

## Rolling Estate Farmlands

### Key Characteristics

- Gently sloping valley sides and plateau fringes
- Generally deep loamy soils
- An organic pattern of fields modified by later realignment
- Important foci for early settlement
- Coverts and plantations with some ancient woodlands
- Landscape parks with a core of wood pasture
- Location for mineral workings and related activity, especially in the Gipping valley

### Location

This landscape character type is found in a series of valley-side locations in south and east Suffolk:

- The upper Stour valley and its tributaries, from Great Wratting upstream to Great Bradley and the county boundary, and from the western outskirts of Haverhill to Withersfield and the county boundary (it forms the valley-side component to Undulating Estate Farmlands and Undulating Ancient Farmlands)
- The middle Stour valley in the Long Melford area (where it forms the valley-side component to Ancient Rolling Farmlands)
- The east side of the Gipping valley and its tributaries from Sproughton upstream to Coddensham and Hemingstone (where it forms the valley-side component to Ancient Estate Claylands)
- A narrow strip that runs along the south side of the Belstead Brook and then along the coastal edge of the Shotley peninsula to Brantham on the Stour estuary, including the river valley around Holbrook (where it forms the sloping edge component to Ancient Estate Farmlands)
- The east side of the lower Deben valley in the Campsea Ash/Rendlesham area (where it forms the valley-side component to Plateau Estate Farmlands)

## Geology, landform and soils

These are gently sloping valley sides and plateau fringes with loamy or silty soils derived from glacial outwash and till deposits. The soils in this landscape are mainly the deep, well-drained, clayey loams of the Ludford or Melford series. The only significant exception to this pattern is a relatively small area around Coddenham where the soils are the much chalkier loams of the Swaffham Prior series, which are prone to drought.

The Chantry Sewage Works at Bobbitshole in the valley of the Belstead Brook is the type site for the Ipswichian Interglacial, the greatest and warmest interglacial stage during the whole of the Pleistocene. This occurred about 120,000 years ago and saw elephants, lions and hippos in the Suffolk landscape.

## Landholding and enclosure pattern

Although there was some parliamentary enclosure of common-field arable in the upper Stour valley area, the amounts were small and its landscape effect was limited. Much of the landscape was already enclosed by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, as is shown on a 1735 map of the Thurlows. In the Melford area there is a high correlation between the fields shown on late-16<sup>th</sup>- and early-17<sup>th</sup>-century maps and those existing now or recorded on 19<sup>th</sup>-century maps. In both areas, and in the Gipping valley, the estate character is muted, limited to occasional straightening and realignment of a wider landscape of ancient enclosure. Straight boundaries are more of a feature of the Shotley peninsula, partly due to the efforts of the extensive Woolverstone estate in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but even more to mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century field amalgamations and re-orderings.

Maps of 1600-1 for areas adjacent to the east side of the Deben indicate the presence of numerous irregular closes and meadows intermixed with some common fields. The common fields had disappeared by the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the pattern of fields here is now a mixture of old meadows, similar to those shown on the old maps, and more regular units related to the adjoining estate landscapes. Comparison with estate maps of the 1730s indicates that road lines have been changed and straightened and that tree belts surrounds many of the fields are a post-1730s development, probably the result of landscaping works by the Rendlesham estate in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – certainly they were there by the 1880s.

## Settlement

The valley-side locations of this landscape type, with their combination of access to water and arable potential, attracted settlement from an early date. Striking cropmarks at Long Melford seem to show a long Neolithic burial enclosure or mound overlain by a circular Bronze Age one – this suggests that there were farming communities in this part of the Stour valley that were sufficiently settled to undertake substantial monumental works by the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. There is certainly evidence of settlements in all the valleys by the Iron Age. Soon after the Roman conquest in AD 43 a Roman fort was established in the Gipping valley at a place then known by the British name of *Combetovium* ('at the confluence'). *Combetovium* later developed into a small town with villas (the Roman equivalent of country houses) in its vicinity. The site now lies under fields between

Baylham Mill and the later country house of Shrubland Hall. Another important Roman settlement, probably urban, underlies the medieval market town of Long Melford. It too was surrounded by villas and the modern town is surrounded by the substantial county houses of Melford Hall, Kentwell Hall and (formerly) Acton Place.

The Venerable Bede, in his early history of the English, states that the 7th-century East Anglian kings had a *vicus regius* or 'royal residence' at Rendlesham. The location of this is uncertain, but a 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition maintained that Naunton Hall stood on its site. This lies a short distance from the medieval church, which is probably significant because Bede's reference is in connection with the baptism of an Essex king at Rendlesham. There must have been a church there then and it most likely lay near to the king's hall. Rendlesham's next 'high period' was in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when a park was developed around a succession of mansions of the Hamilton and Thellusson families (Rendlesham White House, Rendlesham House and Rendlesham Hall); the last being demolished in 1949 after wartime requisition.

The Shrubland estate in Barham and Coddenham dominates that part of the Gipping valley. A deer park was already in existence there by 1668, but was enlarged when a new hall was built in the 1770s for John Bacon. In 1789 the new owner, Sir William Middleton, employed the landscape designer Humphry Repton to produce one of his first 'Red Books' for the park. The Italianate gardens were developed by Sir William Fowle Middleton and his wife from 1830, with the famous staired 'Descent' being designed in 1852 by the architect Charles Barry, inspired by that at the Villa d'Este near Rome, but certainly not copying it.

The sand and gravel resources of the Gipping valley have been extensively exploited leaving a series of large lakes, mainly in the adjacent Valley Meadowlands landscape, but also including the extensive Broomfield Pit workings in Barham. The outcrops of chalk on the valley sides were exploited as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, resulting in substantial pits in Claydon and Coddenham. Much of the material was converted into lime for agricultural or building use, but there was also a whiting (powdered chalk for whitewash and other uses) manufactory in Claydon.

At Bramford there is an important early industrial complex between Papermill Lane and the River Gipping. The eponymous papermill was functioning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but was joined by the world's first purpose-built superphosphate fertiliser factory in 1851. Edward Packard had started a factory processing phosphatic nodules or 'coprolites' (literally 'fossil dung' but actually more diverse in origin) from the east Suffolk Crag deposits at the docks in Ipswich in the 1840s (hence Coprolite Street in Ipswich) but acidic fumes dictated a move outside the town. His Bramford Works were joined by Joseph Fison's Eastern Union Works in 1858, both producing the fertilisers that did much to revolutionise agriculture in East Anglia and beyond. The firms were later amalgamated under the Fison name, and are now part of Yara UK Ltd.

The Woolverstone estate dominated much of the Shotley peninsula from its foundation by William Berners, a wealthy Londoner, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century until its sale in 1937. Berners greatly enlarged the park and commissioned John Johnson to rebuild the Hall in fashionable white brick in 1776. A later generation employed William Andrews Nesfield to design its Victorian garden. Since 1951 the Hall has been occupied by schools. The

Berners family also commissioned the only complete building by Sir Edwin Lutyens in Suffolk – built in 1901 as a residence and chapel for the Sisters of St Peter's Community, St Peter's Home is now known as Woolverstone House. Nearby is Freston Tower, an imposing but enigmatic red-brick look-out tower of six storeys overlooking the Orwell estuary. Recent tree-ring dating indicates that it was built c.1578/9, probably by Thomas Gooding, a wealthy Ipswich merchant. It was possibly built to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's visit to Ipswich in 1579, or perhaps just as a celebration of Gooding's wealth and status – he was granted a coat-of-arms in 1576 and the tower formerly had heraldic plaster plaques on its exterior. Appropriately, this landmark building is now owned by the Landmark Trust.

A string of substantial Tudor and Jacobean houses overlook the Stour estuary on the southern side of the Shotley peninsula – Erwarton Hall (late Tudor red-brick mansion of Sir Philip Parker was partly rebuilt in 1858, also a notable Tudor red-brick gatehouse with a vaulted roof and pinnacles), Crowe Hall in Stutton (Jacobean building completely redesigned c.1824-26 as a stuccoed and crenellated mansion for George Reade by Richard Beales of Lawford, Essex; extensive modern gardens) and Stutton Hall (timber-framed mid-Tudor house of Sir Edmund Jermy altered in the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century to give it a red-brick facing and west extensions; Tudor crenellated and pinnacled red-brick walled garden with an arched gateway).

At Shotley Gate at the south-east tip of the peninsula has a long military and naval history. Two Martello Towers were built here in the Napoleonic wars and in 1902 a Royal Naval hospital was built there. In 1903 H.M.S. Ganges, a wooden ship, was anchored there as a training establishment for boy entrants to the Royal Navy; this establishment was transferred to the shore in 1905 and continued in operation until 1976. There is now a large boating marina at Shotley Gate. Boating is also an important feature of the picturesque hamlet of Pin Mill on the northern shore of the peninsula.

Exposures of clay along the peninsula edge were exploited for brick-making in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, e.g. the Holbrook Creek Brick Works, the Shotley Brick Works, the Hare's Creek Brick Works in Shotley and the Bourne Hill Brick Works in Wherstead.

In the mid-1970s about 400 acres of a valley at Holbrook were drowned to form the Alton Water Reservoir, which is now the largest area of inland water in Suffolk. This replaced a linear 18<sup>th</sup>-century lake in the park of Tattlingstone Place, as well as drowning the sites of Tattlingstone Hall, Crag Hall, Alton Hall and Stutton Mill. As well as supplying drinking water for about 200,000 people in the Ipswich area, the reservoir is also an important recreational area.

Nearby, a smaller body of water lies within a partially wooded environment at Holbrook Gardens. This had been developed as a parkland lake by 1766, when it was owned by Thomas Staunton, M.P. for Ipswich, who had taken over a mansion originally built for John Clench, Queen Elizabeth's 'good judge'. The property was developed into a large wooded park with radiating walkways by 1783, but later lost its mansion and became a satellite pleasure ground for the Berners family of Woolverstone Hall.

At Long Melford, the long main street of the town gives way to a large green at its north end, with the cathedral-like parish church at its high end and the park of Melford Hall on

one side. The imposing red-brick mansion of Sir William Cordell, the Tudor Master of the Rolls, replaced an earlier manor house of the abbots of Bury St Edmunds. The abbots established the market in Melford in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and were probably responsible for the orderly arrangement of house plots around the margin of the green. Beyond the green is the park of Kentwell Hall, the moated Tudor mansion of the Clopton family.

Like the Gipping valley, there was a certain amount of industry around Melford – it had a thriving cloth industry in the Middle Ages (which provided much of the funding for the fine church) as well as corn mills, a paper mill, maltings, an iron foundry and horse-hair fabric and coconut matting factories, but most of these ceased to operate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Settlement in the upper Stour valley is mainly concentrated in a string of villages close to the river. Notable among them is Little Thurlow, the centre of an estate formed by Sir Stephen Soame, Lord Mayor of London 1598-9. His brick school and almshouses remain, but his mansion burnt down in 1809, to be replaced by the existing Little Thurlow Hall in the 1840s. The layout of its splendid early-18<sup>th</sup>-century formal garden, shown in detail on a map of 1735, survives largely intact, including the long garden canal.

### **Trees and woodland cover**

The Deben valley parcels of this landscape have an obvious estate character with plantations and coverts very prominent. This is typical of the late and often private enclosures of the sands of east Suffolk. However in the west around Long Melford and on the upper Stour the character is very different. The landscapes are generally 'ancient' in feel, so there are ancient woodland blocks on the edges of the landscape or framing them, and the estate character is muted but still present.

### **Visual experience**

In general this rolling landscape with a combination of woodlands that have a tidy estate countryside feel, reminiscent of the muted estate pattern of the Undulating Estate Farmlands. On the Shotley peninsular and at Rendlesham however the form is more akin to the regimented pattern of the Plateau Estate Farmlands or Estate Sandlands.

### **Condition**

The influence of single estate ownership remains strong over much of this landscape, so the condition is often good despite the post war modification of the field patterns; In these areas hedges woods and trees are well maintained as is much of the built features of an estate landscape. However, in the east on the Shotley Peninsular and around Rendlesham there are areas where the pattern and features of the landscape are highly modified by agricultural improvement.