurst Meadows' Character Area. Note the straight channel of the South Yorkshire Navigation dug in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century running to the west of the character area north of the colliery site. HEC data © SYAS; Cities Revealed aerial photography © the Geoinformation Group, 1999.**

***Bibliography***

- Rackham, O.                      1986    *The History of the Countryside*. London: Dent.
- Raistrick, A. and Allen, E.      1939    The South Yorkshire Ironmasters (1690-1750). *The Economic History Review* Volume 9, No 2 (May 1939).
- Taylor, W.                        2001    *South Yorkshire Pits*. Barnsley: Wharncliffe Books.