

## Undulating Ancient Farmlands

### Key Characteristics

- Undulating arable landscape
- Villages with substantial churches and old houses, often timber-framed and thatched.
- Hamlets associated with small triangular greens or linear 'ends' and 'streets'.
- Dispersed farmsteads, often moated and with fine medieval and Tudor timber-framed and brick buildings .
- A predominantly irregular field pattern, but with some more regular units on the valley-side slopes
- Oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees
- Substantial open areas created for by post WWII agricultural improvement
- Studded with blocks of ancient woodland
- A large-scale landscape with long undulating open views. Trees, either in hedges or in woods, are always a prominent feature
- In the undulating landscape, crop production, especially oilseeds can be visually prominent.

### Location

This landscape type occurs on the north side of the middle Stour valley, around Glemsford and Long Melford, and to the south of the Bumpstead Brook near Steeple Bumpstead. It is characteristic of the undulating higher land above the valleys

**LDUs: 238.16** (Hartest), **238-124** (Glemsford), **194-46** (Long Melford), **346-139** (Stansted), **504-90** (Birdbrook), and **504-107** (Moyns Park)

### Geology, landform and soils

The elevated plateau of chalky clay till laid down by the Anglian glaciation is however much dissected by small valleys, giving a markedly undulating landscape, with some quite

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steep slopes. The sloping land, combined with the high chalk content of the glacial till, has created a large area of clay soils of the Hanslope series that are good for arable farming, (in contrast to more the difficult to cultivate Beccles series found on the clay plateau of High Suffolk).

### **Archaeology**

Prehistoric barrows (burial mounds) may have existed at Birdbrook Hall and at Chadwells Farm, also in Birdbrook, a Roman cemetery was found in 1779. There have also been finds of prehistoric and Roman artefacts in the Glem valley at Boxted and nearby, in Stanstead, a Roman villa has been partially excavated (one of a number in the vicinity of the Roman settlement underlying Long Melford).

At Colt's Hall in Cavendish there is a faint earthwork that may be the remains of a small Norman ringwork. The site has yielded Saxo-Norman Thetford Ware, as well as medieval pottery, and may have been built by the family of Roger de St Germain, one of the tenants of the powerful de Clare family in 1086. The family were still there in the 12th century, being succeeded by the de Greys in the 14th century (hence its alternative name of Greys Manor) and the Colts in the late 15th century (Sir George Colt was knighted at his house called Colts Hall by Queen Elizabeth in her Progress of 1578).

The house called Chipley Abbey in Poslingford is on the site Chipley Priory, a house of Augustinian Canons founded before 1235. Always a small priory, it was annexed to Stoke-by-Clare College in 1455, but its chapel was still in use in 1535. The chapel was later used as a cow-house before being demolished in 1818. The existing house incorporates a small part of the west range of the monastery and is partly surrounded by a moat; the monastic fishponds also survive.

To the east of Birdbrook, the area is crossed by the earthworks of the dismantled Colne Valley and Halstead Railway running between Haverhill and Chappel – opened in 1860, it was closed just over a century later in 1965. The tree-covered line remains a prominent landscape feature.

### **Settlement**

The area contains a number of villages of moderate size – Stanstead, Poslingford, Boxford, Hundon, Hartest, Somerton and Birdbrook – as well as five larger ones on its edge: Long Melford, Glemsford, Cavendish, Clare and Steeple Bumpstead. All were in existence by 1086 and the sizeable endowment of Hundon church, together with its exceptionally large parish, suggest that it was the site of a Late Saxon minster church. The discovery in 1687 of an apparent Viking burial of c.AD 953 in the churchyard strengthens this possibility. The well-endowed Domesday church at Hartest could similarly have been a minster, though Hartest is also unusual in that the medieval church is situated at the south-east corner of a triangular green of about 2 acres. It is first recorded as *Herdherst* ['herd or stag wood'] around 1030, when it already belonged to the abbey at Ely, having been given by the parents of Abbot Leofsige around AD 990.

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Glemsford is situated on a spur between the Stour and the River Glem, and has evolved from the knitting together of five settlement clusters – the church area, a small triangular green called Fair Green (where a fair for ‘pedlery and toys’ was held every 24th June) with a northern extension called Brook Street, another triangular green called Tye Green and a southern street extension along Skates Hill. It was an important centre for the late medieval and Tudor wool trade, with a large number of clothiers. It even produced its own distinctive undyed white cloths called *Glainesfordes*. The woollen cloth trade had declined greatly by 1824 when a silk mill was set up here. The textile industry was further supplemented in 1844 by the establishment of a horsehair-seating and cocoa-nut-fibre matting works by H. Kolle & Sons of London. Glemsford’s industrial portfolio also included a soap and candles works, brick works, and a flax factory. The silk works remain, but the three-storey horsehair factory has been converted to housing.

The steeple of Steeple Bumpstead is not a spire, but a reference to its substantial, late 11th-century, church tower – it was *Bumstede ad Turrim* [‘Bumpstead at the tower’] in 1259. The settlement grew up beside the Bumpstead Brook and the second part of the name means ‘the place at the reeds’ (Old English *bune* + *steda*). In area, it is the smaller of the two Bumpsteads and was sometimes called Parva or Little Bumpstead. Although not officially a market town, its inhabitants were wealthy enough to build a fine Moot Hall in the late 16th century.

In addition to the villages, there is a small scattering of hamlets with ‘green’, ‘end’ and ‘street’ names, such as Cross Green in Hartest, Bulley Green in Poslingford, Finkle Green in Birdbrook, Fenstead End in Boxted, Mile End in Hartest, Wales End in Cavendish, and New Street, Plum Street and Brook Street in Glemsford. The greens tend to be small and triangular, while the ends and street are usually linear roadside settlements. There are also a number of dispersed farmsteads, some of which can be shown to be of some antiquity. Clopton Hall in Poslingford is recorded as *Cloptuna* in Domesday Book and Houghton Hall in Cavendish is recorded there as *Hoketona*. Houghton Hall later acquired the status symbol of a moat and medieval moats surround a number of the other dispersed farmsteads: Moat Farm in Boxted, the Old Rectory and Moat Farm in Birdbrook, and Latchley’s Farm (named after Henry de Lacheleye, 1310) in Steeple Bumpstead. There are also the remains of a moat around the grand (Listed Grade I) 16th/early 17th-century house of timber and brick built by Sir Thomas Gent and his son Henry at Moyns Park in Steeple Bumpstead, though the property takes its name from the family of Robert le Moigne, who was there in 1254.

Gifford’s Hall in Shimpling formerly lay on the edge of a small triangular green and was recorded as *Gyffords Farme* in 1580, taking its name from the family of Robert Giffard who was living in 1327. New House Farm in Poslingford, despite its name, is also an old property – it is referred to in 1572 as ‘a messuage newly built called the Newhowse’. Even then, it was not totally new because it was built on the site of the manor of *Bustalmynes*, named after John Burstemyn who was also living in 1327. The property was further enhanced in the early 18th century by the Golding family, who constructed a garden canal and avenues within their small park there. Kiln Farm at the northern end of Long Melford (recorded as *The Kell Home Stall* in 1613 and as *Kilne ffarme* in 1660/1) probably takes its

name from a kiln producing bricks for the nearby 16<sup>th</sup>-century mansion of Kentwell Hall, the fuel coming from the adjacent Kiln Grove (*The Kell Grove* in 1613).

There is a wealth of medieval and Tudor timber-framed and brick buildings in this area, as can be seen around the edges of the very picturesque green at Hartest and at Steeple Bumpstead.

### **Landholding and enclosure pattern**

This is predominantly an area of 'ancient enclosure', with an irregular pattern of fields bounded by large, long-established hedges. However in Glemsford it was noted as late as 1855 that 'Part of the parish is still in large *open fields*' and the tithe map of 1840 records a number of one-acre strips in large fields called *Gravel Pit Common, Longland Common, Great and Little Seldom Field, and Great Cobs Croft* running up the valley side in the south-west corner of the parish. The common-field strips have disappeared without a formal enclosure award, but this is still a large, open, arable area.

### **Trees and Woodland cover**

The area is well stocked with ancient woods. Stanstead Great Wood, at 55ha (137 acres) is the largest, but there are many others of moderate size: Hundon Thicks; Easty Wood in Cavendish; King's Wood, Long Wood and Shadowbush Wood in Poslingford; Asgood Wood, Park Wood, Lownage Wood, Longley Wood and Oak Grove in Boxted; Court Wood and Lumpit Wood in Glemsford (both coppice woods in 1840). Many of the groves on the Kentwell Hall estate in Long Melford, appear on a map of 1613: Kiln Grove (*The Kell Grove*), Cold Grove (*Ten Acre Spring*), Ashen Grove (*The Cock shot spring*), Long Spong (*Puttock Row Spring*) and Blakes Ley Grove (*Blakes Grove*). These woods are usually situated on the tops of the more poorly-drained clay hills. The long-enclosed nature of the landscape has helped to preserve the woods by excluding the grazing livestock that would otherwise have diminished the resource.

There are alder shelterbelts and plantations associated with the 20 acre vineyard at Giffords Hall in Shimpling.

### **Visual experience**

In general there are long open views across this undulating landscape, trees, either in hedges or in woods, always a prominent feature. This is in contrast with the plateau claylands of High Suffolk where the views although open, are gently rolling farmland on which woodland is almost entirely absent. Medium to large sub-regular fields with oaks and some elm in the surrounding hedges, which are generally low.

Boxted has poplars on rough ground in the middle of the settlement and is surrounded by sloping arable with large isolated houses. Flint and brick walls, elm and sunken lanes with new hawthorn hedges are local features.

Around Steeple Bumpstead there is a mix of well maintained but gappy hedges, some roadside trees and small, often coniferous, plantations, with a few pockets of pasture used

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as horse paddocks. Other tree species include ash, beech and oak, with willow on the boundary near Steeple Bumpstead, where there is a small watercourse, and some untrimmed elm hedges. Moyne Park lies at the heart of a stud farm estate and is not visible from any public roads, but there are PROWs through the parkland. It is also very well screened by judiciously placed tree belts and plantations, within which arable fields are tucked in, with no pasture visible. Around the boundary there are conservation headlands in the medium size, regular arable fields, with low, narrow hedges and ditches to the roadside.

### **Condition**

The historic pattern of field boundaries has been degraded through 20<sup>th</sup>-century agricultural rationalisation that has resulted in a large number of hedges being removed.

## **Land management issues and options**

### **Geology, soils, landform and drainage**

### **Archaeology**

- Conservation of upstanding heritage assets
- Identify priority sites for arable reversion to protect buried heritage assets

Opportunities to target arable reversion or shallow cultivation on significant archaeological sites

### **Settlement and the built environment**

- Maintain and enhance the landscape setting through sensitive and appropriate development control

### **Landholding and enclosure pattern**

- Maintain the historic pattern of field boundaries and ditches

There is considerable potential for restoration and replanting of hedges in this landscape. There are also opportunities to support the management of woodlands and reduce the isolation of woodland blocks within this landscape. The undulating nature of this landscape means that carefully located woodland and hedge planting could have a significant landscape impact over a wide area.

### **Trees and woodland cover**

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- Maintain the balance of tree cover
- Woodland management - encourage and support the removal of conifers from ancient woodland sites as well as appropriate deer management to maintain the condition of these important historic landscape features
- There are opportunities to create new woodlands within this landscape, if the location is chosen to reflect the local landscape character and to avoid archaeological sites

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