

## **Strip Enclosure**

### ***Areas within this Zone***

*'Onesacre and Worrall former townfields', 'Moss Valley Countryside',  
'Grenoside / Birley Countryside*

### ***Summary of Dominant Character***

This zone is dominated by agricultural landscapes enclosed in semi-regular patterns. Surveyed enclosure boundaries, such as the type characteristic of Parliamentary Awards, are in the most part absent from this zone (although some small areas are included), as are landscapes, originally enclosed in a piecemeal fashion but later subject to significant influences from adjacent urban / industrial landscape zones.

Semi regular patterns of strip fields have resulted from the piecemeal enclosure of open field arable systems (see figure). In the medieval period, large open areas of land were cultivated in long thin strips that would be ploughed separately by oxen into ridges. Often, the practice of turning the plough team at the end of each strip would produce a characteristic curving pattern. This pattern was sometimes fossilised in later piecemeal enclosure boundaries laid out around individual and groups of strips (Taylor 1975, 78-80).

This zone occurs principally to the east of the city, where the agricultural landscape (where it has not been overbuilt) has seen higher levels of boundary loss. This is likely to be due to the lower altitude of this side of the city making it more suitable for arable cultivation.

### ***Inherited Character***

The two types of piecemeal enclosure pattern found within Sheffield ('Assarted Enclosure' and 'Strip Enclosure') are closely related to different settlement patterns; older dispersed settlements are generally found within areas of assarted enclosure, whilst nucleated settlements are related to areas of former common field agriculture. This relationship has long been recognised in landscape studies as a classic example of the relationship between social and landscape patterning (see for example the distinction between 'Ancient' and 'Planned' countryside in Rackham (1986, 4-5), or that drawn between a 'nucleated' and 'dispersed' settlement zones in Roberts and Wrathmell (2000). From data collected for the urbanised area of Sheffield it seems that while a frontier between these two zones can be detected (represented by the distribution of the 'Assarted' and 'Strip' enclosure zones, there is a significant blurring of the two types.

The 'Strip Enclosure' zone is generally to be found to the east and south of the city. Nucleated villages with elements of planning characterised the mid

19<sup>th</sup> century landscape at Sheffield / Little Sheffield, Chapeltown, Ecclesfield, Attercliffe, Handsworth / Handsworth Woodhouse, Beighton, Mosborough, Norton, Greenhill, Tinsley and Dore. All of these villages were associated with large systems of former open fields. Most are likely to have been operating three fields - a pattern common across the English Midlands

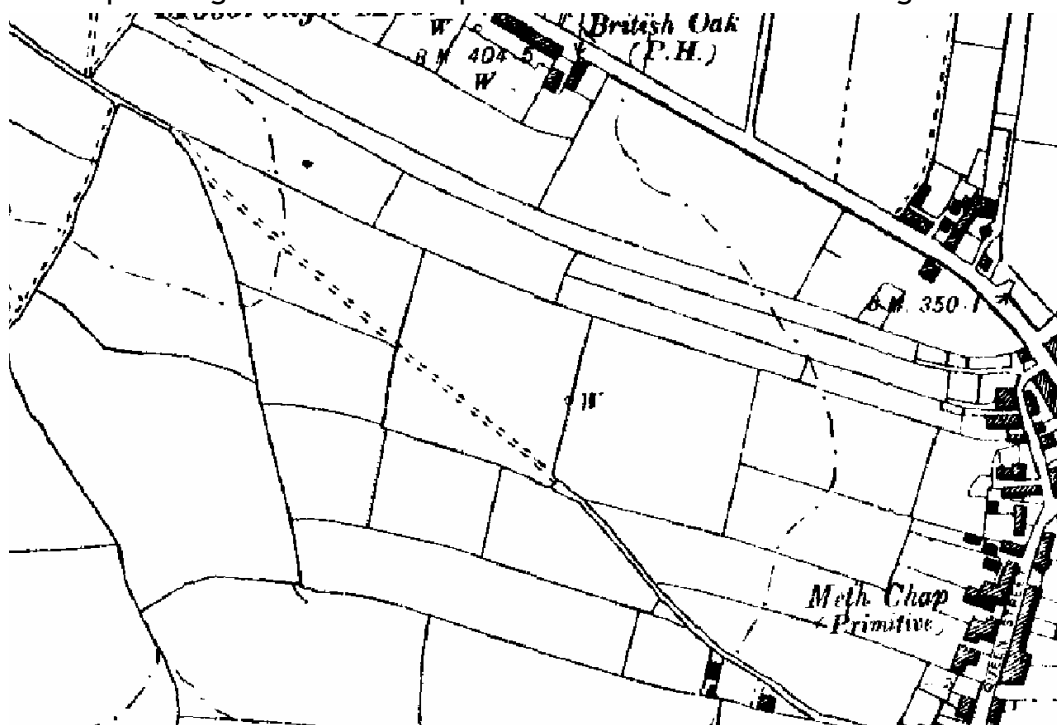
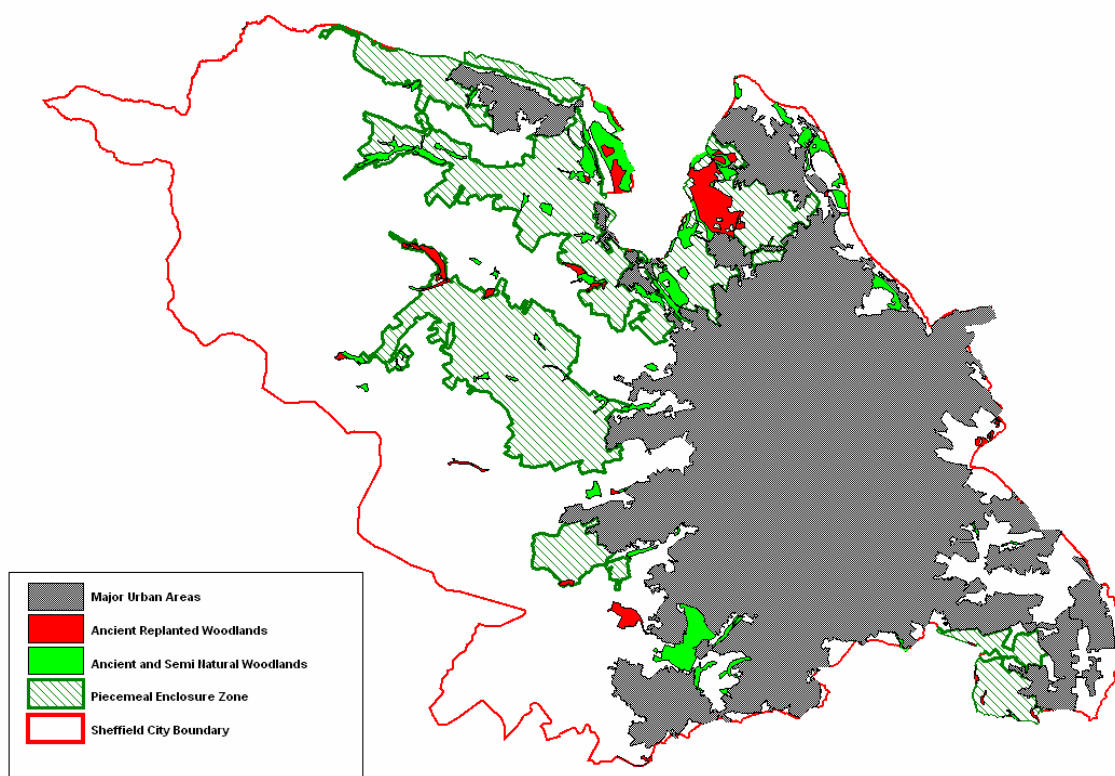


Figure 1: The enclosure pattern surviving in this area around the 'Bridle-Stile' footpath in Mosborough (running NW-SE across the fields) dates to the piecemeal enclosure of strip units from an open field before the Parliamentary Enclosure of remaining common arable in the parish in 1796 (see Fig 2 in Stroud 1996). Cities Revealed aerial photography © the GeoInformation Group, 2002© and database right Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Ltd (All rights reserved 2008) Licence numbers 000394 and TP0024

(see Hall 2001, 13-15). Only a small proportion of this land remains in agricultural cultivation- mostly in the 'Moss Valley' and 'Grenoside and Birley' areas. Agricultural intensification has led to some low levels of boundary loss across much of this zone although some characteristic enclosures and boundaries remain, most notably around Bridle Stile near Mosborough (fig 1) where some very long and narrow strips are preserved. Such examples provide strong legible evidence for the medieval cultivation methods of open fields. The tradition of open field agriculture associated with nucleated settlement appears to have functioned on an increasingly small scale as the landscape gains altitude to the west of the district. Whilst assarted enclosures associated with dispersed settlement become the norm to the west of the city there are still what appear to be small scale common arable systems based on one or two 'town fields' around settlements such as Low Bradfield, Onesacre and Dungworth. From examining characterisation records for past landscape use within the presently urbanised area of the city we can interpret a similar pattern of small scale townfield agriculture extending into the present urban area of the city as far east as Parson Cross and Wincobank, and as far south as the River Sheaf with small a small nucleated settlement associated with a townfield at Crookes.



**Figure 2: The two piecemeal enclosure character zones (Assarted and Strip Enclosure) include most of the City of Sheffield's ancient woodlands. Most of these woodlands are to be found on steeply sloping land historically difficult to cultivate. Image © SYAS 2007. Ancient Woodland data © English Nature (used with permission).**

Traces of the ancient woodlands, from which much of this enclosed landscape was assarted, can be seen across this zone and the assarted enclosure zone, particularly to the west and north of the city. These woods typically survive on steep slopes where land has been impractical to clear. The distribution of ancient woodlands is clearly related to these piecemeal enclosure zones (figure 2). Where these woodlands have not been replanted during the past 150 years they generally have many legible archaeological features relating to their management for timber, mineral extraction and charcoal burning (Jones 1989). In other character zones, surviving ancient woodland areas are generally to be found in areas formerly characterised by piecemeal enclosure.

### ***Later Characteristics***

There has been some boundary loss within the 'Strip Enclosure' zone but this has occurred on a less significant scale compared with land within the 'Agglomerated Enclosure' zone. The biggest influence on this process appears to be the dominant 20<sup>th</sup> century land use, with land suitable for intensive arable cultivation more likely to be subject to boundary loss.

Across the zone there has been modern expansion and alteration to the surviving farm buildings. This has often been in the form of the introduction of modern corrugated shed-type barns, more suited to the mechanised agricultural practices of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Bibliography***

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