The Chase, the Hart and the Park

An exploration of the historic landscapes of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Edited by Katherine Barker

Based on papers given at a one-day seminar held in Sixpenny Handley in November 2006

With contributions by:
Katherine Barker, Gordon Le Pard, Caroline Cheeseman, Martin Green, John Gale and Dorothy Ireland

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Occasional Papers Series 1

The Chase, the Hart and the Park

An exploration of the historic landscapes of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Edited by Katherine Barker

based on papers given at a one-day seminar held in Sixpenny Handley in November 2006

With contributions by
Katherine Barker, Gordon Le Pard, Caroline Cheeseman, Martin Green, John Gale and Dorothy Ireland

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Occasional Papers Series 1

Published by Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

Frontispiece: The Chase, the Hart and the Park seminar speakers; left to right pictured outside Sixpenny Handley village hall are Martin Green, Katherine Barker, Caroline Cheeseman, Dorothy Ireland, Gordon Le Pard, Colin Anderson, Dick Potts (AONB & Seminar chairman), and John Gale.

Copies of this volume are available from the AONB Office.
4 Castle Street, Cranborne, BH21 5PZ.

Printed by East Dorset District Council
ISBN 978-0-9561131-0-8

Contents

List of Figures

List of Plates

Contributors

Dick Potts is Chairman of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Dick is from a farming background in North Yorkshire and read Zoology at the University of Durham where he went on to a PhD and later a DSc for studies on birds and pesticides. He joined the Game Conservancy Trust in 1968 and was Director of Research for twenty five years plus nine as Director General. He retired in 2002 when he became Chairman of the World Pheasant Association based at Fordingbridge, President of the Small Game Commission of the Conseil International de la Chasse based in Budapest and Vice President of the British Ornithologists Union. He is the world authority on the grey partridge.

Richard Burden is a landscape architect who was brought up in the Oxfordshire countryside and was amongst the first cohort to read Biology at Sussex University in 1965. He came to Dorset via University College London and Sheffield University where he worked for the County Council for over 25 years establishing country parks, coastal projects, and introducing ecological and landscape matters into the planning processes. He has held various roles regionally and nationally in the Landscape Institute, being elected the President 1997-99. He joined the academic staff of the School of Conservation Sciences at Bournemouth University in 1998 and took on the role of landscape and planning advisor to the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB in 2005. His wide ranging research interests cover the impacts of recreation on the countryside, landscape character assessment, Chesil Bank and the Fleet, and deer. He is a trustee of the Dorset Gardens Trust.

Katherine Barker is a historical geographer who has published a number of academic papers on various aspects of West Country landscape history. Her research interests are at present concentrated on seventh-century Wessex with particular reference to the career of Aldhelm of Malmesbury, first bishop of Sherborne, taking a fresh look at his literary legacy. Former Senior Lecturer at Bournemouth University, she is currently Hon. Editor of the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society and in April 2006 launched the Dorset County Boundary Survey combining county-based expertise in both archaeology and natural history. It was while working on a recent survey of the medieval deer parks for the AONB she noted the potential significance of the historic borderland running through the area thus designated.

Gordon Le Pard grew up in the New Forest and first learnt his archaeology from reading the works of Heywood Sumner and using them to explore both the New Forest and Cranborne Chase. The subject of Sumner's book of 1931, Local Papers archaeological and topographical Hampshire, Dorset & Wiltshire was – as he explains in the introduction – concerned 'with a District where three counties meet.' For many years Gordon has been working on a biographical study of Sumner and his influence on the development of modern archaeology. Gordon currently works with the Historic Environment Team for Dorset County Council.

Caroline Cheeseman grew up abroad coming to England in 1999. She read Biological Sciences at Merton College, Oxford and then, moving to the School of Geography, she completed a Masters in Human Geography. She has recently finished her DPhil on the dis-enfranchisement debate in Cranborne Chase, considering land management, crime, and hunting patterns in particular. She now works for the Oxford City and University Museums, including the Pitt-Rivers Museum.

Martin Green won the Pitt-Rivers award for independent archaeology in 1992 and has recently been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Reading. Martin lives on an isolated farm in the middle of Cranborne Chase as his family has for many generations. Over forty years, often on his own, he has systematically built up a picture of the ancient

landscape which, as Professor Richard Bradley recently noted, 'can hardly be matched anywhere else in the British Isles.' Martin wrote up this unique piece of research in *A Landscape Revealed; 10,000 Years on a Chalkland Farm* published in 2000. His latest collaborative work was recently published as a monograph by the University of Cambridge McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research (2007).

John Gale is a prehistorian originally from the Midlands and now Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Bournemouth University. In 1990 he joined the staff of what was then Bournemouth Polytechnic where he first came into real contact with – as he says the 'county whose landscape contains such wonderful prehistoric archaeology.' Since then, he has had the pleasure of introducing students on HND and BSc Archaeology courses at Bournemouth to many of the monuments of Dorset. John has carried out many seasons' excavations in Dorset, including major sites at Toller Porcorum and Knowlton and currently at High Lea Farm near Hinton Martell north of Wimborne. In 2003 Tempus published his highly-regarded *Prehistoric Dorset*.

Dorothy Ireland has been a member of the British Deer Society for over twenty years. She is at present Chairman of the Wessex Branch which covers Hampshire, Dorset, South Wiltshire, Berkshire and the Channel Islands. She is also Chairman of EWAC (English Welsh Area Council and Northern Ireland) of the BDS. She is also a Trustee/Director of the BDS nationally and had the honour of being made a 'fellow' in 2000. She tells us that she is not a stalker but believes in good deer management. Her interests are wildlife sound-recording and photography.

Sincere thanks go to **Colin Anderson** who gave a talk at the one-day seminar exploring the medieval Deer Parks of Hampshire with special reference to the Hampshire area of the AONB but has not submitted a paper for publication.

Acknowledgements

The Editor wishes to express her thanks to everyone at the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB office, not only for coming up with the idea of holding a seminar on the theme of 'The Chase, The Hart and the Park' but who organised – and made possible – a memorable weekend early in November 2006, chaired by Dick Potts who has kindly written the Preface. She also wishes to express her thanks to the contributors, not only for presenting papers on the day, but for so willingly agreeing to write things up in the publication of the first of a proposed Occasional Papers Series. Last, but certainly not least, thanks go to Richard Burden for his Introduction to our Proceedings, to Emma Rouse and Vicki White for copy-editing and to Susan Vaughan for the Index.

Members of the November seminar would also like to express their thanks to Lady Studd of Manor Farm Rockbourne, and Laura and Henry Bouskell of Rockbourne Manor for allowing us to explore – respectively – the Deerehay and West Park during the Sunday field trip.

The Editor is grateful for permission from Mr G A L-F Pitt-Rivers to reproduce the Thomas Aldwell map of Cranborne Chase of 1618 which appears on page 51 in Caroline Cheeseman's paper. She is also grateful for permission to reproduce the three images of St Hubert which appear respectively on pages 7, 8 and 10; full acknowledgement will be found on page 10.

Thanks are also due to Rosemary Dickens for permission to reproduce her imaginative plan of the Dorset Cursus and to David Parry for permission to include the plan of the henge excavated at Tarrant Monkton. Both are acknowledged by Martin Green in his paper.

Preface

Understanding the Past – Informing the Future

Dick Potts

It is a great pleasure to contribute to this work for a number of different reasons. First it is a record of the fine weekend of 4/5 November 2006; "The Chase, the Hart and the Park" seminar at Sixpenny Handley and the subsequent field trip to the ancient Deer Parks of Rockbourne, all organised by the indefatigable Katherine Barker. Second, despite the fact that it is essentially historical in nature this volume could not be better timed.

Big changes have taken place in the way we read countryside signs in order to determine the history of land use. Only recently the prevailing view was that there were few historically important earthworks in woodland but now with sophisticated techniques, such as air to ground radar, all manner of boundaries and other artefacts are discernable. The trees had been hiding a lot. So the evidence here about ancient borderlands from the flora nicely complements that obtained with the newer methods.

Our aim in the AONB is to manage our natural heritage so that future generations can enjoy what we enjoy. Nothing new in that, but past management has made many mistakes through misunderstanding history. As Oliver Rackham observed in his recent New Naturalist *Woodlands,* it is a fundamental in conservation to ask what is normal. It is, however, a difficult question to answer for normal is a very subjective view.

Astonishingly only recently has it become clear that deer and other grazers and browsers have, like man himself, determined much of the flora and thus landscape, for millennia. The idea that the UK was once closed canopy forest has given way to the realisation that normal was more like a savannah.

This is a refreshing new look at our history at a time when many ideas about it need to be revised. The information herein will greatly improve our understanding of how our heritage has accumulated and thereby improve the way in which we manage our heritage.

I welcome a work in the spirit of the excavations of General Pitt-Rivers who in the nineteenth century laid down the principles of modern archaeology in our very own Cranborne Chase. Another local, Heywood Sumner extended this work to the landscape as a whole with his findings accompanied by exquisite paintings. These pioneers would I am sure be proud that their foundations are being used so effectively.

Dick
Dr G R (Dick) Potts
Chairman of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

Foreword

Katherine Barker

Cranborne Chase must be one of the best-known regions in British archaeology. It is where General Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827 - 1900) laid down the principles of modern excavation. More recently (in 1980), Desmond Hawkins in his book on the Chase described it as 'spreading itself untidily' over three counties, Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire.

Figure F1 – St Hubert as he appears on the rood screen at Kenn in Devon.

The Chase has been occupied from prehistoric times and occupies a tract of high chalk plateau which does indeed lie across the three county boundaries. The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB in fact lies across four, in the west it runs into – and includes – the south-eastern corner of Somerset. These boundaries are an everyday thing for all of us and play an important part in local government affairs. Perhaps less well known is the fact that these boundaries lie across an ancient borderland. The area designated as an AONB has been a 'frontier zone' for a long time.

As we shall see from the papers published here, the present distinctive character of the AONB is in large part due to a particular system of medieval land management. Its Beauty, rightly perceived in the 1950s designation of the Area, is not – of itself – wholly Natural. It presents an assemblage of characteristic features which Landscape Historians call 'marginal', lying away from the main centres of population and of complementary importance, the management of deer and wood and wood-pasture being among the most significant – the most valuable. These outlying areas were also the sites of hermit's chapels (and before that pagan shrines) places with a culture all of their own, notorious haunts of thieves and wheeler-dealers and people anxious not to be noticed. Cranborne church is dedicated to St Bartholomew, a saint associated with out-of-the-way places; his special concern was with poor travellers and with rites of healing. St Aldhelm, first bishop of Sherborne, tells us that Bartholomew was the apostle sent to convert the pagans in India, 'the last of the lands of the earth'; where he duly set about the destruction of both the idols and the shrines. He had quite a reputation!

The Outstanding qualities of the Cranborne Chase area drew the eye of the AONB designators north and east towards the chalk uplands of West Wiltshire running with the Dorset boundary as far as the south-eastern corner of Somerset. These borderlands present some similar characteristics; tracts of land managed this time not as a Chase that is, as a 'private' Forest licensed by the Crown, but as royal Forests of Gillingham (on the Dorset-Wiltshire border) and Selwood (on the Somerset-Wiltshire border) managed directly by the King's officers. These formed extensive tracts of land where local people had 'Rights of Common'.

Shire boundaries ('shires' are also called 'counties' after 1066) were already well-established by the tenth century – well before the Norman Conquest. They legally defined the limits of justice, military responsibility and the collection of revenue. There is evidence to suggest that these borders – with their associated borderlands – were already of some antiquity. They

served to divide Anglo-Saxon Wessex from Celtic Dumnonia (Devon and Cornwall) in the seventh century, and most probably the Iron Age Belgae from the Durotriges in the time of Julius Caesar. The Durotriges bequeathed their name to Dorset.

So much of life today is county-based and has been for a long time. The papers given at the November 2006 seminar and written up here in this volume afford us an exciting opportunity to take another look at that very distinctive area of country that 'spreads itself untidily' over four county boundaries; Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Somerset; an Area certainly Outstanding – but (as already noted above) not solely for its Beauty.

St Hubert

Figure F2 – St Hubert, bishop, a wood cut from Verviers in Belgium where there are no fewer than eighty seven churches dedicated to him.

An appropriate date for a day devoted to an exploration of 'The Chase, the Hart and the Park' was presented by the traditional Feast Day of St Hubert celebrated on 3 November. And so it was the seminar was held on Saturday 4 November 2006 and the field trip to Rockbourne on Sunday 5 November 2006 (otherwise associated with Guy Fawkes). Patron saint of the Hunt, St Hubert is often pictured with a stag which became his emblem. His story is particularly strong in the great Ardennes Forest of what is now Belgium. A high-born prince and mighty hunter he spared neither stag nor boar even on Good Friday. However out hunting in the forest one day, he came upon a stag at bay, bearing between its antlers a great crucifix from which there came a voice bidding him turn to the Lord. The conversion of this sinful nobleman was instantaneous (so the story goes). He promptly resigned his pleasures and his sports and became a priest and afterwards became first Bishop of Maastricht and Liège. There is an abbey of St Hubert in the Ardennes near where he is said to have seen the vision of the stag and crucifix. He died in 727 – about twenty years after St Aldhelm, first bishop of Sherborne, and a few years before the Venerable Bede.

. . . and St Giles

The church of Wimborne St Giles in the area of the AONB is dedicated to someone whose connection with deer is much better known this side of the North Sea. He was a sixth-century hermit who lived in the Rhone delta near what is now the town of St Gilles on the Mediterranean coast. One day the royal hunt wounded a stag which fled to Giles and put its head on his knee for protection. Another version of the story tells how the arrow destined for the deer struck Giles in the leg after which he was lame for life and which is why he subsequently became patron saint of cripples – and beggars. St Giles is often associated with crossroads in outlying and wooded areas where travellers stopped to have their horses shod or their carts repaired by the local blacksmith. Medieval leper hospitals were often dedicated to him and there were two fairs, one at Winchester and the other at Oxford. St Giles in London is located at Cripplegate.

Introduction: The Chase, the Hart, and the Park; the Proceedings

Landscapes are frequently referred to as something that is 'in the eye of the beholder'; the implication being that they are predominantly visual and aesthetic. To an extent that reflects the eighteenth and early nineteenth century concept of landscape as a picture, facilitated by the likes of Gainsborough, Claude, and Poussin. The fashionable landscapes for the rich, famous, and powerful of those eras were designed for their visual pleasure and enlightenment. Classical artefacts stimulated the intellect and a romantic reflection of the past. The late twentieth century vogue for picture windows echoes that historical emphasis on the view.

Landscapes are, of course, a complex mix of the interactions of geology, topography, weather, wildlife, and land uses. That mélange of the natural and human activities has recently been reflected in the European Landscape Convention's definition of landscape as

> *'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of nature and /or human factors'.*

The human influence in the evolution of landscapes is implicit in the formal recognition of fine landscapes in the United Kingdom, with the National Parks movement, and subsequent legislation, focussing overtly on the landform and natural beauty. Whilst sidestepping a definition of natural beauty, governmental reports and statements are clear that natural beauty includes the wildlife and the scientific and cultural heritages of our landscapes. Those heritages are hugely human orientated, often resulting from generations and centuries of moulding, shaping, and interacting with the land and climate.

The fluctuating economic conditions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have created the landscapes we have grown up with that are largely the by-products of farming and forestry activities. These are functional landscapes, and quite rightly there have been concerns at the loss of wildlife, changes to the landscape structure and networks on the surface of the land, and weakening of the historic fabric. Nevertheless, this is a reflection of the changes, albeit at a different pace and scale, that have occurred to our landscapes since the ice of the last Ice Age melted and retreated some 10,000 years ago. During those peri-glacial times the melting ice water helped to carve the shapes of the downlands and transport the valley sediments of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It can easily be forgotten that climate change here has been quite significant, ameliorating from Siberia-like conditions to warmer and drier, and then oscillating over the centuries with colder and wetter periods. Such conditions led to various stages of woodland growth and facilitated the expansion of human populations. As people came and went, they became more or less prosperous, and had greater or lesser impacts on their surroundings. The thinly treed downs were amongst the easiest to clear for grassland and cultivation, the wildwoods modified for timber and fuel production, and ceremonial, burial, and protective earthworks were built. As these activities ebbed and flowed so the impacts of succeeding generations of humans partially erased the effects of their predecessors, leaving shadows, remnants, traces, and, in some cases, significant structures from earlier times. The waves of invasions of different races brought differing skills, attitudes, beliefs, plants, and animals. All these cultural aspects have added to the layers of physical impacts on landscapes, and, similarly, successive generations have eroded some, and maintained other, features. This continual writing, erasing, and rewriting of the physical, natural, and cultural layers has created the palimpsest that is the multifaceted landscape we experience today.

One of those sought-after items for the Lord of the Manor, introduced by the Normans, was the deer park. In the twelfth century a deer park was a 'must have' to demonstrate wealth and position, and also to secure a source of venison. The process of enclosure generally involved the creation of a ditch and bank topped by a fence; the park pale. A one sided jump may have been provided to allow wild deer to enter without the facility to get out, and the area would have included trees to provide shade for the resident herd. Parks may have served to supplement stocks of wild deer, or provide a specific creature, for hunts in the Royal Forests or Chases. To have received or acquired a Chase from the Crown imparted status to the owner. However, with the passage of time, changes in fashion, society, and hunting techniques the Chases and deer parks fell into disuse.

Some of the deer parks were taken over or revitalised in the form of idealised landscapes by the likes of Capability Brown, Repton, and their predecessors and imitators in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as landscape parks. During that era other similar landscapes were created on land not associated with any previous deer park. To complicate matters further, later periods saw a few parks being created with a small herd of deer enclosed for their aesthetic appearance, and both types of landscape parks having a deer or sheep enclosure.

In addition to the cultural and historical interest in deer parks as features of medieval life and times those elements that have survived to the present represent tangible contacts with the countryside of 500 to 800 years ago. The banks can provide evidence of soil conditions and the wildlife within. The trees that were protected to provide shade for the deer have, in a number of cases, survived to be both veterans in their own right and havens of wildlife, particularly those species that are restricted to long established and stable habitats. The distribution of deer parks has geographical interest as well as contributing to our knowledge and understanding of landholdings and land management of centuries past.

Figure F3 - The seal of the Abbey of St Hubert in Belgium; the saint shown kneeling before the crucifix-bearing stag in the forest.

Deer parks are clearly a many faceted and valuable aspect of the palimpsests that form the landscapes we see and experience today, so greater knowledge of their location, distribution, and provenance is important to inform the future management of those landscapes. Early in 2005 I approached the AONB team with the idea of a literature research project, in association with Dorset Gardens Trust, to locate, map, and enquire into the authenticity of the deer parks of the Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The majority of the work was undertaken by Katherine Barker, and whilst it was in progress the research by Caroline Cheeseman at Oxford University came to light. We were already aware of Bournemouth University's interest in the archaeology of the historic landscapes of the Chase, Martin Green's 'hands on' experience on his farm, Gordon Le Pard's knowledge of Heywood Sumner, and the British Deer Society's key role in deer management so it seemed natural to draw them all together for the seminar and field visits that took place over the weekend of 4th and 5th November 2006.

Some 80 participants gathered at Sixpenny Handley village hall on Saturday 4th November to hear the presentations and discuss deer parks, the Chase, and the deer themselves. On Sunday 5th about twenty-five gathered at Rockbourne to search for evidence of the lost East Park to

the north-east of the church, followed by a visit to West Park to explore the boundary with New Park, a little to the west of the Roman villa. Much was found, fine views experienced, and various topics discussed before the group adjourned to the *Bull* at Wimborne St Giles for a late lunch of roast venison.

Richard Burden
Landscape and Planning Advisor; Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB
President of the Landscape Institute 1997 - 99

Acknowledgements

Figure F1 - St Hubert as he appears on the rood screen at Kenn in Devon is reproduced from Francis Bond, *Dedications & Patron Saints of English Churches, ecclesiastical symbolism, saints and their emblems*, Oxford University Press, 1914, 177.

Figure F2 - St Hubert, bishop, a wood cut from Verviers, is reproduced by kind permission of M Danthinne, 6870 St Hubert, from the *Collection "Il était une fois . . . St Hubert*," vol 2, 28, 1996/7039/3.

Figure F3 - The seal of the Abbey of St Hubert is reproduced by kind permission of Thierry Scholtes, Secretary of the Société régionale d'histoire et archéologie, St Hubert d'Ardenne from a paper by L Knapen, 'Qu'est devenue la bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Saint-Hubert? Une enquête en cours', dans *St-Hubert d'Ardenne,* Cahiers d'histoire, tome VII, St Hubert 1984, 163.

Chapter One
Ancient Bounds and Borders: shires, counties and the limits of the AONB

Katherine Barker

It is a particular pleasure to be able to address members of an AONB audience so close to an ancient shire boundary. Indeed, this seminar is being held just inside that shire boundary – in Dorset - in the *hean leah* – that 'high lea' which gives its name to the place. An Old English word *leah*, initially seems to have meant 'wood' and then an open area in a wood. Handley certainly occupies a high plateau site, although there is an alternative meaning for the first element in the name which could equally well be *han*, 'stone', a word often found in association with a border. For not only is it a 'high lea' it is also a 'border lea'. Handley occupies a borderland area of some antiquity. (The 'd' in the name was only added at the end of the fifteenth century and *Seaxpene*, latterly 'Sixpenny', the name of the medieval administrative Hundred in which it lay, does not appear until the sixteenth.) But more than this, we are sitting within the bounds of an ancient estate; the parish boundary of Handley celebrates its one thousandth and fiftieth birthday just this year, 956-2006. The Old English 'perambulation' or recital of the Handley bounds, landmark by landmark, was published in 1936 by Dr G B Grundy, together with a translation (see Fig 1.1).

It was early last summer I completed a desk-based survey of the medieval deer parks of the AONB. There are about 35 in all. I say 'about' because although it is not difficult to define a deer park – as you know, it is that carefully embanked and fenced-in reserve for the management of those valuable animals – but just how many there may actually once have been in the AONB is more difficult to determine. The two – or three – parks at Rockbourne are an interesting example; see the note in this volume on 'Medieval Deer Parks of the AONB' pages 89-94. Some sites have all but disappeared, others present a number of different phases, and some, the largest – like Stourhead and Longleat – were transformed by the Romantic movement of later centuries; parks which formerly occupied large ecclesiastical estates which became available for purchase – and for development – after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. This was a desk-based survey and thus in many ways a preliminary survey, for each one of these sites needs in-depth research in the written archive and each one deserves a correspondingly thorough field survey. This is an appetite-wetter indeed; stuff for future useful enquiry.

More than that was what I noticed while I was doing the study. The area embraced by boundary of the AONB defines a tract of historic landscape of very particular character and identity which – as yet – has received no systematic study. It is this which forms the subject of my paper.

Deer parks have – in essence – a double requirement that run together, that is, a wealthy landowner with plenty of land and the means to obtain a licence to 'empark.' Deer parks tend thus to occupy what geographers call 'secondary' or 'marginal' land away from major centres of population.

'Secondary' perhaps, but no less important for that, for this is land which, comprising tracts of woodland and grazing formed a valuable renewable resource – and thus a very important source of revenue. Such areas are often marginal in the literal sense, occupying tracts of land on the margins of things, on the borders; those places characterised by seasonal activity and sparse and scattered settlement. These were places where 'Rights of Common' were an essential part of the everyday life and economy of the country people living there. As sporting venues and rich with boar and game and deer these areas furnished important means

of cementing cross-border relationships among the nobility. By the same token, there was the pilfering of wood, fish, birds, bees – things that may have wandered - accidently. Such cases (where they were noticed) were heard in the Manor or Hundred Courts.

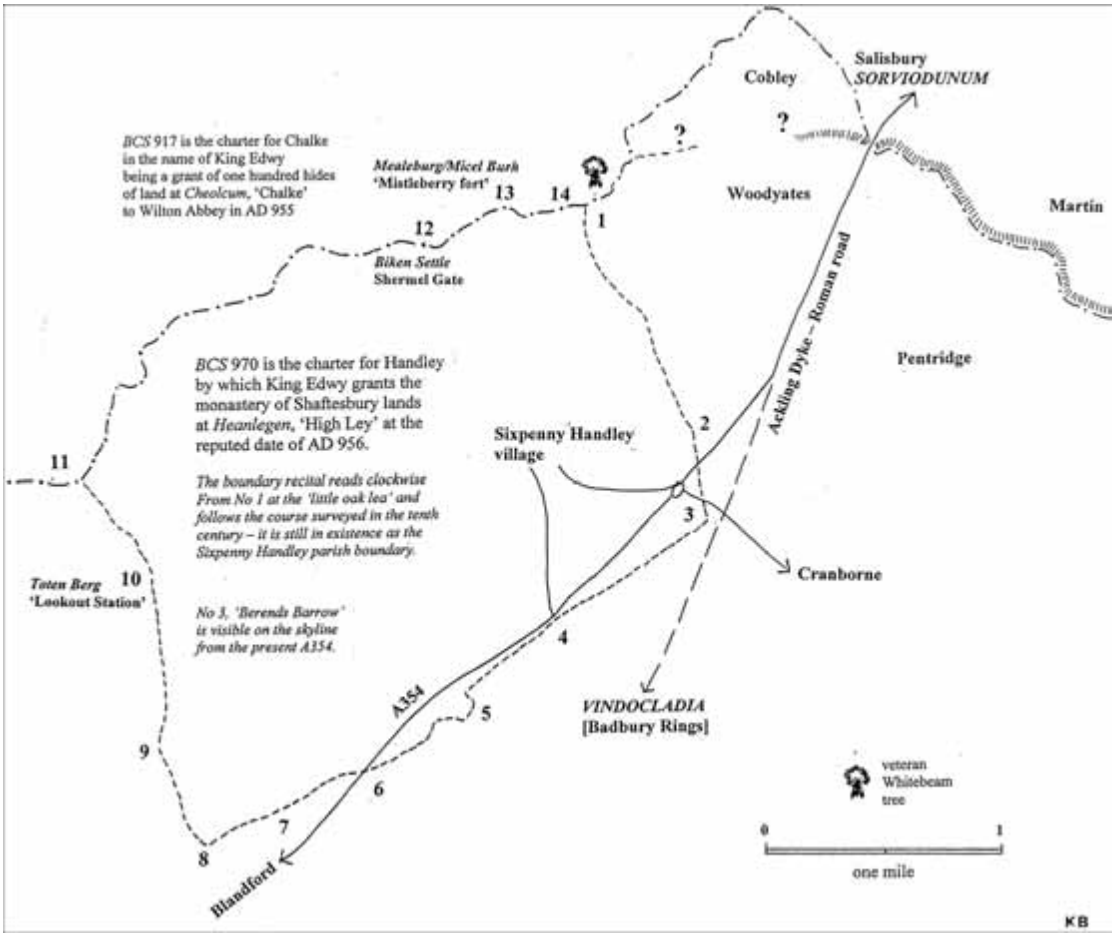


Figure 1.1 - Sketch map of the Handley charter boundary of AD 956. The shire boundary today follows the Shire Rack (numbers 11 to 12) and then runs down slope and crosses the road to Bowerchalke. It then turns north to include Cobley, before swinging south to follow the course of Bokerley Dyke. The arrangement of the Cobley 'salient' suggests it may once have lain in Wiltshire. At some (as yet) unknown date, the course of the main (Roman) road (Ackling Dyke) was re-directed on a course which took it to the river crossing at the 'Bland-ford.' Vindocladia *– the town that was once Badbury Rings – has been long abandoned. Blandford has been a thriving market town for many centuries. Inviting a closer look is the relationship of the course of this road (now represented by the A354) with the southern boundary of Handley.*

There is a nice quote from William Chafin's *Anecdotes of Cranborne Chase* published in 1818 (re-published in 1991) about the 'pilfering' of errant deer. William Chafin had known the Chase for 70 years and was in no doubt that Lord Rivers had rights <u>both</u> sides of the Dorset-Wiltshire county boundary.

'Some silly surmises and vague reports have been circulated that Lord Rivers hath no rights of Chase in Wiltshire. There is an horse path called the Shire Rack which divides the two counties of Wiltshire and Dorset and which passes through the woods in the centre of the three Walks . . . Now if a deer on the Dorset side of the path, the undoubted property of Lord Rivers, should take a freak to skip across this path into Wiltshire his property ceases; it becomes fera natura *[a wild beast] and may be killed with impunity by the first person lucky enough to get hold of it . . .* this – says William Chafin – is so self-evidently absurd and ridiculous that no more need be said . . .

The Shire Rack forms the northern boundary of Sixpenny Handley and has done since at least AD 956, *rack* comes from an Old English word used to describe a route along a narrow pass or defile, here it defines the edge of the shire; it is the county boundary.

The Handley charter of 956 (see Fig 1.1) records the legal conveyance of this estate by the king to the Abbey of Shaftesbury. It forms one of a whole series of Saxon boundary charters – there are nearly 40 still in existence for Dorset - and Dr Grundy also published the surviving charters for the neighbouring counties. In most cases the estates concerned can be located and form a fascinating eye witness account of what these boundaries looked like a thousand or more years ago, a window on the landscape a century before the Norman Conquest. For in the days before scale mapping, the formally witnessed 'perambulation' of a boundary served as legal definition of an estate. For each estate Grundy included a short summary of the area concerned, and then, point by point, the survey of the boundary giving the Old English (or Latin) description and then a modern English translation with a brief note as to how each feature may still be recognised. Handley is written in Old English and – like nearly all the others – reads clockwise and starts at *Arest on Litlen Ac Lee estward*, that is, 'First on the east side of Little Oak Lea'. As Grundy notes, the point indicated is at the north-east angle of the parish on the county boundary about three quarters of a mile west of West Woodyates Manor; the name 'Oak Lea' occurs further down the east boundary in the name of Oakley Farm'. The next landmark, number 2, is 'Pega's Barrow'. The recital of the boundary, landmark by landmark, continues until the fourteenth which brings us back to the beginning; to number one at 'Little Oak Lea'.

Perambulation of parish bounds was made a legal requirement during the reign of Elizabeth I, very largely in response to the many changes made following the Dissolution. How often bounds were inspected before that date – and on what basis – is not clear.

Fig 1.1 is a sketch map of the charter showing some of the principle features. It can be seen that the boundary reference points tend to coincide with those places where the boundary changes course. Thus the Shire Rack between points 11 and 12 is not described. The way the bounds follow a direct course from barrow to barrow along the south side of the estate suggests that it was laid out – defined – in hitherto unenclosed country most probably woodpasture and grazing land, that high 'lea' of the place-name. Between points 3 and 4 the boundary follows a direct course running up to *Berendes Beorh*, 'Berend's Barrow' on the skyline, clearly visible today from the present A354 (Plate 1.1).

Plate 1.1 - Berend's Barrow looking north-east from the A354 at the Handley - Wimborne St Giles crossroads, the row of small trees follows the Handley boundary between points 4 and 3, see Fig 1.1. Berend's Barrow (at 3) may be seen on the skyline.

The north-east corner of the Handley estate running with the county boundary has been the subject of a preliminary enquiry by members of the Dorset County Boundary Research Group. The boundary where it crosses the road to Bowerchalke is about 40 feet wide – a major feature in its own right (Plate 1.2), and supports – among other things – a huge veteran Whitebeam stool just out of the picture.

Plate 1.2 - The Dorset-Wiltshire boundary where it crosses the road to Bowerchalke; the Whitebeam stool is a short distance up slope along the footpath. The boundary is nearly 40 feet wide here, its form obscured by recent undergrowth as can be seen in the photograph. This length of the boundary is followed by a path, in effect representing a continuation of the Shire Rack. How much of the county boundary is accessible remains a subject for future enquiry. Suffice to say, it is not possible to 'beat the bounds' of either Dorset or Wiltshire.

As yet its age is unknown, but it is a tree which has certainly been managed for many centuries. Continuing work suggests it is unique in the record – at least so far – and in due course will be surveyed and properly written up. It is possible this tree was already growing at the time of the AD 956 charter boundary survey – or perhaps it was planted as a high-grade timber source and 'marker tree' on that occasion. As yet, we can only guess. It would be interesting to put an archaeological section through the boundary here, its dimensions are similar to those of Bokerley Dyke to the east. Looking carefully at the course of the Dyke – and at the lie of the land in between – could suggest that they were indeed once linked. That northern 'salient' of Dorset occupied by Cobley may once have lain in Wiltshire.

The boundary on either side of the Bowerchalke road forms – in plan – a 'funnel shaped' entrance so that anyone driving animals down the valley from Wiltshire will not only have found the 'entrance' well-defined, but would have been over-looked on the approach. A very similar arrangement is found at Shermel Gate which is number 12 on the 956 Handley survey. It was then the site of *Biken Settle,* 'Bica's House'. The site is still occupied.

Between points 14 and 13 on the Handley – and county boundary – is followed by parallel rows of hazel coppice stools (Plate 1.3).

Plate 1.3 - A row of hazel coppice stools along the same length of the county boundary pictured in Plate 1.4. These hazel trees are found between No 13 of the Handley charter, the Mealeburg *or* Micel Burh *'great camp' and No 14, the* Aclee*, the 'Oak Lea' which also marks the beginning of the boundary recital of 956.*

These are nowhere near as old as the Whitebeam stool – nor indeed the giant ash stool (Plate 1.4) found along the same length which has clearly been managed for wood over many centuries. However the location of these hazels may be just as historically significant – please read on.

Plate 1.4 - One of the giant ash stools on the west side of the Bowerchalke Road above Pribdean Wood on the Dorset-Wiltshire county boundary. This tree has clearly been carefully managed over many centuries. Who knows how much good ash wood has been won from this ancient root stock.

Who knows what remains to be found along the rest of those lengths of county boundary which traverse the area of the AONB? Or indeed as to what form these boundaries may take. This is all material for future enquiry.

The AONB and four county boundaries

The area designated by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is traversed by no fewer than four historic county boundaries, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset – and in the west, extending into the south-east corner of Somerset (Fig 1.2).

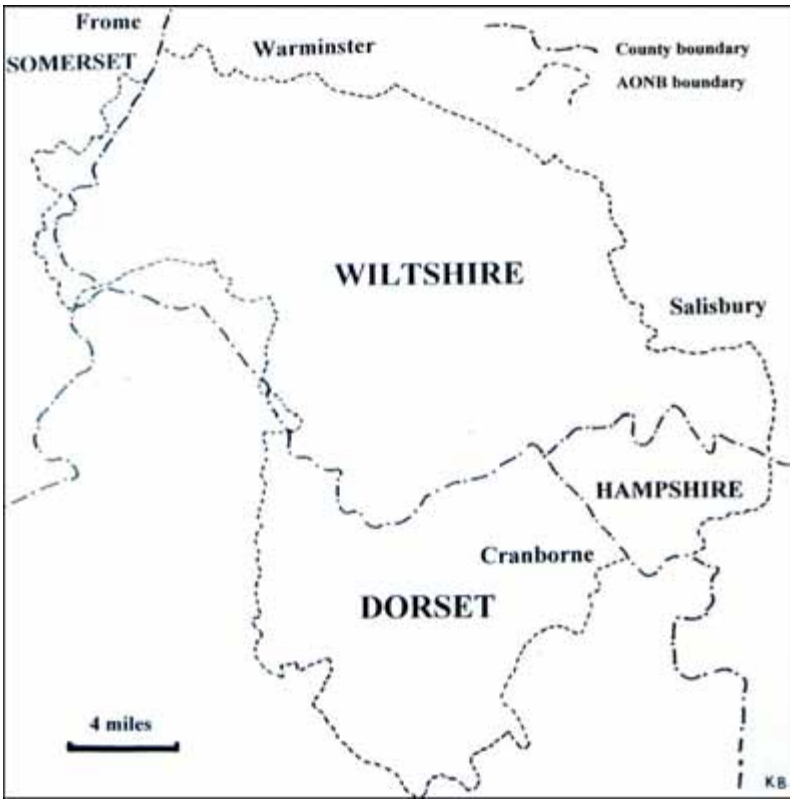


Figure 1.2 - The borders of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in relation to the county boundaries of Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset.

This is an area where much important archaeological work has been done – especially in the Chase – but no one has yet taken a look at this extensive borderland area which awaits systematic enquiry. What follows here is very much in the nature of a preliminary statement, a first look, but already a number of very interesting things have emerged. So many things are county-based – and have been for a very long time – it is a rare privilege indeed to be doing some work on the historic landscape of an organisation whose own borders ignore – as it were – those of four historic shires that track across it.

Counties have a long history. They became 'counties' under the Normans; *comté* is a word which still exists in modern French. To the English they were "shires", from Old English *scieran* which means 'to cut' or 'divide' for these were administrative divisions of earlier kingdoms made for purposes which were essentially military and judicial. The first written reference to Hampshire is in the year 757 when we hear that one of the West Saxon warlords, Sigebert, was deprived of his kingdom except for *Hampshire*. We first really hear about all six shires of Wessex in the reign of King Alfred in the raising of the shire levies for the purpose of defending the kingdom of Wessex against the Danes. On the eastern side of Selwood – of which we shall hear more in a moment – he assembled all the men of Somersetshire and Wiltshire and that part of Hampshire 'which was on this side of the sea'. Raising and equipping the shire levy was one of the principal duties or the *Shire Reeve* – the sheriff.

There are good reasons for supposing that all six shires may be at least a century or more older. Three south-eastern shires, Essex, Sussex and Kent have their origins as independent kingdoms.

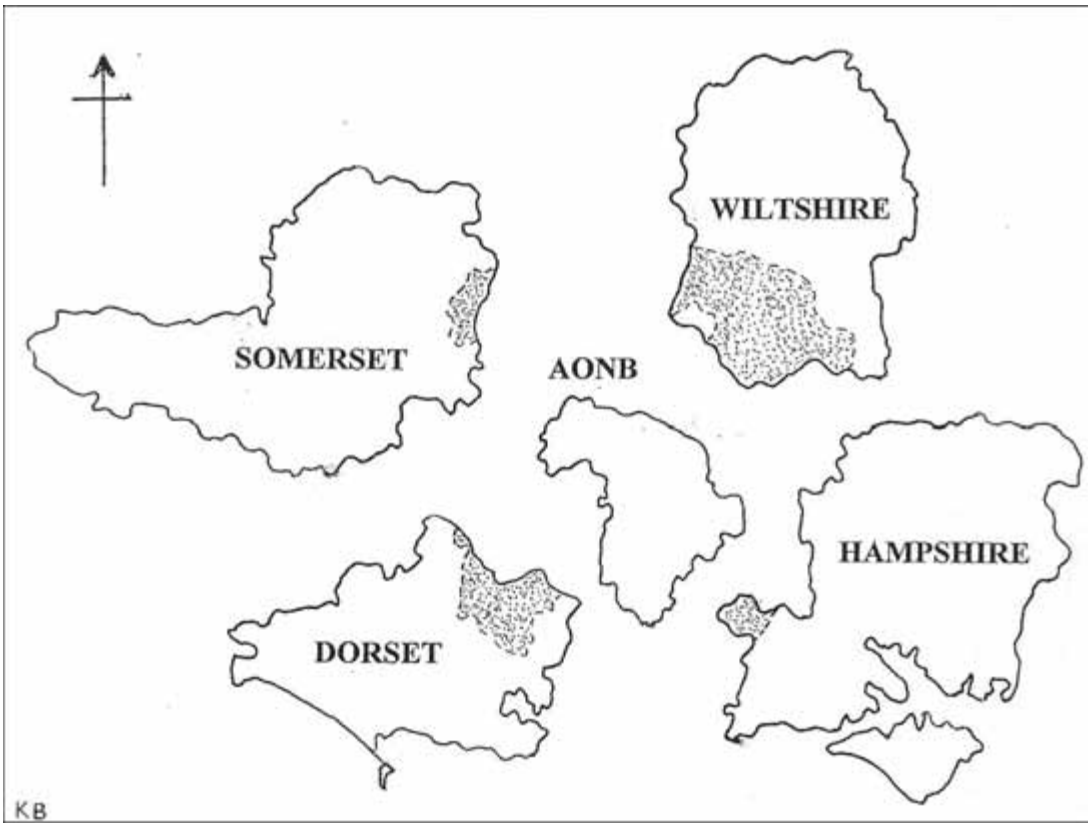


Figure 1.3 - The familiar outlines of four historic shires, Somerset[shire], Wiltshire, Dorset[shire] and Hampshire – with the outline of a much more recent "shire" – the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. As can be seen from the stippled areas, the greater part of the AONB does indeed lie in [south]west Wiltshire.

Thus it is that the shires of southern England re-emerge in the Domesday Book of 1086 as a highly organised and integrated local government system which is one reason why the Norman Conquest was so successful. Every English shire reeve was ousted and replaced by a Norman. The first – much hated – Norman shire reeve of Dorset was one Hugh Fitzgrip. Thus it is the shires are still with us – and thanks to 1066 – now called counties. But for minor boundary changes of the nineteenth century and another more recent, the inclusion of Bournemouth and Christchurch in 1974, Dorsetshire occupies essentially the same area of land as it did a thousand years ago.

Figure 1.3 shows the familiar outlines of the Wessex *shires* and one, rather less well known. This unfamiliar territory is literally a *shire*, a 'division', in the sense that it defines a tract of country which, since the late 1950s, designates the area of the Cranborne and West Wiltshire AONB. To a much earlier generation its existence might well have born a faintly sinister connotation, the implication being that someone had seemingly been licensed to create a territory cutting across the borders of four others already legally defined. To us, of course, it defines an extensive tract of English countryside with no towns, much of it high chalkland plateau, and designated as Outstanding . . . but not solely for its its Beauty – as we shall see. But defined, yes, in terms of local government, for its status is one set up to 'to bring together statutory agencies, local authorities and key stakeholders to guide policy and activity to conserve [this] special place'. Fig 1.2 is a map of the AONB, the bold line is its own border, and tracking across it are those of the four counties.

For many centuries this country has been a United Kingdom. There are two borders which are still familiar and still with recognisable characteristics (Fig 1.4); Hadrian's Wall dividing England from Scotland and Offa's Dyke dividing England from Wales. That the south-west peninsula of England once formed a separate entity is less well known – it takes us back into much earlier history. Part of this boundary runs with the present Dorset border at Bokerley Dyke – as we shall see. Hadrian's Wall was that Roman frontier work which divided the Britons of *Britannia* from those peoples further north, outside the Empire. It was to remain a marker of that divide between English and Scots well into the Middle Ages. Even today the Scottish Borders form a very distinctive historic landscape assemblage; Borderers and Border Castles are left as tell-tale evidence of an area once rife with disputes over political and religious affiliation, border controls, dues and taxes . . . smuggling, skulduggery and sabotage.

Figure 1.4 - The borderlands of a United Kingdom: the Kings of Scotland and Wales are well-known players in British history; less well known is the fact that in the seventh century there were kings of Dumnonia*. At this date* Dumnonia *comprised the greater part of what is now Devon[shire]; Cornwall was* Cornubia*.*

Offa's Dyke, a formidable ninth-century bank and ditch system was constructed to divide the Mercian English from the Welsh. The Welsh Marches comprise that string of shires running north-south along the frontier; Old English 'mark' or 'march' simply means 'boundary'. (Sometimes the word is misrepresented and we find local pronunciation has bequeathed us 'marsh'. Marshwood on the Dorset-Devon border may well be one of these). The Welsh Marcher Lords still figure in tourist literature, that once dangerous countryside full of defensive works and enclosures of various kinds, enhanced by Norman military occupation and its motte and bailey castles.

Recent work by Andrew Reynolds suggests that the Wansdyke, that great linear earthwork running east-west across Hampshire, Wiltshire and north Somerset, may represent a mid-Saxon boundary marking the contested border between the kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia.

That tract of land that forms the southern part of England has been unified so long that the existence of a cultural, linguistic – and indeed military – divide that separated the south-western peninsula from the south central heartland is mostly forgotten. The Cornish – we understand – still feel very Cornish – but much of this is descended from nineteenth-century Celtic revivalist movements.

Nearly two centuries before we hear about King Alfred and the shire levies, the West Saxon warlords were actively engaged in spreading their power westwards into the land of the Britons. The country was still *Britannia*. There was still some time to go before it became *Engleland*, 'land of the *Angles* or *Engles*' – and *Saxones*. Formerly pagan, the West Saxons espoused the Roman church, that Christian Order introduced by way of Canterbury. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that through due process of a (re)introduced system of Roman law, they confiscated large tracts of land hitherto held by British Christian landowners in the West; those landholding Britons who were heirs to the world and work of St Patrick (Ireland) and St David (Wales) and St Petroc (Cornwall) – and many others.

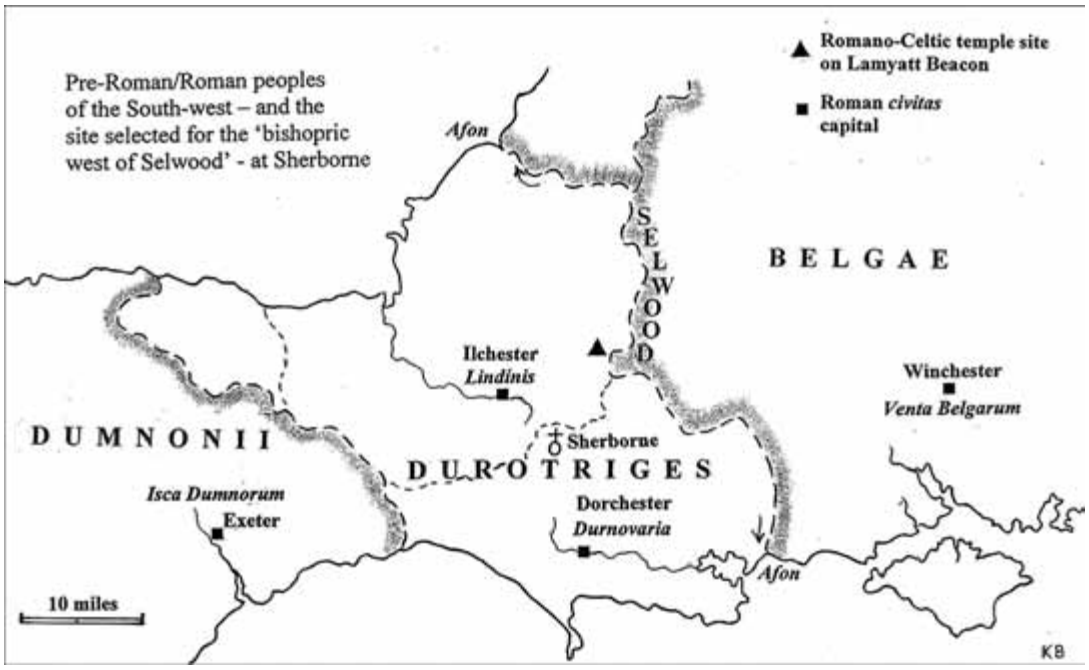


Figure 1.5 - The pre-Roman/Roman peoples of the South-west showing the sites of the four civitas *capitals, Exeter, Ilchester, Dorchester and Winchester. Dorset and Somerset straddle the higher part of the peninsula from river to river (*afon*/avon to* afon*/avon); their respective courses linked by what eventually became the county boundaries of today. At the end of the seventh century the new bishopric was set up on the Dorset-Somerset border in order – we may understand - to administer both territories.*

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us that on the division of the great bishopric of Winchester at the end of the seventh century, the new cathedral to serve the south-west was set up at Sherborne, to the west of the 'Great Wood', that is, to the west of Selwood, now the Somerset-Wiltshire border. Winchester cathedral was – and is – sited in the old Roman city of *Venta Belgarum*, the *Venta* of the *Belgae*'. From there the diocesan boundary ran south and east following the watershed and thence south to the Hampshire Avon (Fig 1.5) – and then down to the coast.

Winchester cathedral was – and still is – sited in the old (walled) Roman city or *castra* of *Venta Belgarum*, the *VVenta*, *Wenta*, of the people called the *Belgae*. Thus it is we inherit the place called *VVen-castra* or *Win-chester*. Sherborne itself was not set up in a Roman city but midway between two, respectively Ilchester and Dorchester, sited on the border of what has every appearance of being two earlier territories which as a pair stretch across the higher part of the south-west peninsula. To this very day these territories are named after their erstwhile *saete* 'inhabitants'. Dorset was (and is) the land of the *Duro-saete* – the *Duro*-people or *Durotriges*, inhabitants of *Duro*- or *Doro*-country and the *Somer-saete*, the inhabitants of the summer lands, intimations here of the seasonal movement out to these great tracts of lowland marsh and moorland. To the west were the *Dumnonians*. The kingdom of *Dumnonia* occupied what is now Devonshire and Cornwall.

There are good reasons for supposing that peoples we collectively refer to as Britons – that is, the descendants of the *Durotriges* – put up considerable opposition to the entry of the West Saxons into Dorset. A major Roman road crossed into *Durotrigian*/Dorset territory at Bokerley Dyke on its way to the now deserted town of *Vindocladia*, Badbury Rings. The Dyke is a massive linear earthwork which archaeology has demonstrated to be the result of a major post-Roman 're-build'. It is a defence work best explained as the work of the long-resident population on its western side to limit the movement of incoming, immigrant English speakers from the east, the *Saxones*, attempting to settle their territory.

In due course the West Saxon kings assumed control of Dorset and there is every indication that Bokerley Dyke remained to mark a border; that is, the border between the diocese of Winchester and the newly-formed diocese of Sherborne. In Roman times this had been the border between two Iron Age tribes the *Belgae* and the *Durotriges.* (Given that the Dyke has a prehistoric Bronze Age antecedent; it has surely marked a boundary on at least one earlier occasion.) We shall return to this border and what is argued here to be a one-time border control on Bokerley at *Woodyates*, literally at the 'wood gates'.

What makes a border? This sounds an odd question perhaps but becomes very relevant here. One of the most significant territorial 'divides' in human history is played by rivers and most particularly the places where they begin, that is, their watersheds. The same often goes for the natural world too.

The AONB not only embraces the borders of four counties but a large part of the complementary watershed that serves to define them; that watershed which defines the higher part of the South-west peninsula (Fig 1.5 & 1.7). It extends – interestingly enough – from the [Bristol] Avon to the [Hampshire] Avon, from *afon* to *afon*, that is literally from 'river to river'. (The word *afon* is still used in Welsh.) The incoming English speakers do not always come over as very informed – given that 'River Avon' means 'River River' in two languages – Brittonic/Welsh and English. (Although it is possible this represents a deliberate piece of early bi-lingualism.) Selwood running along the Somerset-Wiltshire border divides the waters of the west–flowing Brue and the north-flowing Frome from the east-flowing Wylye, Ebble and Nadder. Moving south we follow the watershed of the Stour fed by its principal tributaries the Cale and the Lodden; just to the east are the headwaters of the Nadder and the Sem. At Sedgehill the country is hilly – deeply dissected – and the watershed is, as it were, more complex; something to which we shall return.

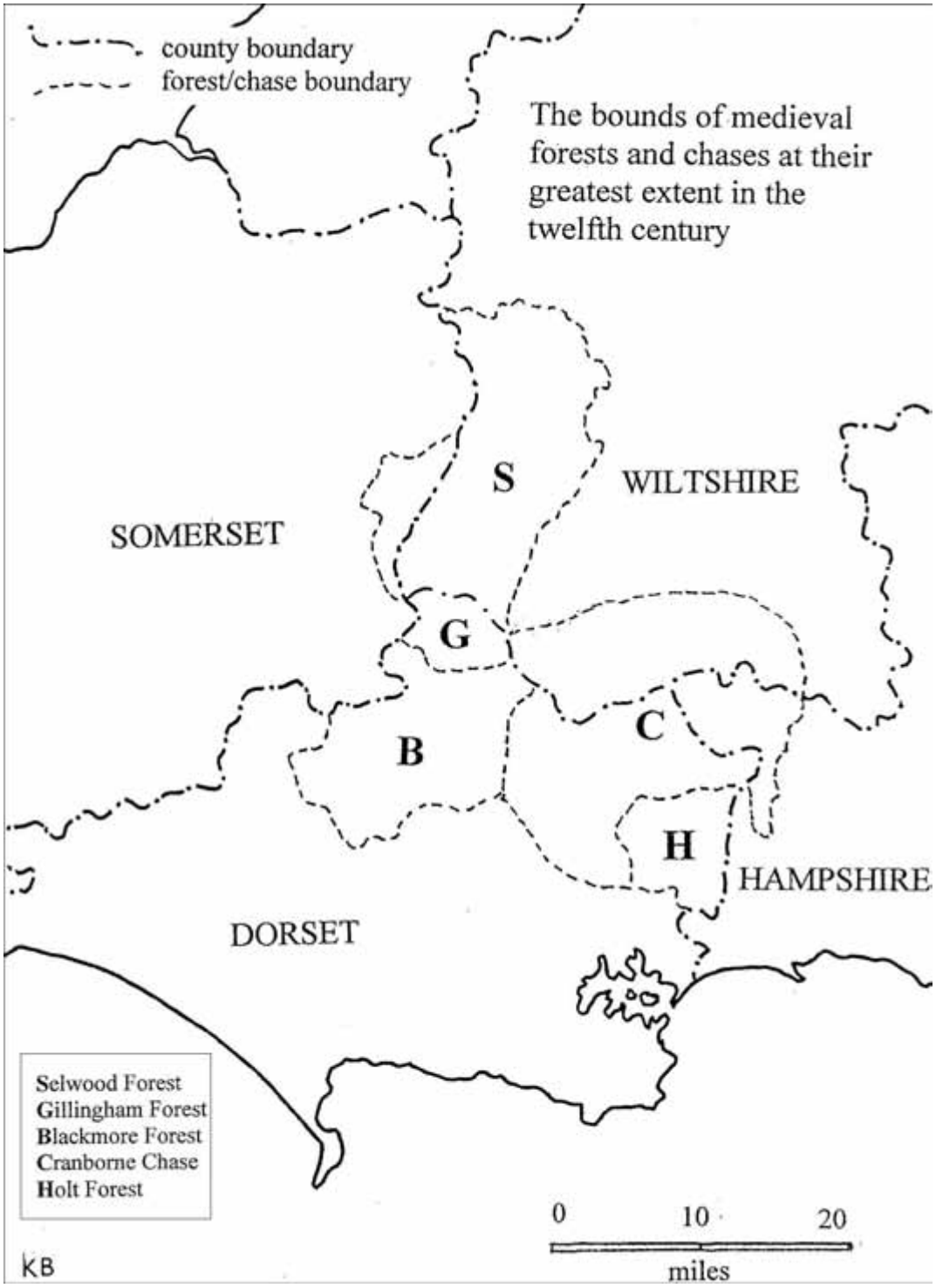


Figure 1.6 - The bounds of forests and chases at their greatest extent in the twelfth century; it can be seen how much of the area now designated by the AONB lies within an area endowed with a special legal status in medieval times. Royal Forests are generally understood to be Norman in origin; there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that the distinctive management of these areas is descended from something rather earlier.

Watershed borderlands are secondary, literally marginal land to the geographer and with characteristic groups of place-names and dispersed – scattered – settlement; outlying chapels and sometimes one-time hermits cells. They were places of long-surviving pagan practices. The word 'pagan' comes straight from the Latin *pagani*, literally those people who live out in the sticks; 'heathen' means much the same thing.

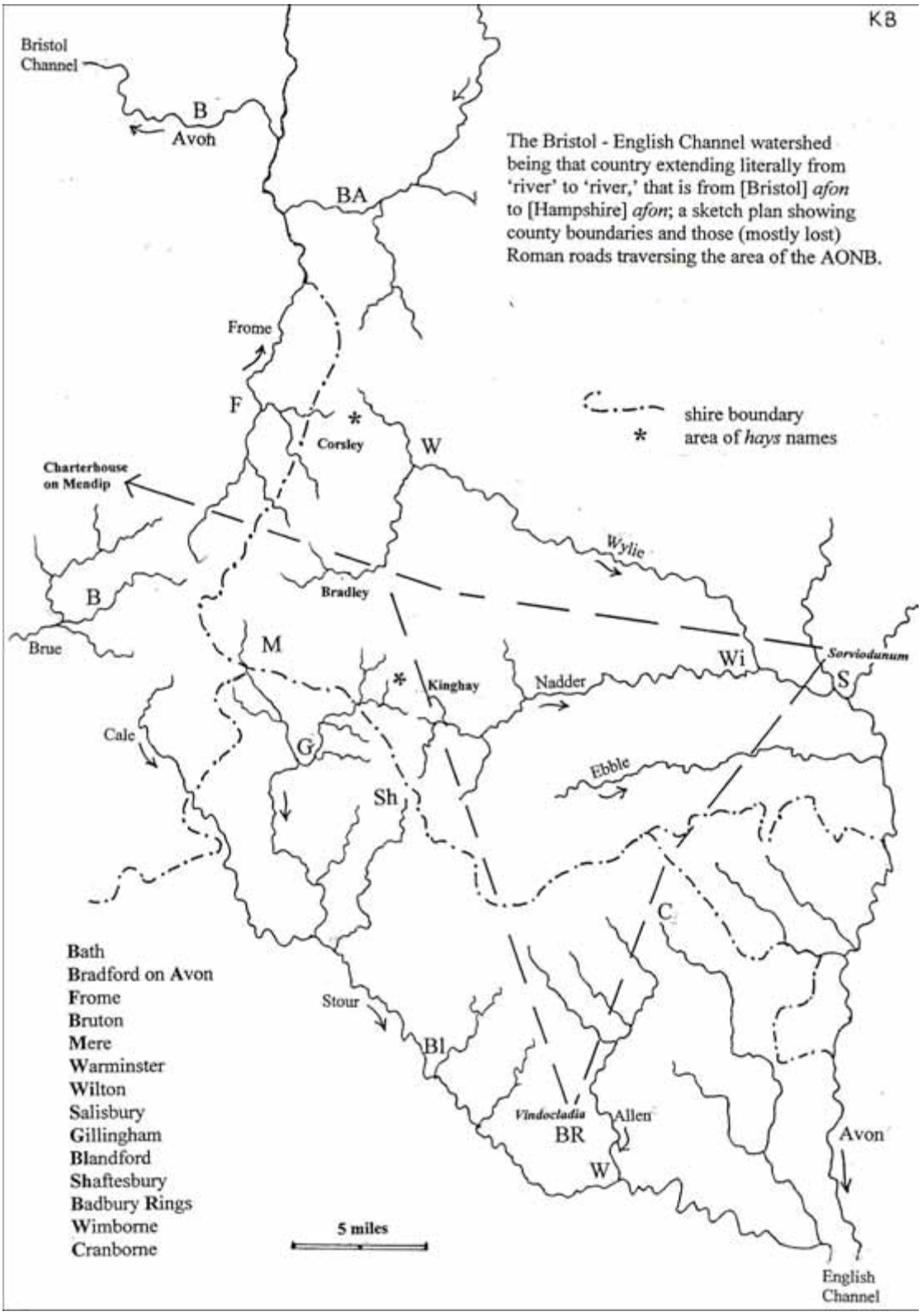


Figure 1.7 - Sketch plan of the watershed of the Somerset-Wiltshire-Dorset borderland showing the principle rivers and streams in relation to the county boundaries. Roman roads and areas of hay/hays *names are also indicated.*

Characteristically, this is an area which, by the twelfth century, was managed by Crown as Royal Forest, that is, as tracts of country subject to Forest Law, a legal device which served to

maximise Crown revenues; areas including tracts of both open land and woodland. The word 'forest' itself comes from the Latin *foris* meaning 'outside', that is, outside Common Law. Local people had extensive Rights of Common over this land, for grazing and for marl, clay and peat digging and for collecting fallen wood and underwood, charcoal burning and similar. In the King's gift were – of course – deer and game and standard timber; sometimes high quality building stone. Fig 1.6 is a sketch plan showing the AONB-watershed area under its maximum afforestation in the reign of King John who – for whatever reason – was always short of money. There are here the legal bounds of the Forest of Selwood; Blackmore falls outside the AONB area, so does Gillingham – mostly – and Cranborne, which was accounted a 'Chase' – that is, in essence, a 'private' Forest licensed out by the Crown. These areas are slung right across the watershed – and on either side of the actual shire boundaries.

There is another implication here of course. Forest Law ensured a strong seigniorial or lordly presence in border country. No one cut down a tree, dug a ditch, trapped a deer or set himself up without royal licence – at least, not officially.

Patterns of lordship are interesting. A few years ago the writer did some work for the Dorset Coastal Digital Archive on the origins and development of coastal settlement. One particularly interesting discovery was that by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, the greater length of the Dorset coastline was in the hands of either Crown or Church. That is to say, it was 'managed' by (or on behalf of) those two institutions which had the resources to man and to supervise seamarks, harbours and harbour dues, trade – and defence. In short, they had the authority to oversee the movement of goods and people.

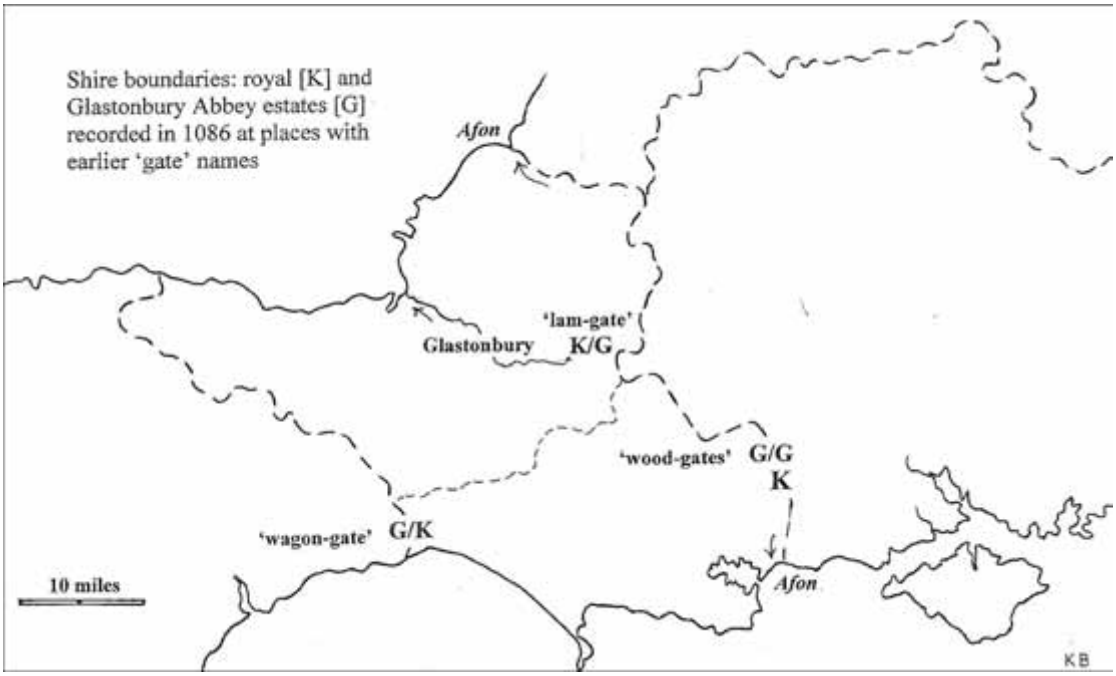


Figure 1.8 - Royal and Glastonbury Abbey manors recorded on three shire boundaries in 1086. Each of these boundaries records a 'gate' name; Lamyatt in Somerset and Woodyates in Dorset are found in the current place-names; the 'wagon gate' on the Dorset-Devon border at Lyme is recorded in a charter of 938. These 'gate' names may record a one-time check point where a toll or tax was levied on goods moving from one shire to the next.

On the Devon-Dorset border (see Fig 1.8) we find Glastonbury Abbey well represented at Lyme, where the estate actually straddles the shire boundary – Uplyme is in Devon. The road ran up from the harbour following an eastward route and crossed the border at the *waegn* gate, 'wagon' 'wain' or 'way gate' recorded in 938. The Crown holding is represented by what

becomes the medieval borough - *regis* – 'of the King'. West Saxon Crown and Glastonbury Abbey are found together, as it were side by side, in the 'management' not only of a harbour, but of a harbour on a border. Recent work on which the writer is currently engaged takes the Glastonbury presence here back into the later part of the seventh century. That is, to an early period in West Saxon expansion.

Fig 1.9 shows the pattern of landownership entered in Domesday for the watershed-borderland area of the AONB. Of immediate note is the fact that Glastonbury Abbey lands are entered, not once, but twice along the border. The first is at Bokerley Dyke and the second at Lamyatt along Selwood. In 1086 Glastonbury held land on either side of Bokerley Dyke, at Martin, the *(ge)maere tun*, 'place on the boundary' and at Pentridge. There is – at least as yet – no evidence for this arrangement going back as far as that evidenced at Lyme.

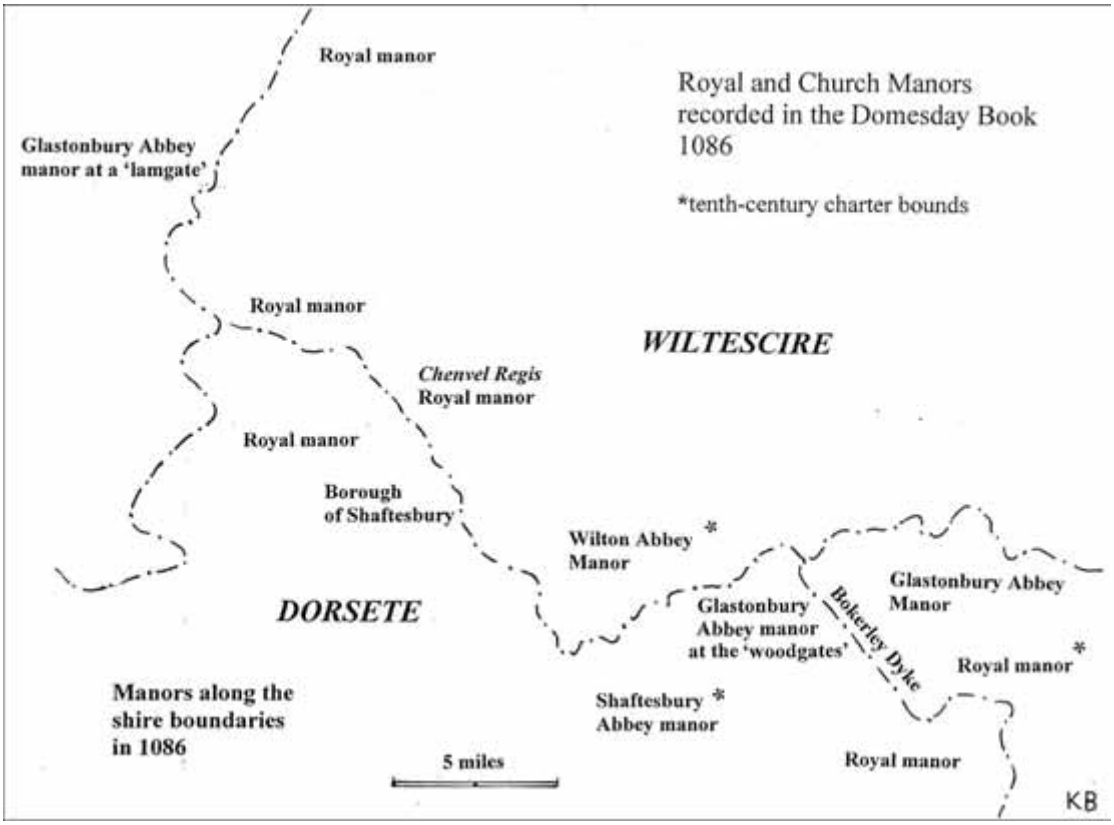


Figure 1.9 - Royal and Church manors recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 for the area of the AONB. Entries in Domesday are listed shire by shire (county by county), in most cases their bounds following much the same course as today. Perhaps in need of some explanation is why Wiltescire *carries a 'shire' name (as does* Hantescire*) but neither* Dorsete *nor* Sumersete*. Fig 1.5 may provide a clue. Those manors immediately to the east of Bokerley Dyke, Martin and Damerham, were transferred from Wiltshire to Hampshire in 1895.*

Immediately to the south of Martin is Damerham - which in 1086 included Rockbourne. Damerham is first mentioned in the time of King Alfred. In the mid-tenth century in response to the Danish threat *Odiete* (Woodyate), *Pentric* (Pentridge*) Domerham* and *Mertone* – all early Glastonbury estates lying astride the shire boundary – were, it seems, 'requisitioned' by the King as an estate of 100 *mansae* of land. The place-name *Damerham* is interesting; *dom* is Old English 'law' and *ham* is 'residence'. In Roman times, Latin *mansio* was a residential staging post. Reference to a hundred units usually implies an already-working estate – or group of estates – and this has thus every appearance of being just that, held by the crown on the border. At Bokerley there are thus a group of large borderland estates held by the king and by the abbot of Glastonbury; a 'coupling' already cited for Lyme on the other side of the

county, on the Devonshire border. The Roman road crosses Bokerley Dyke at Woodyates, literally the 'wood gates' – to which reference has already been made. A single *Wdgeate* in the ninth century, it was also only one gate in 1086; the plural form we inherit dates from a later period. Old English *yat* or *geat* means 'gate' and when it occurs in a place-name usually designates a gate of some particular significance. This *yat* is found at the point of entry into Dorset, on land held on both sides of the border by Glastonbury Abbey. As noted above, there was a 'wagon gate' on the Dorset-Somerset border at Lyme.

Yet another 'gate' name is found at Lamyatt on the Somerset side of the Selwood watershed (Fig 1.9). At the headwaters of the River Brue above Lamyatt is Lamyatt Beacon, a prominent limestone outlier once topped by a large Romano-Celtic temple which must have been a major landmark visible for many miles. Archaeology suggests it was dedicated to the god Mercury, patron of travellers and traders. Under the temple building archaeologists found piles of stag antlers. An important one-time pagan sanctuary it is probably referred to by Aldhelm, first bishop of Sherborne, in a letter to one of his students. He describes a horrible place where once 'filthy snakes and stags were worshipped in crude stupidity'. In their place, he assures us, the architect had skilfully constructed an *oraminum*, a place for Christian students to stay. At Lamyatt Beacon the archaeologists may have found that too. The very pagan imagery of stags heads and antlers were Christianised through the visions of Saints Hubert and Giles; there is a short piece about these two saints at the beginning of this volume. It is of interest to note that a pagan temple site at Woodyates also produced a large number of stag antlers.

Lamyatt (like Woodyates) also presents a *yat* or 'gate' name – this time apparently in the singular – and on an east-west route across Selwood. Lamyatt was a Glastonbury Abbey estate; it is adjacent to Bruton, an early royal manor, where the Norman historian William of Malmesbury tells us Aldhelm presented to the church there a heavy marble altar he brought back from Rome. Something as heavy as this clearly was (and William tells us he had actually seen it) most probably transported by boat – a flat-bottomed river craft – and came up the River Brue from the Somerset coast; a route which will have taken it through Glastonbury itself. Thus once again, we find king and [Glastonbury] abbot holding estates on a shire boundary; this time Wiltshire with Somerset.

There is no surviving documentary evidence from this side of the English Channel, but certainly in a seventh-century Merovingian – French – context, the right to supervise and collect tolls at border crossings was in the gift of the king and could be very lucrative. Glastonbury Abbey has a long, rich and colourful history which has been much enhanced in the telling, but there is little doubt that it had its origins as an early and well-placed trading *emporium* on the River Brue. The River Severn with its Welsh and Irish links has been dubbed the 'Celtic Mediterranean'. Evidence – such as it is – from the early shire boundaries cited here, suggests that Glastonbury may also have fulfilled a role as licensed controller of [inland] revenues.

For both Woodyates and Lamyatt it may thus be argued here that these places are 'gate' names, the meaning of which finds its origins in the existence of an early border control. These were registered places where the movement of drovers and their stock, and traders and people and pack animals paused, watered, said a prayer – and paid a toll. Under the Roman Empire tolls levied at borders were called *portaria*. Woodyates, like Lamyatt, is known to have been occupied in Roman times. West Woodyates occupies a spring head of some antiquity; a pausing place for watering and one which – by implication – will present a pagan Celtic significance Christianised by a Glastonbury lordship.

Following the shire boundary west from Handley

It is now of some interest to retrace our steps along the Handley Shire Rack and to follow the actual course of the shire boundary on its way towards Somerset (Fig 1.9, see also Fig 1.7). Moving west in 1086, the land lying to the south – Handley – was held by Shaftesbury Abbey, by the charter of 956 already mentioned. In 1086 it was registered for 90 hides – were 10 missing perhaps? On the north side of the Shire Rack in Wiltshire land was held by Wilton Abbey. That too formed the subject of a tenth-century grant, this time for a full 100 hides, and like the Handley grant this also forms the subject of a surviving boundary survey. A first look suggests this grant represents a large block of land embracing that group of villages between Berwick St John as far as – but not including – Bishopstone.

Moving on round to the west, we reach Shaftesbury, already a royal borough and mint by 1086, which occupies a spectacular 700s' high borderland hilltop site. It was a *burh*, which in 877 was spelled *buri*, that is, a 'fortified place'. Its full name was Old English *Sceaftesburi.* A *sceaft* is a 'pole'; the word survives in modern 'shaft'. While it has been suggested that this is an allusion to the steepness of the hill, it seems more than possible here that the word refers to a long-lost tall pillar or pole which once topped it – the inland equivalent of a sea mark – which could be used for signalling. Such a feature would have been visible for many miles to both north and south. Possibly the subject of late seventh-century grant by an early West Saxon king, Shaftesbury was the site chosen for a nunnery by King Alfred's daughter. (As noted above, Handley was a Shaftesbury Abbey estate.) The Domesday Book records Shaftesbury in a pretty desperate condition. Clearly a place of strategic importance, just twenty years after the Norman conquest thirty eight of sixty six houses there were in ruins . . . and of those one hundred and fifty three houses held by the Abbey forty two 'had been utterly destroyed'. English resistance to the Norman administration was ruthlessly supressed. Domesday informs us that this state of affairs dated from the time of one Hugh Fitzgrip.

So west again along the shire boundary to Gillingham. Gillingham was a large royal manor. A place-name ending in '*ingham*' is an early Saxon form; it is the *ham* of the *Gillingas,* 'Gilla's people'. Arguably this 'ham' has the same kind of residential significance as presented by Damer*ham*. Gillingham is a well-represented place-name type further east – found for example in Reading and Basing and Woking[ham] – and Gillingham in Kent – but there are no further '-ings' in this area. This is probably significant in this context, that is, the name may well represent occupation of this large borderland estate by some of the first generations of West Saxon – Old English-speaking – settlers, kinsmen perhaps, to one of the self-appointed kings. Gillingham occupies a large and very distinct northern salient in the Dorsetshire boundary.

Mere – in Wiltshire – is where boundary things change course, and we find ourselves back in the designated area of the AONB. The place-name Mere is simply *(ge)maere*, 'boundary.' Sited in the Domesday Hundred of Mere was the Wilton Abbey manor of [West] Knoyle and the royal manor of [East] Knoyle also recorded in 1086 as Chenvel *Regis* in the Geld Accounts on which much of the later Domesday Inquest was ultimately based. Why, we may ask ourselves, does Mere have the name it has? It does not indicate a settlement, or a people – just the boundary. It is like Martin at Bokerley, but without the 'tun'. The answer can never be known for certain, but looking at the geography of the area, we note firstly that we find ourselves on the borders of three shires, secondly that the countryside is broken and hilly, and thirdly – and perhaps not least – the shire boundary as it has descended to us does not quite follow the watershed. Its course follows what is, as it were, an arbitrary line, one for which formal on-the-ground definition would – we may take it – have assumed a rather greater significance than usual. It has bequeathed its name, Mere, 'boundary' to that administrative area of Wiltshire abutting the borders of both Somerset and Dorset.

Round the corner from Mere the shire boundary now runs north along the Selwood watershed above Stourhead on the eastern side, which – as its name suggests – occupies the headwaters of the River Stour, and thence past Lamyatt already mentioned.

North of Lamyatt is Witham Friary, site of a one-time Carthusian monastic house (with a medieval deer park) and Longleat, formerly the site of a hermitage, a lonely 'out station' as it were, of the extensive royal manor of Warminster. Site of today's great Elizabethan house and park, and built after what we might think of as the 'privatisation' of the estate after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. But now we really are outside the boundary of the AONB.

What is missing from the sketch plan of the shire boundaries are not only the contours but a plot of all the mounds and minor earth – and ringworks and enclosures of various kinds and of various dates which are to be found ranged along the whole of this borderland. These are works for the management and impounding of animals, for seasonal occupation and settlement, not least for quarrying and timber-working, and for look-out and defence in times of unrest. These sites are yet to be systematically examined and recorded for all four counties. One of these minor earthworks is not very far from the Sixpenny Handley village hall. It is to be found just off the Shire Rack on the Handley (south) side, and appears on the OS 1:2500 map as a 'fort' in Mistleberry Wood. It is unlikely to have much to do with mistletoe. For this 'fort' is to be identified with the *Mealeburg*, listed at number 13 on the Handley charter (Fig 1.1). It is almost certainly recorded as a boundary feature of the neighbouring Chalke charter but this time the clerk renders it as *Micel Burh*, or 'Great Camp.' It was thus already in existence by the mid tenth-century. It is a curious work, now hidden in woodland and apparently unfinished, damaged – or altered – at some later date. It was drawn and recorded by Heywood Sumner and appears in his *Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*. It occupies a site which would once have afforded a clear and uninterrupted view to the south as far as the coast. To the north is an area of level plateau land which affords a clear view of anyone – or anything – which had made the ascent up from the Chalke valley. Interestingly, there is a *Toten Berg*, a 'Lookout Station' listed at No 10 probably, notes Grundy, 'the earthen enclosure at the side of the British village nearly three quarters of a mile N of Farnham village'. The origins – and subsequent use of both the *micel burh* and the *toten berg* – remain obscure. There is some archaeological potential here.

Shire borderlands and deer parks

The medieval deer park survey drew attention to another landscape feature of the area of the AONB which might merit further enquiry (Fig 1.10). Blagdon Park is by far the largest attested medieval deer park of Dorset. It occupies an area of a thousand acres and more and actually lies across the county boundary at Bokerley. It is of a size to qualify as something of a 'Great Park' and – perhaps significantly – extends on either side of the shire boundary. There may once have been something similar in West Wiltshire. There is some evidence in support of a long-lost 'Great Park' centred on what becomes Bradley Park at Maiden Bradley. This would have occupied a wide swathe of high plateau country leading up to the Selwood border. Yet again, there may be the remains of what could be a third hypothetical 'Great Park' on the west side of Dorset on the Devon border, being the extensive – and now lost – park of Marshwood-*Crekelade*. The first name may possibly present Old English *mearc*, 'border' and the second, *(ge)lad* 'route' or 'passage' is linked with an earlier word 'crook' or 'creech' for 'hill'. The word *(ge)lad* as in (Long) 'Load' in Somerset is more often found in association with a designated ferry crossing over a river. As noted earlier in this essay, the place-name 'Marshwood' is more obviously descriptive of this low-lying, clay, vale.

Without further work it is difficult to know whether these areas are likely to be related in terms of their early management and to how they might (or might not) be understood. These are tracts of land associated with their respective shire boundaries; if they do indeed present a shared identity of some kind, they may originally have formed outlying herding – and hunting

– areas; the scene, perhaps, of major seasonal markets or fairs. It is possible they are descended from an earlier phase in the lives of these borderlands. There is good evidence in pastoral societies of the importance of such areas as meeting and trading places; as places of convocation and parley. A number of early battles are known to have taken place on borderlands – also places where treaties, pacts and alliances were drawn up.

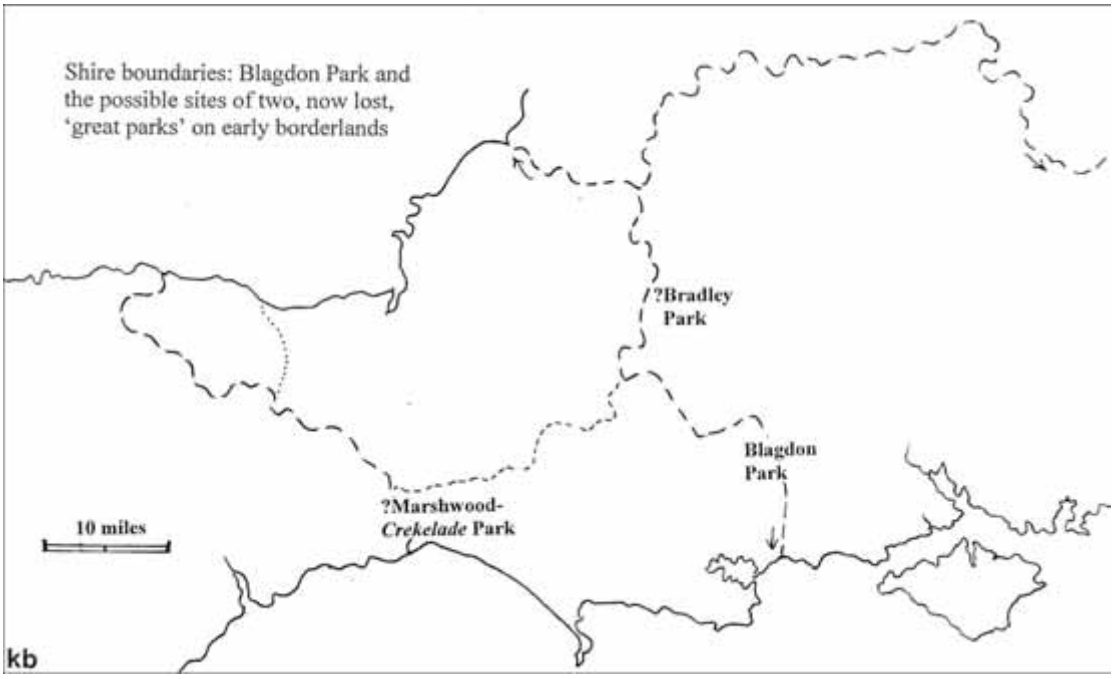


Figure 1.10 - Sketch plan showing the possible sites of 'great parks' on three shire boundaries; a clue to the existence of former, now long-lost 'great' parks at Bradley and at Marshwood may be provided by the Medieval Park at Blagdon.

Hay **and** ***hays*** **place-names in the AONB**

Place-names in the Landscape is the title of a book written by the doyenne of place-name studies, Margaret Gelling. This essay concludes by thinking about one particular minor place-name which drew the attention of the writer in the course of the research undertaken for the AONB medieval deer park survey. Dr Gelling awaits further developments with interest. This is a minor place-name which is found many times in one particular area of the AONB. It is a name-element which has been recorded elsewhere in connection with borders and borderlands. Here, within the AONB, it occurs on the Wiltshire-Dorset border round Semley and Sedgehill (Fig 1.11). Plotted on a map it presents a distribution pattern which – so far – seems to have gone unnoticed.

The minor place-name concerned is *hays*, which may also be spelled *hayes*. It is also found as *hay*. The writer lives near a 'Culverhayes' in Sherborne which was once a medieval 'culver' or pigeon *hays*, that is (or was), a hedged enclosure with a pigeon house in it. It is now bereft of both pigeon loft and hedge and is occupied by a car park. The word *hay* or *hay(e)*s is the same word as found in modern French, *haie*, 'hedge'. It comes from the Latin *haga* found in Old English as *(ge)haeg*, and thus, pronounced with a soft 'g' becomes current English 'hedge'. It is found on the other side of the North Sea in Flemish and Dutch as *haga, haghe, haya* or *haia*, - whence the origin of the 'ha-ha' in eighteenth-century landscaped parks. (There is that well-known place called The Hague.) In German a *hag und graben* is the laying of a coppice hedge; indicating that a *haga* was a barrier of thorns designed to keep out grazing animals. It is not an uncommon minor place-name element and is usually taken on this side of the North Sea to denote a [laid] hedged enclosure, field or plot. Sometimes it

forms the name of a farm. A 'hayward' was someone designated to look after *hays*, 'hedges'; the 'haw' in hawthorn comes from the same word. It is that spiky, bushy plant; a 'hay thorn'. (Cut dried grass used to feed stock, which we call 'hay' comes from a similar – but different – Old English word. Thus a 'hays', a hedged field growing grass, could be cut for 'hay'.) There is a *Hege Reawe*, 'hedge row' recorded in the Handley charter between reference points 9 and 10.

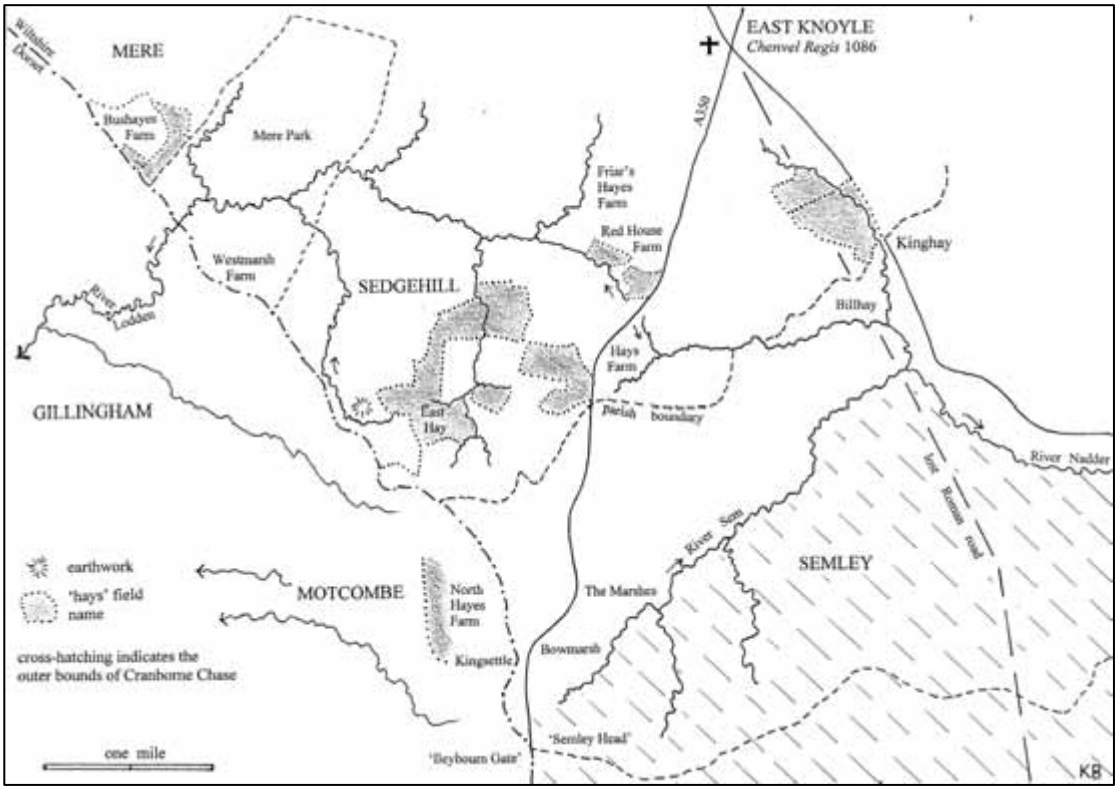


Figure 1.11 - Sketch plan of the Sedgehill-Semley area on the Wiltshire-Dorset border showing field names in hays *as recorded on the East Knoyle Tithe Map of 1839. It becomes clear that some of these* hay/hays *names are associated with distinct field and settlement plans; Kinghay astride a lost Roman road is an interesting example. See Fig 1.12 for more detail.*

The word *haga* is found in the pre-Norman name for a deer park, Ongar Great Park in Essex was known in Old English as a *deerhay*. This is also found as a field name in the AONB in Rockbourne (see page 91-92 in this volume). Lying to the north and west of the medieval manor house is a field recorded in the seventeenth century as *Deerehay* and which may represent the hitherto 'lost' East Park. The boundary of the 'hay' will clearly have been of a character sufficient to retain deer – and further, the use of this word probably implies that this was an enclosure or reserve which dates from a time before the Norman Conquest.

Della Hooke has made a special study of the West Midlands where she notes that *hagas* are particularly associated with wooded areas and linked with the driving and trapping of animals; hence *wulfhagen*, 'wolf hays' and *swinhagen*, 'pig hays'. Frans Vera suggests that in the tenth century this may also have been the meaning of a *deor haga*; that is, a permanent enclosure into which deer were driven through a narrow opening. We should, perhaps, start to look for such an opening into the Rockbourne *Deerehay*. That is to say, it was not used in quite the same way as a later Deer Park. 'The common demoninator of all this – as Frans Vera notes – is the impenetrability of a *haga* by animals – even by those desperately trying to escape.

In order to suggest that *hay* or *hays* can present a human – and military – significance, a small digression becomes necessary which takes us over the English Channel to think about some work published several years ago by a French scholar, Charles Higounet, who noted the occurrence of *hays* names in France. In France, the Latin word *haia* or *haga* is first recorded in a document of the year 862 with the meaning of 'defensive palisade'. It is also the word used to denote the limits of territorial *seigneuries*, 'sometimes equipped with ditches, wooden defences and regulated passages'. It was an essentially military term also associated with a 'run up' to a bank and ditch or to an enclosed or protected area. Higounet quotes the *haies de Brie,* the 'hedges' of that area of France which gives its name to the cheese. In the twelfth century the *haies de Brie* extended over many miles defining areas of lordship. The word *haie* finished up, notes Higounet, by later designating an open field in woodland, or a hedged close, or sometimes a larger area reserved for the *chasse.* He noted that it should be possible, by looking carefully at both documentary and landscape evidence, to distinguish between the two.

We can go back further than this. In his account of the Gallic Wars, his *De Bello Gallico*, Julius Caesar describes a common practice employed by the Gauls to impede the progress of the Roman cavalry. People called the *Nervii*, occupying the country along the River Scheldt (much of the area now known as Belgium) were particularly skilful in deflecting Roman attack. The whole strength of the *Nervii*, noted Caesar lay in their infantry. 'So it was long ago' he writes, 'they devised a method of hindering their neighbours' cavalry when it made plundering raids into their territory. They cut the tops off saplings, bent them over, and let a thick growth of side branches shoot out; in between they planted briers and thorns and thus made hedges like walls, which gave such protection that no one could even see through them, much less penetrate them'. Caesar says they made 'hedges like walls.' Caesar uses the classical Latin word *murus* for wall, and for hedges he uses the word '*saepes'* – he does not use *haga*. What seems to have happened is that it was the local word, early Dutch/Flemish *hegge* which was only later Latinised as *haga*. And also Latinised were Old German *hecke* and Old English *haege*. What was *saepes* to Mediterranean-based Romans, became *haga* to later writers living in a northern countryside.

Caesar is describing a technique we would call 'hedge laying', something characteristically northern; something the Romans might surely have dubbed 'barbarian practice'. A bank planted-up with a row of appropriately spaced and managed hazel trees was, properly coppiced, an important long-term source of wood for all kinds of practical and everyday uses, best-known perhaps is its use for hurdles for fencing and walling. Planted along borders – along frontiers between rival groups – they would have formed a formidable barrier, particularly to horses; newly coppiced hazel is very spiky and could have been very easily 'fortified' – made yet more spiky – during times of threat. Managing the growth of brambles (which Caesar carefully mentions) would have provided an additional deterrent to movement – while ensuring an annual crop of blackberries!

The writer recently chanced to see archive film footage from the First World War featuring much the same area as that once occupied by the *Nervii*. Dating from the early months of the conflict, the pictures showed men, in open country, digging long trenches along the bottom of which they were fixing lengths of hurdling held upright by carefully-spaced hazel stakes driven deep into the ground. Designed to impede enemy cavalry (and gun carriages) this technique was only superseded by the introduction of barbed wire . . .

Professor Higounet noted the existence of *hays* names across the Channel here in England, recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and cited by Professor Darby. Darby observed that 'the record of places with *hays* [in Domesday] presents some strange features. By far the greater number appear in the folios for Cheshire and Shropshire with fifty two and forty two places respectively. There are another ten for Herefordshire but only three each for Gloucestershire and Worcestershire. Rather tentatively, he suggested they were all linked

with hunting, in other words, with that category of *hays* reserved by Higounet for the *chasse.* What is immediately striking here is the marked concentration of these *hays* along the Welsh Marches – along the English-Welsh borderland. This area will also 'fit' with Higounet's observations relating to the correlation of *hays* names in northern France with those areas associated with the careful definition of lordships, those places sometimes equipped with ditches, defences and regulated access routes. A place-name he saw as often denoting the 'run up' to an enclosed, protected – or patrolled – area. Some of these along the Welsh Marches are more than likely to be associated with the hunting and/or the retention of animals; it is suggested here that all of them are in some way or other related to the exigencies of living in contested border country. Conflict between English and Welsh goes back at least to the eighth century. Della Hooke notes a marked concentration of *haga* names in the boundary clauses of one particular area to the west of the River Severn on the borders of the [lost] kingdom of the *Hwicce*, remembered as those people who gave their name to Worcester – the 'Hwicce-castra'.

In researching the medieval deer parks of the area of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB the writer came across – quite unexpectedly – a notable concentration of names in *hays* along the Dorset-Wiltshire border at Semley and at Sedgehill in need of some explanation (see Figs 1.7 & 1.11). A second area which presents an assemblage *hays* names lies across the Somerset-Wiltshire Selwood watershed clustering round Corsley – which lies just outside the area of the AONB. Corsley itself lies in Wiltshire. This is (or was) the *leah,* the 'lea' given as sited at the *cors,* Old Welsh 'marsh' or 'bog'. In the context suggested here, Old English *corf*, 'pass' or 'gap' becomes a possibility (as in *Cors*combe in Dorset). Corsley is on the Wiltshire side of the putative Bradley Great Park on the route across Selwood and down into the Avon Valley of north Somerset.

Many years ago, Professor W G Hoskins noted the large number of *hays*-named places, especially farms, to be found on the Dorset-Devon borderland which he saw as related to early Saxon colonisation and settlement of the area. This is an extensive area, larger than that identified round Corsley and Semley and Sedgehill, and which invites further enquiry.

Several of the *hays* names of the Semley-Sedgehill area of the AONB seem to be associated with distinctive field and settlement patterns similar to those identified west of the River Severn (see above). This is an area of the AONB which invites some systematic field work.

Fig 1.11 is sketch map made from the East Knoyle Tithe Survey of 1839. It was through this hilly, deeply dissected countryside, a long-lost Roman road once pursued its route from Badbury to Mendip. Its projected course takes it through *Billhay*, then through *Kinghay* and on to that point where its course has been traced just south-east of East Knoyle church. This was once a main road; a cross-country arterial route linking the English and Bristol Channels. No one knows when it went out of use – when – and why – traffic stopped using it. It is hard not to suggest that the disposition of that settlement which came to be known as the king's *hay* played some part here; movement was made difficult, the tolls were too high – the area too dangerous.

As can be seen from Fig 1.12, the projected course of this lost Roman road appears to cross what the Tithe Survey shows as a double hedge, and unusually for a hedge, it is not only listed as such by the surveyor, but actually assigned its own survey number. The character and alignment of the hedge – and what may growing in it – in relation to this lost road apparently crossing it at right-angles, invites some field work.

Similarly with the settlement plan presented by Bushayes Farm (Fig 1.11) which actually abuts the shire boundary but this time on the western side of the watershed. As can be seen on the sketch map the hedge bounding a *hays*-named field just south of the farm buildings joins the shire boundary at right-angles, an arrangement which echoes exactly that presented

at Hays Farm just north of Lyme where the remains of a substantial field bank of coppiced hazels joins the Devon-Dorset boundary. At Lyme, Hays Farm is actually sited on the Dorset-Devon border – as is Bushayes Farm on the Wiltshire side of the Dorset boundary north of Gillingham where part of its boundary runs with that of Higher Mere Park (Fig 1.11). There are no fewer than fifteen *hayes*/*haies* names recorded on the seventeenth century map of Gillingham Forest. At Sedgehill itself, the arrangement of *hays*-named fields in 1839 seems to isolate a rectangular area lying across the course of one of the tributary streams of the Lodden, and Hays Farm lying beside the present A350 occupies that area of land between two streams – astride the actual watershed.

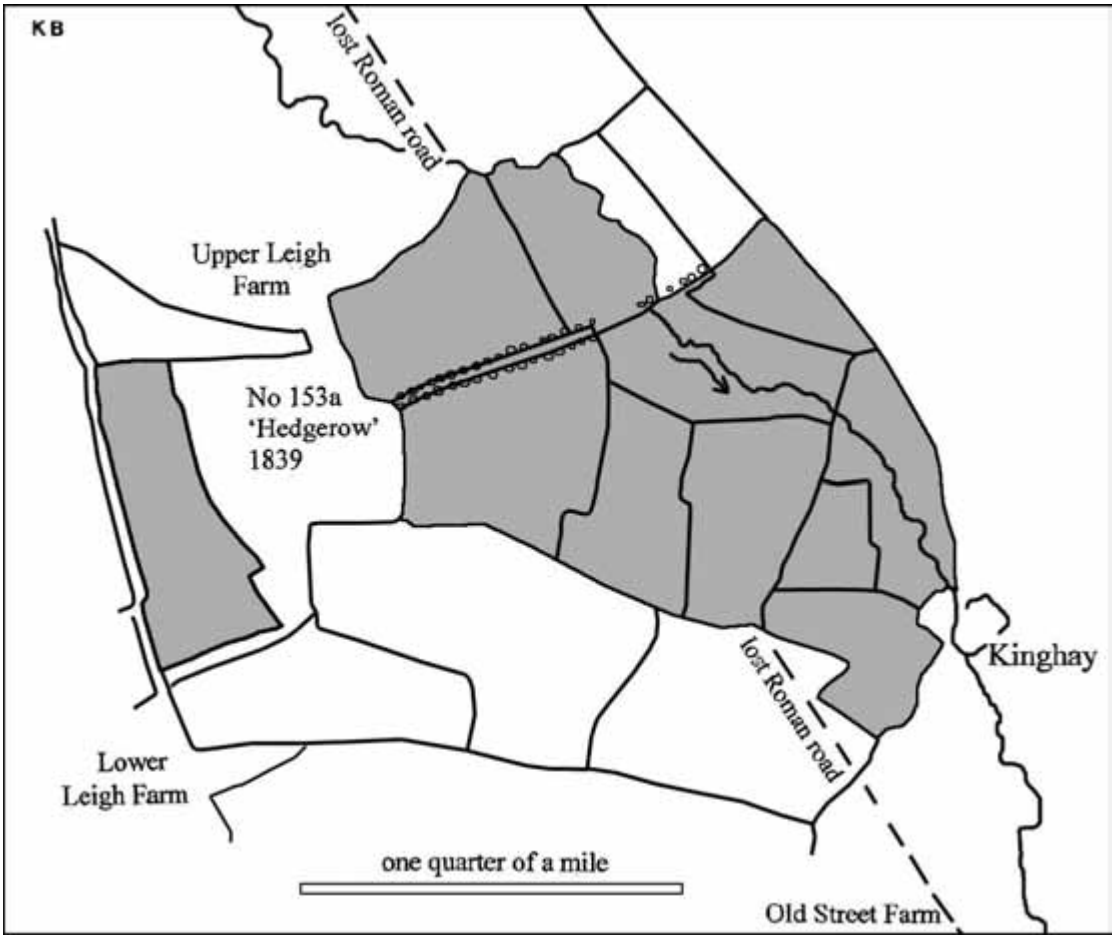


Figure 1.12 - Detail of Kinghay taken from the East Knoyle Tithe Map of 1839. A carefully drawn double hedge, numbered 153a by the Survey, appears to lie directly across the course of a lost Roman road. As on Fig 1.11, hays-*named fields are shown shaded.*

Further to closer inspection of *hays* settlement and field patterns in other borderland areas, it may be possible in the Sedgehill-Semley area of the AONB to at least begin to distinguish between something simply denoting a 'hedged field' or 'close' from something designed to control the movement of animals in marginal and afforested areas, to something which could also serve to control – or impede – the movement of people. The word *hays* itself, as noted above, is of Old English/Germanic origin and which prompted Proffessor Hoskins to posit that, for the Dorset-Devon borderlands, these were places set up by the incoming English. These names will thus belong to that phase of colonisation and settlement during the seventh and eighth centuries. The assemblage of *hays* names on the Dorset-Wiltshire border just north of Gillingham – and that presented at Corsley along the Wiltshire-Somerset border – provides an even stronger case for a link with contested borderland areas, with what were to become West Country shire – county – boundaries. What that link may have been remains to be explored.

'Everything is older than we think'…

The age and character of the hedges in these Semley-Sedgehill *hays*-named places may be able to tell us quite a lot about their origins. Archaeology may also have something to say. One particular length of the Dorset-Wiltshire shire-boundary-hedge comes to mind here, and it is with this length of the boundary this paper concludes. Walking west along the Dorset-Wiltshire boundary from Pribdean Wood on the road from Handley to Bowerchalke from point 14 on the Handley charter towards Mistlelberry Camp, members of the Dorset County Boundary Research Group found the shire boundary following a course defined by parallel rows of well-spaced hazel coppice stools, and which may be seen on Plate 3.

There is nothing here of the scale or age of the Whitebeam tree along the border to the east of the Bowerchalke road, nor of the scale or age of Bokerley Dyke further east still. Here a centuries old boundary has been planted up with what was once an important – indeed essential – renewable resource which, as may be seen in the photograph, was once formerly better managed. It was regularly coppiced. No one yet knows what archaeology may have to say about the boundary itself beneath the hazel trees which documentary evidence suggests was already well-established a thousand years ago. The words of Julius Caesar echo in the mind. Those peoples known as the *Nervii*, the 'Nervians' in what is now Belgium along the River Scheldt, who held up the Roman advance with carefully managed 'hedges like walls'. This length of the boundary only needs a little management to convert very easily.

That the coppiced hazel hedge, the Whitebeam tree and Bokerley Dyke can be understood as related to one another is an unexpected aspect of the historic landscape of the AONB. The word 'landscape' (like the word 'hedge') is well represented in the Low Countries, that *landschip* earlier found in Old English was re-imported and coined to connote those wide, scenic views so characteristic of this designated Area. It is not simply those tracts of landscape that are the making of what we see, its watercourses, its geology and soils, but its settlement and management. Those aspects of human activity framed by those linear features by which the land surface has been divided, assessed, defended – designated – in short by its 'boundary geography'. Many years ago the writer coined the word 'hercology' to describe the study of boundaries. From a Greek word *hercos* meaning a hedge, fence or boundary; that pertaining to an inheritance. There is little doubt that boundaries comprise some of the most ancient features surviving in the landscapes of today. Some are demonstrably recent; others have origins lost in the mists of time. Vested interest in boundaries remains very strong.

In the seventy-plus years since Dr Grundy published a translation of the tenth-century Handley charter there have not only been major advances in archaeology but in the study of landscape history which simply didn't exist until the publication of W G Hoskins' pioneering *The Making of the English Landscape* in 1955. 'Despite the multitude of books about English landscape and scenery . . . there is not one book which deals with the historical evolution of the landscape as we know it' he wrote. Over the last 25 years the work of scholars like Oliver Rackham has emphasised the complementary importance of an understanding of the natural world – of woods and woodlands, hedgerows – and individual trees.

If the Whitebeam tree on the Dorset-Wiltshire boundary owes both its landscape location and its survival to human agency it is literally rooted in archaeology. So is everything else that has its roots in the disposition of those four shire boundaries that traverse the area of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Area Downs of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is not within the field of this essay to discuss the meaning of 'Beauty', concepts of beauty belong to the world of aesthetics, to philosophy. That deemed to be 'Natural' is a category describing a state-of-affairs which is not 'man-made'. It is here the designation identifies itself as one reflecting the thinking of a generation before anyone was aware of the scale of the impact of human activity on the rural landscape. Towns and cities were clearly man-made – industrial,

smoky and not beautiful. The Romantic movement had bequeathed a vision of the pastoral and the idyllic and it was this which was threatened by post-war expansion, by suburban sprawl, by the occupation of the countryside by the newly mobile, car-owning classes complemented by newly-introduced intensive agricultural methods, 'factory farming' to feed them.

The designating of an AONB "shire" – perhaps a not wholly inappropriate coining of the word – will itself take its place in the landscape history of this area. Wittingly – or not – the designators slung a boundary around an area of a very particular manmade – man-managed – character. It has been a privilege to visit an area where the 'father of British archaeology' General Pitt-Rivers laid the foundations of the discipline we follow today. Understanding has grown and archaeology – landscape archaeology – now embraces not only those things below ground but those things on and above ground; not only those things buried, but those things changing and growing. For just as W G Hoskins observed, 'everything is older than we think'. The bounds of the AONB present opportunities for a field of enquiry over a tract of countryside which transcends – quite literally – those twenty-first century administrative limits associated with county planning and budgetary interests. In considering these literal *limits*, the actual physical form in which these county boundaries present themselves today, these many miles of so-far unrecorded 'linear landscape feature', poses the question as to their future. 'Boundaries are one of the most permanent and ancient features in the English landscape' noted Hoskins and these surely number among them. Those things underground will safely remain there unless dug up, surface features if not maintained will degrade over time – but those things growing, those trees whose continuing existence is demonstrably the result of skilled management over many, many generations – will simply cease to be if left to 'nature'. The legacy of the twenty-first century in this unique borderland area is yet to be determined.

References and further reading

Full references to much of the work in this paper will be found in another of the forthcoming volume *Aldhelm* and *Sherborne: essays to celebrate the founding of the bishopric in 705,* based on papers given at a conference in 2005 and edited by Katherine Barker and Nicholas Brooks. The Sixpenny Handley charter was published by G B Grundy in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, vol 38 for 1936 – to which reference has been made in the text. Between 1933 and 1939 he published nearly forty Saxon boundary charters relating to Dorset. Handley is not the only Saxon charter boundary extant for the area of the AONB; for Wiltshire see G B Grundy's collected *The Saxon Land Charters of Wiltshire.* The Dorset County Boundary Survey was launched in April 2006, the first of a proposed series of Short Reports appeared in the Dorset *Proceedings* for 2007, vol 128. A second was published in 2008. Andrew Reynolds' recent work on Wansdyke is to be found in his 'Social Identities on the Macro Scale: a Maximum View of Wansdyke' in a volume edited by Wendy Davies, Guy Halsall and Andrew Reynolds, *People and Space in the Middle Ages* 300-1300 (2006).

On hedges there is the book of the same name, *Hedges*, in the New Naturalist series by E Pollard, M D Hooper and N W Moore, of 1974. Recently published in the same series is Oliver Rackham's magisterial work *Woodlands* (2006). Also useful is his earlier *The History of the English Countryside* (1986) and his *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* (1976, revised edition 1990). An informative booklet is Angus Winchester's *Discovering Parish Boundaries* (1990) one of the Shire Publications.

Things pagan – those 'filthy stags and snakes' deplored by St Aldhelm – may be found in Ann Ross's Pagan *Celtic Britain* (1967). A digest of this earlier work – and also full of illustrations – is her *Pagan Celts* (1970, re-published in paperback in1998). Then there is *The*

Gods of the Celts (1986) by Miranda Green. More recent is *Gods with Thunderbolts, Religion in Roman Britain* (2002) by Guy de la Bédoyère.

Two important sources in landscape history are to be found in paperback. The first, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles,* translated and edited by Michael Swanton in 1996, was re-issued in paperback in 2000. The second, the Domesday Book, has been published by Phillimore of Chichester, county by county. Those volumes on *Wiltshire* (1979), *Somerset* (1980) and *Dorset* (1983) were all edited by Caroline and Frank Thorn; *Hampshire* (1982) was edited by Julian Munby.

A useful chapter by James Bond 'Forests, Chases, Warrens and Parks in Medieval Wessex' is to be found in *The Medieval Landscape* of Wessex (1994) edited by Michael Aston and Carenza Lewis. Fig 1.6 has been re-drawn from part of his map on page 117. Della Hooke's work discussing *hay/hays* names in Worcestershire is to be found in her '*The Anglo-Saxon Landscape: the Kingdom of the Hwicce* (1985). WG Hoskins noted the incidence of *hays* names on the Dorset-Devon border in his now famous essay 'The Westward Expansion of Wessex' published in 1960 as an Occasional Paper published by the Department of English Local History in the University of Leicester. Hoskins' seminal *The Making of the English Landscape* of 1955 was re-issued in 1988 with an introduction and commentary by Christopher Taylor – and colour photographs. Dr Higounet's work is only to be found in French, *Les Forêts de L'Europe Occidentale du V au XI siècle* published in Spoleto in 1965; he cited Prof H C Darby's work on the Domesday Book which the latter published in his *Domesday England* of 1977. His Fig 68 on page 205 shows the number and distribution of hays names recorded in 1086.

Margaret Gelling has written several books on place-names, as readable as they are informative. In 1984 she published *Place-names in the Landscape* and more recently, with Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-names* which appeared in 2000. For more detailed analysis there are the English Place-name Society volumes published county by county; for Dorset by A D Mills (1977, 1980, 1989) and for Wiltshire by Gover, Mawer and Stenton of 1939. Dorset also has Anton Fägersten's *The Place-names of Dorset* first published – in Sweden – in 1933 and re-published in 1978.

Warmly recommended is Bill Putnam's *Roman Dorset* published by Tempus in 2007; in the same series is *Prehistoric Dorset* by John Gale (2003) one of the contributors to the *Chase, the Hart and the Park*. Another contributor to this volume is Martin Green. Do not miss his much praised *A Landscape Revealed, 10,000 Years on a Chalkland Farm* (2000) which explores in depth the archaeology of the Handley area of Cranborne Chase. A book which still cannot be bettered – by an author whose simplicity of style belies his brilliance – is Christopher Taylor's *Dorset* in the Making of the English Landscape Series. First published in 1970 a new edition appeared in 2004.

Original sources – including Tithe maps - may be consulted in the relevant county record offices. Digital copies of maps are often available for private study.

As noted in Plate 1.1, it is not possible to 'beat the bounds' of either Dorset or Wiltshire. A subject for future enquiry – with possible historical significance – is just how much of the shire boundary is today followed by a bridle way or footpath.

Chapter Two
Sunset over the Chase: The Beginning of Field Archaeology on Cranborne Chase

Gordon Le Pard

Our days begin over the Forest, and end behind the Chase. Eastwards, at the back of Cuckoo Hill, lies the New Forest. Westward, in front of Cuckoo Hill, rises the long ridge of Cranborne Chase (Sumner 1910 p 92).

If the words, 'history of archaeology', and 'Cranborne Chase' are mentioned together, then most people would immediately think of the pioneering work by General Augustus Henry Lane-Fox Pitt-Rivers (1827–1900). Pitt-Rivers was not the only pioneer associated with the Chase, only a few years after his death another man would come to Cranborne Chase and look at its archaeology afresh, George Heywood Manuoir Sumner (1853–1940).

Heywood Sumner, as he was invariably called, had an unusual background for an archaeologist, he was an artist. One of the founders of the Arts and Crafts movement in the late nineteenth century, he was best known for his murals, executed in the unusual, and complex, method of plaster sgraffito. However, in common with many of the artists of the movement, he worked in many different fields, of which the most important to his later work was book illustration.

In 1897 he moved from London to Bournemouth, a town he loathed, though his wife and family liked it.

If ever there was a garden city, Bournemouth is the place, for it is made up of miles & miles of houses in gardens; another little house in another little garden, & then another little house in another little garden, & so on & so on, nearly all the way from Christchurch to Poole. I never loved the sea, & did not find refreshment in garden city life: but the country inland was a constant joy (Sumner ms. 'Book of Gorley' p 2).

Sumner was a keen cyclist and, riding fifty or sixty miles a day he explored the New Forest and Cranborne Chase. Soon just visiting the countryside was not enough, and in 1899 or 1900 he decided to buy or build a small cottage in the New Forest.

My aim was to find a squatter's holding on the gravel hills of the Forest, where we could try the experiment of life amid wild air (Sumner 1910).

These comments read like the idealistic views of many of the 'Arts and Crafts' artists, several of whom moved to the countryside, without any real notion what country life was like; Ernest Gimson, the furniture designer, for example, could not get his simple brick oven to work! Sumner, however, knew perfectly well what he was doing. He had grown up knowing the Hampshire countryside well, if he was going to live in the country he was going to do so in comfort.

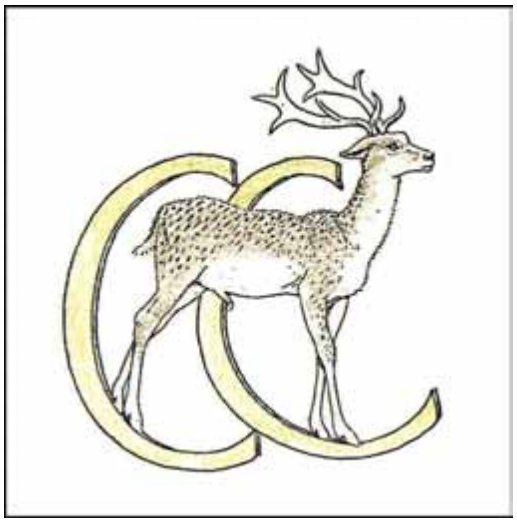


Figure 2.1. Cranborne Chase 'Logo' from manuscript 'Book of Gorley II'

He soon found a site on the edge of the New Forest at Cuckoo Hill, Gorley where there was a ruinous cottage (which was burnt down on Bonfire Night 1905). Here he built the large and comfortable house which he would occupy for the rest of his life.

Settled in at Cuckoo Hill he began work on a description of the local countryside, the 'Book of Gorley', probably intended for his family in future years. This manuscript eventually ran to three volumes. It is through these books that we can trace the development of Heywood Sumner as an archaeologist.

Based at Cuckoo Hill he explored the local countryside; his house was placed on the western edge of the New Forest, facing out towards Cranborne Chase, hence the quote at the beginning of this article. Using the minor railway lines that ran across Dorset and Wiltshire as well as his trusty bicycle, he travelled widely with his sketch book. One such trip is outlined at the beginning of an essay on thatch.

Now when I turn wayfarer, and fare westward from Gorley, across the chalk ridges of Cranborne Chase to Shaftesbury; then down the long causeway that leads into Blackmore Vale, where the good lands begin, and the oxen fatten in rich pastures shaded by interminable elms; past Sherborne, up the gentle ascent of Toller Down, past Beaminster that lies in a great hollow surrounded by hills, and so on to Bridport.

As he explored Cranborne Chase he began to get interested in the archaeology, his notebooks are filled with sketches of the standing monuments, but as yet there is no idea of carrying out his own work. Probably, faced with the massive volumes of Pitt-Rivers researches, he thought there was nothing new to find. The only piece of independent work he did at this time (1908) was mostly desk based, researching the history of local deer parks. Using sixteenth and seventeenth century maps he lists, and gives brief details of, nearly seventy parks in Hampshire, Dorset and Wiltshire.

Figure 2.2 - Ackling Dyke from manuscript
'Book of Gorley I'

He then looks at one park in more detail;

Of all the parks mentioned in these lists, let me now give some chronicle of one – Blagdon, near Cranborne, which may be taken as typical of the disparked ~ parks of our three counties.

No modern map records Blagdon Park. That such a park once existed has been forgotten in the district. The only faint traces of local tradition attaching to Blagdon Park that I have been able to discover, came from an old inhabitant of Cranborne who could mind that 'he did used to plough up bats & crocks [bricks and tiles] on Pentridge Hill in a field called Crockerdon, & that they do say a King's house once stood there'-

Possibly these bats & crocks were the relics of the house shewn by Saxton in Blagdon Park, & probably this dim memory survived from the long succession of royal visits to Cranborne (Book of Gorley Volume II).

He then goes on to outline the history of Blagdon Park from published maps and county histories, but does not appear to have cycled over to Pentridge Hill to look for, '*bats & crocks in a field called Crockerdon*'.

A drawing from this time sums up Heywood Sumner's life, and interests. It comes from a poster he drew in 1904, one of a series of the 'Months of the Year', drawn for the Fitzroy Picture Society; which produced cheap, brightly coloured pictures for schools, church halls etc. The picture for May shows four of his children Dorothea, Beatrice, Humphrey and Christopher dancing with a May garland in a blossom-filled orchard, such as he planted at Cuckoo Hill. In the foreground a New Forest stream trickles across its gravel bed, whilst in the distance rises the chalk hills of Cranborne Chase, crowned with a prehistoric hill fort.

Then, in 1910, he published a selection from the first two of his manuscript notebooks, as *The Book of Gorley*. This was to change his life from that of retired artist and country gentlemen to archaeologist.

The Archaeologist of Cranborne Chase

In 1910 Heywood Sumner became an archaeologist. It is certainly unusual that one can be so precise about such an event but with Sumner it is possible, since the change is sudden and dramatic, in the early part of that year he is accepting earlier authors accounts of ancient sites with a certain naiveté;

ANGLO-SAXON Clearbury Ring - Is on a chalk hill, 460 feet above the sea, situated at the north-east extremity of Cranborne Chase.... Sir R.C.Hoare attributes this camp to the West Saxons, and dates it about A.D. 519, when the battle of Cerdic's Ford (Charford) was fought beside the Avon between Ambrosius (nearly the last king of the Romano-british) and Cerdic, who led the West Saxons. Ambrosius was vanquished and killed, and the remnant of his followers retreated to the highlands of Cranborne Chase (Sumner 1910 p 106-7).

Even the most old fashioned archaeologists of his day would have had doubts about the attribution of Clearbury Rings to the Anglo Saxons, as well as the very precise date of AD 519. However, within three years he is describing the same site with the eye of a truly sceptical, modern archaeologist.

CLEARBURY RING The clump of beech and Scots pine that crown the hill adds greatly to its beauty in the landscape, but the archaeologist must regret that the woodland growth, over the camp site, prevents the hope that its history may be unearthed by the spade. The periods of the occupation of Clearbury ring ... these are questions that excavation might have answered without excessive search and expenditure of labour, the area being comparatively small. But now the roots of trees hold the secrets of Clearbury Ring (Sumner 1913 p 28).

Also in 1910 he is drawing barrows and hill forts as interesting features in a landscape. By the spring of 1911, he was surveying the upstanding earthworks of Cranborne Chase with a skill and accuracy that was unsurpassed in his day.

What was it that changed Sumner from an artist who saw ancient monuments as landscape features, to one of the finest field archaeologists of the day? The clue is to be found in his only surviving archaeological notebook which dates from 1910-1912. It begins as a typical artist's sketchbook, with drawings of landscapes, trees and animals, then in April 1911 it changes to include detailed measurements of earthworks. Many of these notes are dated and,

comparing them with the dates on drawings in *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*, it can be seen that these were the field notes for the published plans and descriptions. The measurements are taken in a very specific way, which was detailed a few years later by Dr. J.P.Williams-Freeman in *An Introduction to Field Archaeology as Illustrated by Hampshire* (1915).

Take a pencil drawing of the 25-inch Ordnance Survey Plan and add to it and correct it on the spot .... take the vertical and horizontal measurements of the banks and ditches and note them in columns opposite the respective letters (in a field sketch) (Williams-Freeman 1915).

This would certainly suggest that Sumner had met, or corresponded with, Williams-Freeman at this time. There is another unusual coincidence, in 1910 Williams-Freeman published his first list of Hampshire Earthworks with an appeal for help; "I will be very grateful to anyone who can aid me with this survey" (Williams-Freeman 1910). Either as a result of this request, or perhaps through Williams-Freeman seeing *The Book of Gorley,* Sumner and Williams-Freeman met. By autumn 1911, the date of the first surviving letter from Sumner to Williams-Freeman, they are obviously good friends, a friendship that was to last until Sumner's death.

Dr. J.P. Williams-Freeman was one of the finest archaeologists of the early twentieth century and his *An Introduction to Field Archaeology as Illustrated by Hampshire* is still a valuable work. He was primarily a surveyor, not an excavator, and it was from him that Sumner, almost certainly, learnt the basics of archaeological surveying. Sumner certainly seems to have been an apt pupil, by early 1911 he was undertaking his first independent surveys. His plans of Bokerley Dyke and Grim's Ditch date from May of that year, whilst over the next few months he was to survey a further forty five sites on Cranborne Chase.

By the summer of 1911 Sumner also realised, that to understand the sites he was surveying, he would have to excavate. As he was to write several years later to Robert Newall;

The interpretation of evidence obtained by the Scientific excavation of a site is founded on the total knowledge now obtainable on such site. In this case you know all the survived facts, above & below ground, & only conjecture, in your interpretation. The interpretation of evidence obtained by Scientific survey of a site is founded on superficial appearances only i.e. only a portion of the knowledge now obtainable. In this case, you know all the survived facts above ground but conjecture as to those below, and conjecture in your interpretation of the conjectures which you treat as assumptions (letter to Newall 7/7/24).

Advice on excavation was to come from Colonel William Hawley, who was excavating Old Sarum at the time. Hawley seems to have been keen to help and advise Sumner, visiting his digs frequently over the next few years. However his main guide, when it came to excavation and recording, were the volumes of General Pitt-Rivers Excavations in Cranborne Chase. Sumner had obtained his copies, sometime before 1907, because they dealt with Cranborne Chase. Now he read them for advice - and followed the General as well as he was able.

The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase

Only a few years earlier, in the 1880s and 1890s Cranborne Chase had been the scene of General Pitt-Rivers' remarkable archaeological campaigns, and thus its archaeology was better known than virtually any other part of the British Isles. So why did Heywood Sumner begin his field work there?

First he knew it well, even before he moved to Cuckoo Hill he had been exploring on his bicycle and the earthworks of the Chase had formed the subject of numerous sketches, some of which found their way into *The Book of Gorley*.

Secondly, Pitt-Rivers' excavations had not covered the whole of the Chase, he had concentrated on sites he owned. Thus Sumner's book can be seen as a companion volume to Pitt-Rivers' series, describing the surface remains of a variety of sites, which could, in part, be understood by reference to Pitt-Rivers' excavations. This may have been Sumner's idea, since of the sites he describes, only two, Winklebury and Bokerley Dyke, had been described by Pitt-Rivers.

Figure 2.3- Knowlton from 'The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase' *(1913)*

Finally, of course, it must be remembered that Williams-Freeman was investigating the earthworks of Hampshire, so by concentrating on Cranborne Chase, Sumner avoided duplicating much of his friend's work. There was some overlap, and both happily acknowledged it, any rivalry seems to have been very friendly.

The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase, is a remarkable survey, forty-nine sites were surveyed, mostly prehistoric or Romano-British. The exceptions are the motte and bailey castle at Cranborne and (perhaps) the Mizmaze at Breamore. Each site is dealt with in a similar way, the site is described, any writers who had mentioned it in the past are quoted and finally, if possible, the site is ascribed to a particular period. For example;

Whitsbury Castle Ditches. This is a very fine camp. It stands 400 feet above the sea, its area covers about 16 acres, and is for the most part surrounded by a triple circle of great banks with two deep ditches .... The area, which is now under pasture, presents a smooth surface. There is no humpy ground but potsherds may be found, telling of past habitation (p 20).

Or on a smaller site;

Chettle Down: The settlement on Chettle Down is remarkable for the large number of cultivation, or enclosure, banks that cover the down surface.... Here, beside two mounds of unusual form, sherds of British pottery may be found upturned whenever the moles have been working (p 44).

At both these sites Sumner recorded pottery, "British" pottery on Chettle Down, but gives no further details. At this time, even after Pitt-Rivers' work, most prehistoric and even some Romano-British coarse pottery had not been clearly identified, so his lack of detail is, perhaps, understandable. Although the majority of the sites in *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase* were well known prior to Sumner, his plans set new standards of accuracy and presentation. He also made several important archaeological discoveries. On July 13 1911 he noted at Hambledon Hill;

Outside the Camp on the S. side, in the hill plateau there is humpy ground that may mean habitation, but here also there does not appear to be any mould, and I could find no pottery shards (Sumner sketchbook 11).

This was expanded in the published description;

Both these spurs are crossed from scarp to scarp by low banks and shallow ditches, double and triple. The down outside the South - Eastern defences of Hambledon Hill Camp had been dinted with modern diggings for flints, and thus it is impossible to form an opinion as to what sort of habitation existed here to account for these outlying banks and ditches. But we may be sure that these simple 15 multiplications of low banks and shallow ditches belong to a different period to that of the great earthworks of Hambledon Hill (Sumner 1913 p 15).

He had discovered the Neolithic Causewayed Camp, although it was not until 1928 that it was realised what it was that his descriptions, and accurate plans, showed.

The publication of *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase* was greeted first with a little scepticism, then delight. The review in the Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine expresses it perfectly;

This book with its thick paper, its opulent margins, its large ornamental type, and its number of full-page or double-page plans, each one an example of attractive penmanship, suggests art rather than archaeology as its subject. It deals with the camps, the entrenched earthworks of lesser strength, which the author regards as cattle pounds or folds, the banks and ditches, the British village sites, and the earthworks of exceptional character such as Knowlton and the Breamore Mizmaze lying within the ancient outer limits of Cranborne Chase in Dorset, Hants and Wilts....Altogether the book - a beautiful book in itself - gives a considerable amount of information as to the earthworks in South Wilts, which is not to be gathered from other sources (Anon 1914a).

Grim's Ditch 1911

Whilst working on the Chase Sumner had realised that excavation was essential if he was to understand the sites he was surveying. He carried out two excavations during the time he was working on *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*. The first was the sectioning of Grim's Ditch. This is the name given to a series of banks and ditches that crossed the chalk downs of the eastern Chase. Several earlier writers had described Grim's Ditch, with varying degrees of accuracy, and put forward a variety of theories to account for it. In Sumner's day the most popular was 'an ancient British trackway', with its rival a 'tribal boundary' running a close second. He considered that;

It appeared to me that excavation could give the only evidence that could explain the usage of Grim's Ditch. If it had ever been used as a trackway, the floor would assuredly be wide and would show signs of trampling (Sumner 1913 p 61).

He began to dig on Breamore Down, near Gallows Hill, on 7 August 1911 and completed his section in three days. The bottom of the ditch was sharply cut and had clearly never been a trackway. The site was inspected by other archaeologists;

Colonel Hawley was staying here last weekend, & I drove him over on Saturday to have a look at the cut. He was interested in the section shewing so clearly that it had never been used as a trackway (Letter to Sir Edward Hulse 9/9/11).

A second section was cut on Knoll Down where;

Five small sherds of probably pre-Roman pottery were found 3 feet down in the silt of the ditch, three sherds of similar pottery were found on the down level under the South-Eastern bank. The mole castings about here had shown that such potsherds were below ground, and that it seems that this earthwork was thrown up in pre-Roman times. With the evidence of these sections, I think it is impossible to suppose that this ditch can ever have been used as a trackway. But positive evidence of the period of its construction is still needed (Sumner 1913 p 61-2).

Unfortunately the pottery was not described in any further detail and has not survived. However his suggestion of a prehistoric date for the feature, and its use as a boundary has been confirmed by later authors (Bowen 1990).

Rockbourne Down 1911-1913

It was during his initial explorations of Cranborne Chase that Sumner discovered Spring Pond. Ponds fascinated him, and one of the unpublished essays in Gorley II concerns two local ponds, Spring Pond and Ocknell Pond.

Whilst writing this essay (sometime between 1908 and 1910) he had read *Neolithic Dew-Ponds and Cattleways* (Hubbard and Hubbard 1905). This curious little book had considerable influence in its day;

One little book that had a great vogue at the time [early in the twentieth century] was a curious compilation called 'Neolithic Dewponds and Cattleways', by Hubbard. It was full of the wildest ideas, but it did have a freshness that was in marked contrast to the dreary stuff that then often passed as archaeology. At least it showed that there were a lot of interesting things lying about all over the downs, waiting to be explained (Crawford 1953).

One of the ideas put forward by the Hubbards was that of the 'fortified pond', a pond surrounded by an earthwork. It was, perhaps, with this in mind that Sumner came to Spring Pond in 1911, to see if it was a 'fortified pond'. It was not, but there were unrecorded earthworks by the pond. Sumner was naturally curious and soon determined that these banks delineated a five sided enclosure containing 96 acres.

After making such survey as I have described and planned my observations were directed to the Down Land that still remains uncultivated within the area of this large enclosure. Signs of habitation - humps and hollows, with potsherds on the mole-hills and rabbit scrapes were found on the upper, North-Eastern side of the area, and here, helped by the experience and advice of Colonel Hawley, who kindly came over from Old Sarum to inspect the site, I began to excavate in 1911. The place chosen was a hollow on the Downs where moles and rabbits worked freely, and threw up potsherds (Sumner 1914a p15).

Over the next three years he was to spend several weeks each summer excavating the site. It was an unqualified success. Three 'Hypocausts' were located (they would now be identified as 'grain dryers') on either side of the enclosure ditch, a causeway had been built across the ditch to link them, and a separate enclosure built which incorporated, unusually, a Bronze Age round barrow, on which a wooden building had been constructed. He completed the excavation by late summer 1913, and his account *Excavations on Rockbourne Down, Hampshire* was published in March 1914. It was very well received;

On Rockbourne Down is Spring Pond - a chalk spring which rises in winter and falls in summer. Curiosity as to the source of this spring led Mr. Sumner to Rockbourne Down, and, while planning the banks surrounding the pond, he discovered the ancient site - the Romano-British Enclosures on the Down - the excavation of which is here so carefully described. ..... In the paper-covered booklet before us Mr. Sumner has presented the results of his labours in

a most attractive form. The details of work and descriptions of relics are given with the same care and accuracy that characterise the well known works of Pitt Rivers on his excavations in the not far distant Cranborne Chase; but the plans and diagrams are drawn in a somewhat new, and most graphic and interesting style. The typology and general production of this booklet are particularly good (Anon 1914b).

The comparison with Pitt-Rivers publications is perfectly valid, Sumner copied Pitt-Rivers in many respects, however the reviewer is also correct in pointing out that the site plan is different from those by Pitt-Rivers. It is a very 'modern' plan. The standing earthworks are shown by hatchures, the boundaries of the excavated areas clearly shown, together with all the features discovered. This publication made his archaeological name. It was of high quality, and described a previously unknown type of site. It had been realised that small farms must have existed in Roman Britain, indeed must have been common, but no one had ever found one before. The site became a classic, and has recently been extensively re-interpreted (Bowen 1990).

During the excavation of Rockbourne Down Sumner had recorded large quantities of coarse pottery, and he wanted to know where it came from. His friend Frank Stevens, curator at Salisbury Museum, suggested the New Forest. However collections of Roman New Forest pottery were of little help as the earlier excavators had only kept the fine wares, discarding the undecorated coarse pottery! Sumner now turned his attention to the New Forest potteries, re-excavating old sites and discovering new ones. By 1927 when *Excavations in New Forest Roman Pottery Sites* was published, it was the best known Roman pottery industry in the country.

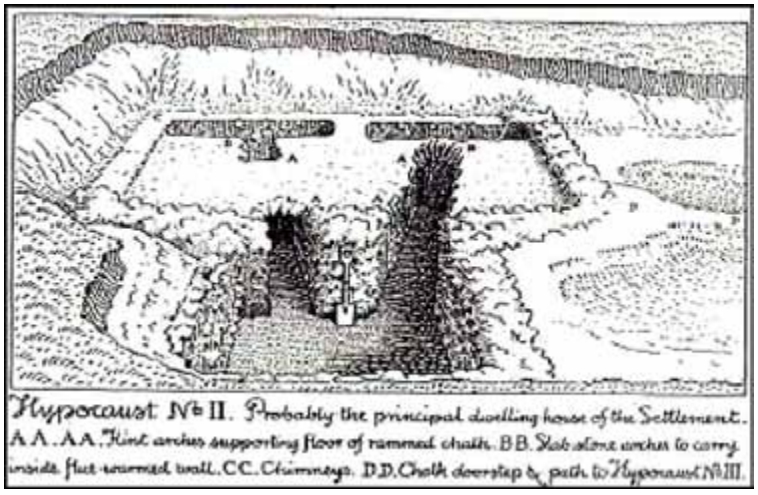


Figure 2.4 – Illustration from Excavations at Rockbourne Down *1914*

His attention was also focussed on New Forest earthworks, between 1913 and 1917 he carried out a second massive earthwork survey; *The Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest*. He was to return to Cranborne Chase after the First World War, when he was asked to carry out a third earthwork survey; that of the 'Bournemouth District'.

The Survey of the Bournemouth District

For his third, and final, earthwork survey Sumner had help, both on the ground and financial from the Bournemouth Natural Science Society (BNSS), in 1918 their Archaeological Section decided;

On 12th December, 1918 a conference was held to discuss possibilities of archaeological record work. A discussion led to a resolution to undertake a topographical survey of the Bournemouth area, and this was entrusted to, and kindly undertaken by, Mr. Heywood Sumner F.S.A., and Mr. W.G. Wallace.

W.G. Wallace was the honorary curator of the B.N.S.S. museum. Fortunately Sumner's letters to Wallace survive, and through them we can see how this survey was organised. First 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps of the area were obtained, and searched for both marked earthworks and for place-names that suggested sites worth searching;

The 6" sheets gives several names that are interesting. I see a moat is marked round 2 sides of Leigh farm near Wimborne - in the vil of Leigh - and a "Church Moor" copse nearby that excites my curiosity, as I always suspect - & generally find - some sort of Earthwork near a "church" place name (Letter to Wallace 5/1/19) .

Following this field work was undertaken, both to examine the known sites and to search for new ones;

I have done 2 more days of field work, & have finished a plan of "The Bee Garden" Earthwork on Holt Heath, - which I take to be an ancient earthwork of the Small square enclosure type (Letter to Wallace 8/6/19).

As with the previous surveys discoveries were made;

I have found what I believe to be a deer-park earthwork, (comparing with Old Park, Lyndhurst), on Rye Hill, Woodlands. The farthest verge of our district, near Wimborne St. Giles (Letter to Wallace 13/6/19).

In his work on the New Forest, Sumner had mapped the standing earthworks of the medieval deer park near Lyndhurst. He recognised the type of earthwork when he saw it on Rye Hill.

Investigation proved that these ... earthworks were portions of a bank and ditch that enclosed a large deer park. The adjoining place-names of "Deer Park Farm" and "Deer Park Ponds" indicate the purpose of this earthwork, which is old but not ancient (Sumner 1921b p 61).

This was the first Dorset Deer Park to be discovered by archaeological field work.

Rye Hill has the distinction of being the first Medieval Dorset park of which a detailed account was published (Cantor and Wilson 1968).

His plan is fascinating in that, as well as the earthworks of the deer park it includes several ancient trees. Heywood Sumner loved trees, and wrote extensively on them, particularly on the New Forest. Here his aim was clear. As these trees were probably growing when the deer park was in use, it was as important to include them in the plan as it would be to include an ancient stone or building.

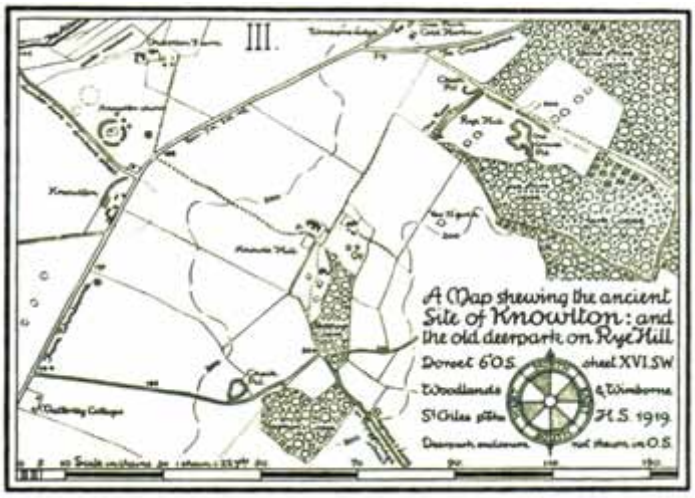


Figure 2.5 - Knowlton from 'Ancient Earthworks in the Bournemouth District' *(1921)*

This plan also records Sumner's only known brush with, 'alternative archaeology'. In 1908, Hadrian Alcroft, in his

pioneering work *Earthwork of England*, had included a plan showing how a line drawn through three barrows to the south of Knowlton Rings passed through the ruined church in the middle of the Ring.

South of this [the largest ring] are three mounds in a row. A line joining the centres of the first and third mound passes through the centre of the other, and if projected, passes also through the centre of the second circle containing the ruined church (Alcroft 1908).

In *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase* Sumner had discussed the barrows around Knowlton rings, and quoted *Earthwork of England*, but he doesn't mention this supposed alignment. It was during a field visit for the Bournemouth Natural Science Society to Knowlton in 1915, that it seems to have been brought to his notice. The Rev H Shaen Solly had given a long talk on the various alignments of the barrows with the rings, and on the Solar worship of its builders. Then;

'Mr Heywood Sumner, F.S.A., who had kindly come over to meet the society, was asked to speak. He emphasised the connection between the Rings and barrows, and wished the main purpose of the Rings and the meaning of the direction of the line through the barrows and the centre of the Ring to be carried to a suspense account till more had been learned' (Anon 1916).

It seems that he has been caught out, but this led him to look at the barrows more closely. He was a better cartographer that Hadrian Alcroft and he soon realised that the barrows were not in a straight line. There was no alignment! In his discussion of the plan he mentioned the supposed alignment and added;

In this instance, the position of these three barrows does not seem to be specially significant of ritual alignment dictated by one of the Knowlton circles.

Witchampton Roman Temple

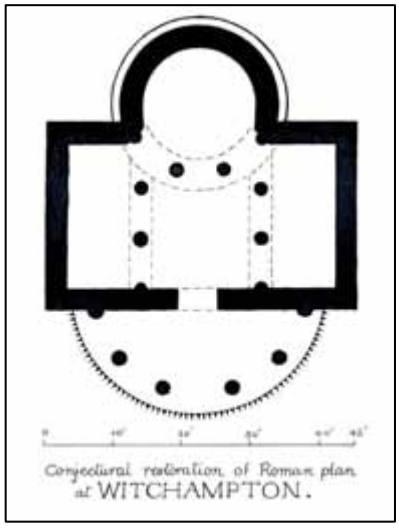


Figure 2.6 – Plan of the Roman Temple at Witchampton (previously unpublished)

The final excavation that Sumner was involved in on Cranborne Chase took place at Witchampton in 1923. He had been asked by Captain Acland of the Dorset County Museum to advise the tenant of the property who had found a Roman building and was excavating it.

We could also include Mrs Mc Geagh's Roman site near Wimborne on our way to or fro. I have been there today, & still hope for discovery of importance if luck attends my advice. She has a very good gamekeeper excavator, who has done the job throughout, & who trusts me. If the work which I planned today is carried out as they - promised, there should be a good deal to see by Aug. 6 [letter to Gardner July 30 1924].

Mrs Mc Geagh's excavations at Wichampton near Wimborne, (now wrongly spelt Witchampton) in the Allen Valley; has revealed a remarkable foundation plan of a building that suggests (in plan) a Basilican 'church'? or Temple - see over-leaf [letter to Williams Freeman October 1924].

He made what he could of the rather amateur excavations;

I have sent Mrs Mc Geagh 3 plan drawings, & a record of her excavation which, if she approves, will be sent to Miss M.V.Taylor Journal of R. Studies, for consideration, & I hope publication [letter to Gardner October 61924].

His published plan and notes he made for Captain Acland are now the only record of this small Roman temple.

After this excavation he seems to have done no more field work on Cranborne Chase, this was hardly surprising as he was now over seventy, but he continued to lead field trips for both the Bournemouth Natural Sciences Society and the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society to sites on the Chase. He was in constant correspondence with other archaeologists working in the area and he would always try and visit any excavations, such as that of the Long barrow on Thickthorn Down (1933). In 1937 he suffered a minor stroke and died at Cuckoo Hill in early 1940.

Heywood Sumner's legacy

General Pitt-Rivers came to the archaeology of Cranborne Chase with the view of a military man. Meticulously organised campaigns of excavation setting new standards of excavation.

Heywood Sumner came to the Chase with the eye of an artist and book illustrator. He knew how to draw, and, perhaps more importantly, how to draw for publication. From the outset his plans are clear but full of detail. They set a standard which has been equalled but never surpassed. In illustrating finds he was also innovative, he was one of the first, if not the first, to draw pottery in the modern manner together with its section. Finally he showed how small scale excavations, he usually worked with a small team of one or two companions, could answer large questions.

Heywood Sumner had been an artist, and a fine one, he had come to archaeology late in life (he was 60 when *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase* was published) but when he died in 1940 his Times obituary talked, rightly, of the death of one of the leading British archaeologists.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

Private collections Letters to Sir Edward Hulse and Dr. E. Gardner

Bournemouth Natural Science Society
Letters to W.G. Wallace, Annotated maps from the 1919 survey of the Bournemouth District

Dorset County Museum
Letters to Captain Acland.
Ms. Report on Witchampton Temple and various drawings.

Hampshire County Museum Service
Letters to J. P. Williams-Freeman

National Monuments Record
Book of Gorley Manuscript Volumes II and III

Winchester City Museum
Letters to Dr. J.P. Williams-Freeman, H.Powell, General M. Powell, A.Arnold

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anon, 1914a. Earthworks of Cranborne Chase (review). *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society,* 5, 11.

Anon, 1914b. Review of New Books - Excavations on Rockbourne Down. *Antiquary,* May, 199.

Anon, 1915. Notice of Field Meetings. *Proceedings of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society,* 6, 11.

Alcroft, A.H., 1908. *Earthwork of England*. London: Macmillan.

Cantor, L.M. & Wilson, J.D., 1968. The Mediaeval Deer-Parks of Dorset VIII. *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society,* 90, 241-8.

Crawford,O.G.S. 1953 *Archaeology in the Field Phoenix*, London. 44

Hubbard, A. J. & Hubbard, G., 1905. *Neolithic Dew Ponds and Cattleways*. London: Longmans.

Shaen Solly, H., 1920. Archaeological & Historical Section Chairmans Note. *Proceedings of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society,* 11, 46.

Sumner, H., 1910. *The Book of Gorley.* London: Chiswick Press.

Sumner, H., 1913. *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase.* London: Chiswick Press.

Sumner, H., 1914. *Excavations on Rockbourne Down*, *Hampshire.* London: Chiswick Press.

Sumner, H., 1917. *The Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest.* London: Chiswick Press.

Sumner, H., 1924. Notes on Roman sites at Witchampton, East Grimstead and Farley. *In:* Collingwood, R.G. & Taylor, M.V., Roman Britain in 1923. *Journal of Roman Studies,* 13 (1923), 268.

Sumner, H., 1925. Note on a Roman Building at Witchampton Dorset. *In:* Collingwood,R.G. & Taylor, M.V., Roman Britain in 1924 *Journal of Roman Studies*, 14 (1924), 235-7.

Sumner, H., 1927. *Excavations in New Forest Roman Pottery Sites.* London: Chiswick Press.

Sumner, H., 1931. *Local Papers, Archaeological and Topographical, Hampshire, Dorset and Wiltshire.* London: Chiswick Press.

Sumner, H. ed. Coatts, M., 1987. *Cuckoo Hill, The Book of Gorley*. London: Dent.

Sumner, H. & Wallace, W.G., 1921. Ancient Earthworks in the Bournemouth District. *Proceedings of the Bournemouth Natural Science Society,* 12, 48-71.

Williams-Freeman, J.P., 1910. List of Hampshire Earthworks. *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club,* 6, 343-5.

Williams-Freeman, J.P., 1915. *Field Archaeology as Illustrated by Hampshire.* London: Macmillan.

Chapter Three
Land and Life on Cranborne Chase, 1786-1830

Caroline Cheeseman

In his 1791 'letter to the noblemen, and gentlemen, proprietors of lands in Cranbourne Chace', Anthony Chapman depicts the area as overrun with deer and deer-stealers, leaving behind them a wake of property damage and public disorder. He writes:

I believe the public in general will join me in opinion, that [Lord Rivers] has been sacrificing the morals of the lower order of the people, the corn of the farmers, and the estates of the proprietors of lands, in and near his Chace, and I believe I may add, in some degree his own fortune – to what! – To a boasted Royalty unproductive to himself of any good; but highly prejudicial, and of extensive mischief, and evil to the community.

With these words, the stage was set for four decades of debate concerning the future of Cranborne Chase, a pre-modern institution increasingly out-of-place in a modernising world. Yet, despite potential political sensitivity, relations both amongst the local upper classes and between the local upper and lower classes remained largely civil, even – on occasion – jovial. The landscape was, after all, a productive one, sustaining sport and society simultaneously. Gifts of venison being 'one of the more delicate means by which the gentry expressed influence and solicited favour' (Thompson). Walk Rangerships were an expensive but sought-after position, even amongst the very proprietors Chapman represented. Meanwhile, local labourers exploited the Chase by taking advantage of various common rights.

* * *

Cranborne Chase's long history as a hunting franchise finally ended in 1830, but its legacy lives on. The following is a brief and general overview of land and life on the Chase at the turn of the nineteenth century, remnants of which are still apparent today, at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Introduction

In his 1891 *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, local resident Thomas Hardy described Cranborne Chase as 'a truly venerable tract of forest land, one of the few remaining woodlands in England of undoubted primaeval date', with its 'Druidical mistletoe', 'aged oaks', and 'enormous yew-trees'. To what extent was his description fact, and to what extent fiction? The answer, of course, lies in the local landscape – a landscape still very much marked by its past.

Modern and Pre-modern Landscapes

The Modern Landscape

Although Hardy rightly attributed to Cranborne Chase a deep sense of history, many of his predecessors would have likely labelled it archaic rather than venerable, for it remained a stubbornly pre-modern landscape in what was an increasingly modern world – a world in which timber and turnips and pheasants and foxes were amongst the country gentleman's chief concerns. For him, the modern period was a time of enclosure and game preservation.

With Britain almost constantly at war and with many of its battles being fought at sea, ships were an important part of the country's military strategy. They were likewise an important part of the country's economy: the growing empire bringing with it a growing source of trade.

However, ships required timber, a commodity that was, in fact, relatively scarce; hence the conversion of many Royal Forests to timber production, with countless private landowners following suit. Whilst Wiltshire excelled in its timber production – Davis reporting in 1811,'It is certainly owing to the residence of so many noble-men and great land-owners in this county, that the spirit of improvement is so general' – Dorset rather lagged behind, Claridge deeming it 'extremely barren, both in timber and [under]wood' in 1793. However, twenty years later, Stevenson was less critical: 'Plantations of fir, of various kinds, intermixed in some cases with other trees, have been made by many of the principal proprietors; which have not only contributed in a great degree to adorn the neighbourhood of their country-seats, but have also added materially to the value of those barren heaths'.

Changes were also underway in the fields. With new systems of crop rotation gaining force, turnips, clover, and rye vied for space alongside the more traditional grains. Turnips were particularly economical when farmed together with sheep, the fold system dominating many chalkland areas, including the downs of Cranborne Chase. Defoe championed the system, asserting that 'by folding their sheep upon the plow'd lands, removing the fold every night to a fresh place … this, and this alone, has made these lands … able to bear as good wheat, as any of the richer lands in the vales'.

The Pre-modern Landscape

Thus, the eighteenth century saw Cranborne Chase labelled an anachronism and an annoyance – a relic of the now outdated pre-modern age – for neither seedlings nor turnips could escape the Chase's hungry deer. However what made Chases and their royal counterparts, Forests, so quintessentially pre-modern? What exactly were they, and how did they differ from one another?

Firstly, although Forests and Chases had a definite geographical aspect, they were, in fact, privileges rather than places. That is, they were legal franchises, bestowing the right to hunt over a certain stretch of land, which the grantee might or might not own. Secondly, although Chases were, strictly speaking, subject only to Common Law, many, including Cranborne Chase, used various aspects of Forest Law (which Chapman condemns as 'at first the offspring, and are now the dregs of Norman tyranny'). Thirdly, although the owners of Forests and Chases held the exclusive right to preserve and hunt a number of animals, deer were most important – all the more so because buying and selling venison was prohibited throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and well into the nineteenth. Gifts of venison, and invitations to hunt it, were therefore an important means of patronage. Finally, to point out that neither franchise need have any trees – pre-modern Forests and our modern forests, although rooted in the same history, are quite distinct.

Nonetheless, owners of Forests and Chases had the right to preserve vert as well as venison – that is, plants as well as animals. Cox defines vert as '*any thing that beareth green Leaf, but especially of great and thick Coverts'; it did not, however, include 'plants, which are of the nature of hearbs, as thistels, and such like' because they cannot 'hide or cover a Deere'* (Manwood). Manwood elaborates, defining 'three speciall causes, why the Forest Lawes have so carefully provided for the preservation of the Vert'. The first two were the provision of cover and the provision of browse, but the third had nothing to do with deer, being simply that 'the very sight and beholding of the goodly greene and pleasant woods in Forest, is no lesse pleasant and delightful in the eye of a Prince, then the view of the wild beasts'.

Forests and Chases were, then, primarily hunting franchises, with every aspect managed with deer in mind. Unsurprisingly, this did not always sit well with local landowners, whose main concerns were the productivity and profitability of their estates and their own ability to hunt over them.

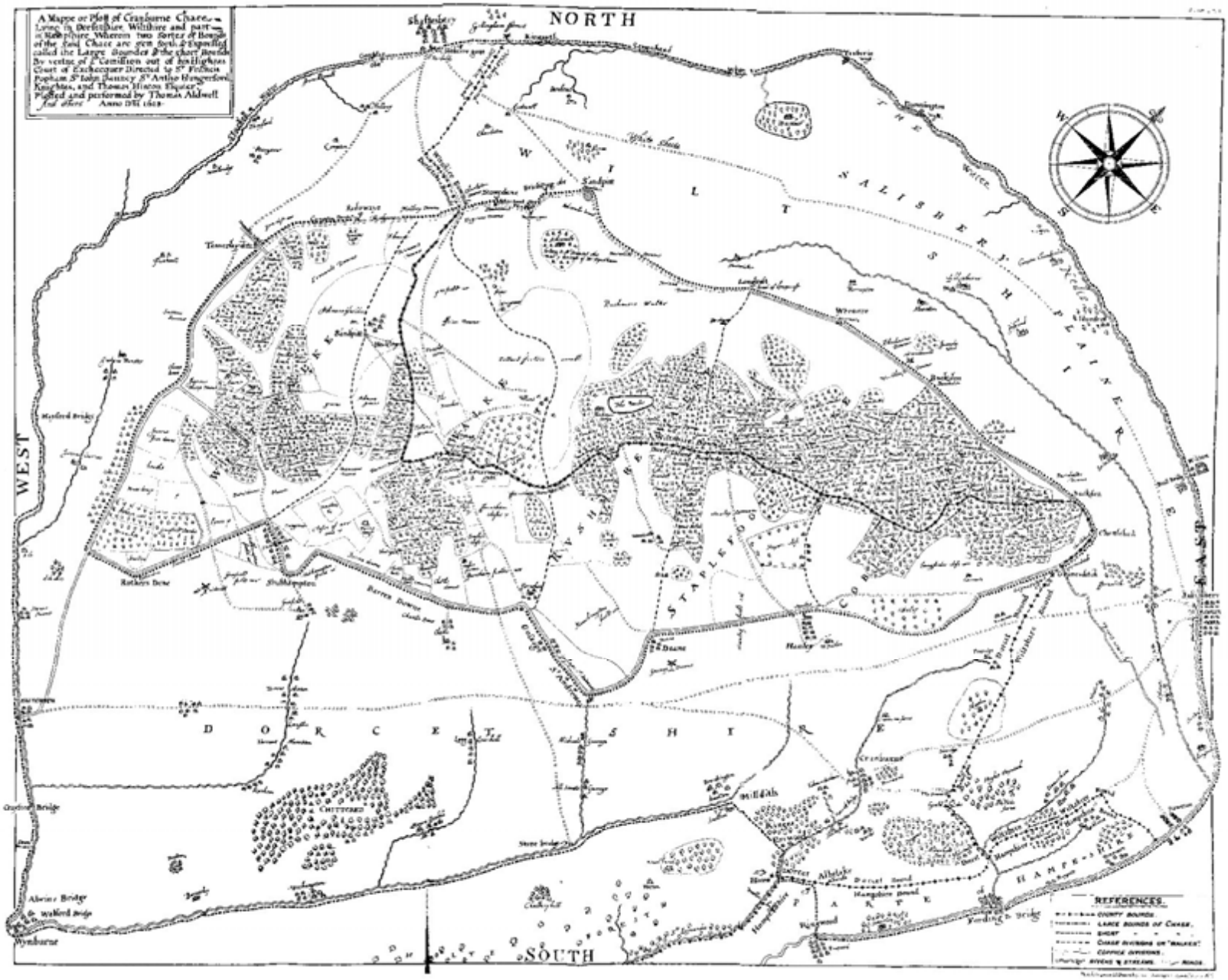


Figure 3.1 – Thomas Aldwell 1618 Map of Cranborne Chase. (Reproduced with the kind permission of Mr G.A. Pitt-Rivers)

Cranborne Chase: a Pre-modern Landscape in a Modern World

In a bid to convince Lord Rivers to disfranchise, a group of local landed proprietors offered what proved to be a thoroughly modern argument, pointing out that the deer severely damaged trees and crops, making timber production and agricultural innovation impossible; that they were a great temptation to local labourers, who were particularly prone to crime; and that they cost his Lordship a great deal of money, but with no financial return. Despite mounting pressure on their part, the proprietors would have to wait over forty years before achieving success. Hence the period offered in my title 1786 being the year when disfranchisement was first proposed and 1830 being the year when it was finally achieved.

Historical Context

The area's history as a hunting ground dates back to Anglo-Saxon times. From the Normans to the Stuarts, it passed back and forth between royal and non-royal ownership as part of the Honour of Gloucester, the last royal owner being James I. He granted it to Robert Cecil, subsequently the first Lord Salisbury, and over the next century, it passed by sale from Lord Salisbury to Lord Shaftesbury (at which point it was separated from the Honour of Gloucester) and from Lord Shaftesbury to Mr Freke, whose great-nephew, George Pitt, inherited it in 1714. His great-grandson, also George (the second Lord Rivers), inherited in 1804, finally agreeing to disfranchise in 1828, the year of his own death. Disfranchisement took effect two years later.

Geographical Context

The Chase covered a substantial area, forming a rough quadrangle with Shaftesbury, Salisbury, Ringwood, and Wimborne at its corners. The precise Outer Bounds, and therefore its acreage, were a frequent point of contention, only an often-vague perambulation ordered by Prince John existing as guidance. However large the Outer Bounds, the heart of the Chase lay in its Inner Bounds, for it was here that most of the Chase's woodland was concentrated, and so here, too, that most of its fallow deer population was concentrated. This inner area consisted of five walks: West, Burseystool, Rushmore, Staplefoot, and Cobley. A sixth – Chettered – lay separate and to the south. Two additional walks, Alderholt and Vernditch, preceded the Chase's 1830 disfranchisement, the former being cleared of deer in either the sixteenth or seventeenth century (evidence is conflicting) and separated from the Chase in 1695, the latter being sold to the Earl of Pembroke in 1620 and disfranchised in 1802.

However, quite separate from the Inner and Outer Bounds was another means of dividing the Chase, that is, into deer-fed and non-deer-fed areas. As James Webb, the Ranger of all but Chettered Walk, explained in 1816, although Lord Rivers could claim the entire extent of the Outer Bounds, his deer roamed over only a relatively small part. He wrote:

the Deer fed part of the Chace is about 17,000 Acres, which is but a small proportion out of 500,000 Acres, and above 1000 Acres out of the 17,000 is Lord Rivers's own Land, therefore there is but about 16,000 Acres that is fed constantly by Deer that belong to the numerous proprietors of Land within the Chace, and all the remaining part of the 500,000 Acres is left entirely at their own Disposal to plough and Sow as they please.

Land Management

Even within the deer-fed part, crops – whether agricultural or sylvicultural – were not without some means of protection. Although common and newly-enclosed fields could not be fenced, anciently-enclosed fields could, Webb explaining that 'instead of our not allowing them to raise a fence to exclude the Deer from those extensive Lands, we on the Contrary wish they would fence, and the Stronger and higher they made their fence the more they would please us'. Whereas fencing around fields was voluntary, fencing around coppices was mandatory.

In 1828, a local man recounted for Lord Anglesey

That the General rule of fencing the Coppices in the Chase ... is this: That the Owner, on felling the Coppice, is bound to make a Bush fence round it, so as to secure it agt the Deer, and keep it in repair during 3 years when the Chase Keepers have a right to make gaps in the fence for the Deer, but not for the common Cattle to get in, wch is called the right to leap & creep That the fence remains in this state one year, when it is intirely removed by the owners Woodman, whose perquisite it is considered to be. From this time 'till the coppice is cut again it is open, not only to the Deer, but to the common Cattle, and the Owner is precluded from fencing it.

The 'leaping and creeping' to which Isaac refers is worth further mention as it is a term apparently unique to Cranborne Chase. As the name suggests, it involved lowering the fences in some places so the deer could leap over and making gaps in them in other places so the deer could creep through.

Even after the initial period of exclusion, livestock could feed in the woods only at certain times of the year: for cattle, from (old) May Day to fifteen days before Midsummer and from fifteen days after Midsummer to Martinmas. The intervening periods were known as fence month and winter heyning, respectively. Exclusion during the former minimised disturbance to fawning does, whilst exclusion during the latter minimised competition for food. 'That useful animal the pig [also enjoyed] the privilege of a run in the woods', from Holy Rood to Martinmas, when 'great numbers [could] be seen in some seasons picking up a very profitable living on the fallen nuts and acorns, which they [devoured] with great avidity' (Smart). However, Lord Rivers banned both cattle and pigs from Rushmore and Staplefoot Walks, and banned sheep altogether.

Quite distinct from the dead hedges surrounding newly cut coppices was a series of more permanent live hedges, called borders. Resulting from the creation of rides, these borders helped to maintain open spaces for transporting wood and exercising dogs, and were additionally an important food source for the deer. According to the 1816 *Memoranda respecting the Customs of the Chace Woods*,

The Borders are preserved exclusively for the benefit of the Deer, & are not to be cut by the Woodmen – The Keepers alone have a right to shroud them for the maintenance or browsing the Deer. – They consist principally of Evergreens & berry bearing Plants, of which the following are most common Holly - Ivy - Thorn - Crab or Wilding - White-beam or Whiting Tree & Maple ... The two first of the aforementioned Plants are called Vert, and are of most service to the Deer – the others are generally named Berry, and the Deer in the Season resort to the Trees in great numbers for the Fruit, particularly to the White Beam Trees.

Interestingly, the last species listed, maple, is neither vert nor berry, and so has no use as deer feed; instead, the keepers cut steps into its trunk, which they then climbed to shoot the deer.

Chafin's 'industrious peasant'

The local population benefited from the Chase's continued existence not only through the right to graze common livestock, but also through access to various woodland products. With hazel so predominant on the Chase, both hurdle and spar making were important local industries. Chafin was especially keen to highlight the diligence of Cranborne Chase's labourers, as shown by his rosy description of a family happily hard at work:

The industrious peasant who from his earnings by early and late hard labour at time of the harvest, hath acquired a small pittance, sufficient to enable him to purchase a few spar gads for employment in the long winter evenings, reaps some gain from his manufacturing of them,

but more comfort from the operation itself, though temporary, to perhaps a numerous young family, for while the master of the cottage is attentive to his work, and his good dame busy in her household concerns, the children are employed in picking up the chips and shreds of the gads as they are called, and with handfuls at a time feed the lingering fire underneath the little crock, containing a few potatoes or other vegetables, the produce of their small garden plat, so as to keep it in a constant simmering, and the little blaze from each handful adds a temporary lustre to the dimness of their farthing candle, and the gleam from it illuminates the placid countenances of the groupe of happy offspring round the fire-side. With what joy and gladness must the honest parents look on and behold the effect of their industry in the present happy state of their progeny, and the fair prospect, by the blessing of God, of its continuance: who when they have regaled themselves on their frugal meal, can with clear consciences, and therefore light hearts, betake themselves to their hard pallets stuffed with the chaff of oats, and enjoy more comfortable repose that the high and mighty ones on their sumptuous beds, filled with the softest down of the eider duck.

The account is in keeping with Chafin's generally romantic view, also apparent in his description of the local nut harvest:

The Woods consist chiefly of hazel, which produce nuts in great profusion, to the relief and benefit of all the hamlets and villages for miles around it. It is their second harvest; for when all the corn hath been got in, and the leasing of the fields at an end, the inhabitants betake themselves to the woods; whole families from distant places flock to the Chase; bring their little cots, provisions, utensils, and every necessary for their comfort that they can provide themselves with, and make their abode there for whole weeks at a time if the weather will permit. Fuel they have at hand in great plenty; and after the fatigue of the day, they make large fires, which they sit round, eat their scanty meal, then slip from the green shells their day's gathering, talk over their success, crack their jokes as well as their nuts, and, clothed with innocence and simplicity … may well join in the old song, and say or sing, "For who are so happy, so happy as we?"

Numerous other treasures might also be found in the undergrowth. Not only were there what Chafin describes as 'substances of a dubious nature, called Trufles [held] in much esteem by epicures, and [bearing] a high price', but also 'the best Valerian Roots in the kingdom', used to treat a variety of nervous disorders. The truffle trade does not appear to have been a stable one – Chafin reports that 'a few sedulous persons make some gain from them; but it is a very precarious pursuit, and of short duration' – however, it does seem to have been locally significant, not only on Cranborne Chase but in surrounding areas as well (Clarendon to the north of the Chase in particular). Valerian root likewise provided those in the know with a considerable, though sporadic, profit – its relative rarity likely contributing to its value, for it purportedly grew to perfection only in year-old coppices. There was also a thriving trade in live plants, particularly spurge laurel and whitethorn quickset. Of course, none of these plant products was a commonable resource, the local population acting on its own initiative to find, gather, and sell them. As Chafin points out, although 'All these valuable articles are obtained in a clandestine and illegal manner … I know not that any … have ever as yet been called to account for these lawless transgressions'.

Crime

Nonetheless, Chapman's 'noblemen, and gentlemen, proprietors' saw the local population as containing some of the worst thieves and vagabonds imaginable. They thus warned that

the Chase having been for many years a nursery for and temptation to all kinds of vice, profligacy, and immorality; whole parishes in and adjacent to it being nests of deer-stealers, bred to it by their parents; and initiating their children in it, they naturally contract habits of idleness and become pests of society. It is likewise a great harbour for smugglers, the woods being very commodious for secreting their goods, and the deer-stealers always at hand to

give them assistance. These being evils which should not be permitted in any civilized country, as no private property ought to exist so prejudicial to the community at large.

Webb recalls a particularly profligate deer-stealer 'an Old Man … of the Name of Dibbin, who [said] he had been a Deer Hunter 50 years and had killed 5000 Deer, and was never detected, for when I took him it was from the Information of an Associate'. Yet Chafin asserts that 'the Chase is certainly not a lawless place', and, indeed, a Chase Court did exist, meeting annually 'for the preservation of Vert & Venison & [for] inspecting the Conduct of the Keepers & of all the Woodmen'. Numerous prosecutions also appear in the Summary Conviction, Quarter Session, and Assize records.

Hunting

Deer-stealers were not the only ones to enjoy the thrill of the chase though, Smart recalling that 'Buck hunting was a very favourite amusement with gentlemen of the last century; and the hounds always kept for this purpose by the Ranger of the chase, afforded them a good opportunity for the enjoyment of the sport'. He further adds that 'The chase venison was ever held by competent judges in the highest estimation, for its unrivalled flavor and fine condition; many of my readers will doubtless remember the liberality with which this delicacy was dispensed, and the hospitable feelings and social intercourse thereby engendered and called into lively play'.

However, Cranborne Chase was home to many birds and beasts besides the fallow deer, all of them hunted with equal fervour. Of particular note was the area's contribution to foxhunting, Thomas Fownes establishing the country's first purpose-bred pack of foxhounds at Stepleton in 1730. The Chase was also home to Peter Beckford, the acclaimed author of *Thoughts on Hunting*. Perhaps most famous, though, was J.J. Farquharson, the so-called 'Meynell of the West', who hunted Cranborne Chase for fifty years. Upon his retirement, the Chase became Portman country, and so the hunt continued.

Even after disfranchisement, the sale particulars for Woodcotts Farm and Manor continued to herald local sport and its relationship with the landscape, the advertisement reading:

In a highly picturesque Part of the County … an Inviting Spot for a Sporting-Box … situated on … the verge of Cranbourne-Chase, (now disfranchised,) near Lord Rivers's Hunting Lodge … diversified in Scenery of the boldest Character, richly Wooded … hardly to be surpassed in Means of Embellishment, and as abounding in … Advantages which Time will disclose to enterprising and skilful Proprietors … There is abundance of Game, and celebrated Packs of Hounds are within easy Reach.

Conclusion

Although, in 1868, Hutchins regrets that 'the glory of the Chase has departed: and agriculture rejoices over the extinction of its ancient sway', more than a century later, Hawkins concludes, 'Though time has not stood still in the Chase, its hours have chimed with a slow deliberation that lags behind the sharper pace of modernity'. Seymour similarly believes,

it is a place that retains a sense of ancient permanence. Driving or walking through it now, seeing its historical monuments, tiny churchyards, sprawling woods and sweeps of downland stretching away from hidden valleys, one can readily imagine those bygone days when the deer were its most prized possession and keepers went out to do battle with poachers under a wind-tossed sky and gibbous moon; for in Cranborne Chase the heroic and the arcadian are for ever joined together.

Other works by the author:

Cheeseman, C., 2005. Ownership and Ecological Change. *In:* Langton, J. & Jones, G., eds. *Forests and Chases of England and Wales c.1500-c.1850.* Oxford, St John's College Research Centre

Cheeseman, C., 2005. Vert and Venison. *Deer,* 13, 30-33.

Cheeseman, C., 2008. *Geography and Modernity: Changing Land, Law, and Life on Cranborne Chase in the Nineteenth Century.* DPhil thesis Unpublished. Oxford, Bodleian Library.

Further Reading:

Cranborne Chase

Chafin, W., [1818] 1991. *Anecdotes and History of Cranborne Chase*. Wimborne, The Dovecote Press.

Hawkins, D., 1980. *Cranborne Chase*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Smart, T. W. W., 1841. *A Chronicle of Cranborne and the Cranborne Chase*. Wimborne, Dovecote Press.

Dorset and Wiltshire

Claridge, J., 1793. *General View of the Agriculture in the County of Dorset*. London.

Crowley, D.A. ed., 1987. *The Victoria History of the counties of England: A history of Wiltshire, vol. xiii*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Davis, T., 1811. *General View of the Agriculture of Wiltshire*. London, The Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement.

Page, W. ed., 1908. *The Victoria History of the counties of England: A history of Dorset, vol. ii*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Pugh, R.B. ed., 1959. *The Victoria History of the counties of England: A history of Dorset*, *vol. iv*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Hunting in Dorset

Greaves, R., 1958. *Foxhunting in Dorset*. London: Field Sports Publication

Higginson, A.H., 1936. *The Meynell of the West*. London: Clear Type Press.

Legg, R. & Copson, C., 2001. *Dorset Sporting Runs: Huntsmen writing on Hunting through the Best of Hunting Country*. London: Halsgrove.

Chapter Four.
Secrets of a Sacred Landscape - the Dorset Cursus Complex

Martin Green

Academic/Research/Publication context

The ancient landscape of the Cursus area of Cranborne Chase has seen episodes of investigation since the eigtheenth century, to be discussed later, but none so intense as that undertaken in the last 40 years. The author began an archaeological field survey in the region in the 1960s and investigations are still continuing. However, within this timeframe were specific phases of activity where collaboration with others resulted in periodic publication. During the initial fieldwalking phase interest in the work by David White, who was engaged in excavating threatened barrows in the region for the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, resulted in an initial paper published in the Dorset *Proceedings* for 1971 entitled 'Early Man on Cranborne Chase'. Following a chance discovery in 1976 the author began the first of what was to become a series of excavations. In 1977 I was invited to join a joint team from Reading and Glasgow Universities who were considering undertaking a new survey of the area under the leadership of John Barrett and Richard Bradley. The impetus for this reappraisal was provided by the then recent accessibility to the Pitt Rivers Cranborne Chase material with its arrival at Salisbury Museum. This collaboration led to 8 years of intense fieldwork which was concluded by a synthesis *Landscape, Monuments & Society – the prehistory of Cranborne Chase* Cambridge University Press and specialist reports *Papers on the Prehistoric Archaeology of Cranborne Chase* Oxbow Monograph 11, published in two volumes in 1991.

Excavating in 1992 I uncovered a deep shaft with remarkable potential for a long prehistoric landscape sequence preserved within it. Clearly detailed analysis of the deposits would build substantially on the tentative landscape results published in 1991. Mike Allen, the then environmental manager for Wessex Archaeology, was approached and responded enthusiastically to the challenge of undertaking this work which has resulted in two papers – 'An early prehistoric shaft on Cranborne Chase' (*Oxford Journal of Archaeology 16*, No 2) and 'The Fir Tree Field Shaft; the Date and Archaeological and Paleo-Environmental Potential of a Chalk Swallowhole Feature' (Dorset *Proceedings* 120) published in 1997 and 1998 respectively. The full results of the remarkable sequence uncovered is currently in press (French *et al* 2007). Also in 1992, continuing fieldwalking resulted in the discovery of a flint scatter of potentially early post-glacial date. A small trial excavation led to an artefact being scientifically dated which confirmed the initial hypothesis. Sites of this date, when small hunter/gatherer groups re-colonised Britain after a long period when it was uninhabitable, are extremely rare. Clearly the case for further work was strong and a collaborative excavation under the direction of Nick Barton of Oxford Brookes University was undertaken in 1998 and an initial paper published the same year (Dorset *Proceedings* 120) including soil profile work undertaken by Charley French of Cambridge University who was to instigate the latest phase of work

This current collaborative phase of work began in 1998 and was designed to investigate landscape in the chalk downland region of southern England through studying recurrent signatures of land management practices in the geoarchaeological and ecological records of buried land surfaces. The new data collected will develop our understanding of the interactions between prehistoric settlement and land use, the monumental landscape and landscape/environmental change. Interim papers on the work were published in 2000 (Dorset *Proceedings* 122) and 2003 (*Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 69). Work in the field for this latest phase of work, which included major excavations of monuments and settlements is

now finished and the results were recently published *Prehistoric landscape development and human impact in the upper Allen valley, Cranborne Chase, Dorset*, French *et al* 2007 Cambridge University Press.

A popular summary of these ongoing researches was published by the author in 2000 under the title *A Landscape Revealed – 10,000 years on a chalkland farm*, Tempus.

Summary

Hidden within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is a remarkable sacred landscape initially created by the first farming communities within our region. This landscape evolved and developed for a further two millennia following the building of the first monuments. I use the word hidden deliberately because the monument central to this remarkable landscape, the Dorset Cursus, was not fully revealed until the publication of Richard Atkinson's paper in 1955. This huge spinal earthwork, the longest Neolithic monument created in Britain, stamped the immediate landscape with a special sacred status following its construction around 3,300 BC. Subsequently the area of the Cursus corridor, about a 2 kilometre width to either side of the monument (although the major embellishments occur within 1 km) was provided with a remarkable range of burial and ceremonial monuments. The increasing complexity of this continues to be revealed by ongoing field survey and excavation. This paper endeavours to document the latest results from the continuing work after a brief resume of early investigation.

Plate 4.1 Aerial view (1984) facing south west along the Dorset Cursus from, Wyke Down across the Allen valley to the slopes of Gussage Cow Down. Down Farm is visible near the top right corner.

Discovery and early investigation

It is to the indefatigable eighteenth century archaeological explorer William Stukeley that we owe the name 'Cursus' for this most peculiar form of prehistoric earthwork created within our shores. Although he came to Cranborne Chase in 1724 and made a remarkable sketch of the Ackling Dyke slicing through a barrow on Oakley Down, it was to be near Stonehenge that he recorded and named the first known monument of this type. Stonehenge was a magnet for early antiquaries and Stukeley was no exception. Wandering the landscape nearby he came across 'A new unobserv'd curiosity' – two parallel banks and ditches, set 100 metres apart which ran for 2700 metres and were closed at either end. He was later to decide that this was a chariot track or Cursus for the entertainment of the ancient Britons. However, it was not until the work of a later pair of pioneering archaeologists, Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington, that the greatest of all cursuses - the Dorset Cursus is first recorded.

Resident at Stourhead and Heytesbury respectively, the two men were busily engaged exploring, researching and digging earthworks particularly within the area currently defined as the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Surveying the earthworks on Gussage Cow Down in 1805, a site which Sir Richard was to describe as 'one of the most interesting situations in England', they recorded the two parallel ditches and banks descending the down to the north east. Colt Hoare was to write later in *Ancient Wiltshire* 'I hope I may not be considered too fanciful, in attributing this long line of bank and ditch to the amusements of the Britons as a Cursus' and goes on to say 'a more eligible spot could not have been selected for the extended view of a horse-race'.

However, no closed ends or terminals were discovered during their fieldwork, so clearly the full extent of the earthwork had not been discovered. Subsequent plans published by Charles Warne in 1872 and by Heywood Sumner in 1913 of Gussage Cow Down included the Cursus but provided no new information regarding it. Ironically the latter author did record what we now recognise as the south western terminal on Thickthorn Down but he not unreasonably assumed it was the surviving half of a small square enclosure.

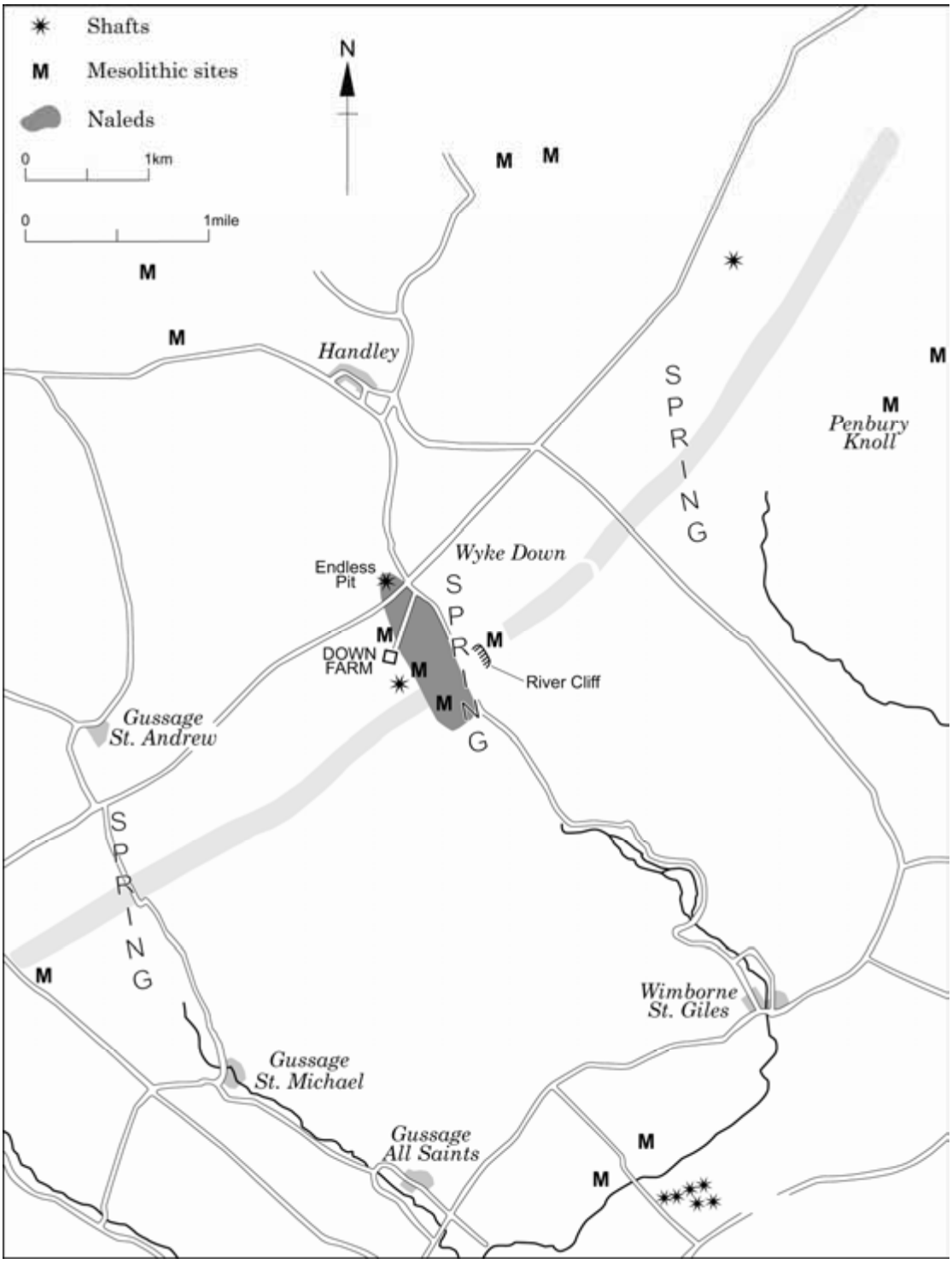
It took 150 years to elapse before the magnitude of Colt Hoare and Cunnington's discovery was fully realised following the publication of Richard Atkinson's paper in 1955.

This paper will argue that the course of the Cursus was clearly influenced by both natural phenomena and earlier monument construction within the region. It has long been recognised that the Cursus is intimately associated with a group of a dozen long barrows, territorial markers and burial places of the first farming communities. Richard Bradley (1984) has demonstrated that a number of these pre-date the Cursus and were subsequently linked, and in two cases incorporated, by the Cursus. Not so well known is that a number of significant natural phenomena are also linked and in some cases incorporated into the monument. Following the course of the earthwork from the position of the south-western terminal on Thickthorn Down where three long barrows are known and Mesolithic activity attested, the Cursus descends into the Gussage valley and incorporates part of the Terrig stream, a tributary of the River Allen, which at this point continues to appear above ground only occasionally and unpredictably. Within the valley the course of the Cursus is not fully known, whether it is dug through the course of the stream or breaks either side. However, as it is known to have been dug through both the Allen and the Crane it is likely the former is the case. The monument then continues upslope to Gussage Cow Down where the long barrow Gussage St Michael 14 is incorporated. Descending Gussage Cow Down the earthwork passes just to the south of the natural shaft in Fir Tree field, known to have still been partly open in the latter 4th millennium BC and then crosses the Allen valley. At this point within the valley are a number of remarkable natural phenomena created by periglacial activity. As well as the shaft, mentioned earlier in Fir Tree field, a much larger example, known as Endless Pit and recorded in a land charter of AD 956, lies a short distance north of the Cursus. Still visible even today this large natural opening would have had to have been a significant feature to have been recorded in the 10th century and clearly would have been substantially deeper in the Neolithic. The surviving depression will occasionally fill with water during the rising of the springs in winter. A piece of local folklore recorded by Parke in 1963 (*Folklore*) concerns some ducks which were put in the pond formed at Endless Pit, went below for food, and came up again at Gussage, several miles away!

The shaft lies near the head of the valley and brackets the northern end of an area of most unusual topography flooring the valley from this point for a distance of just over 1 km to the south, just before the Ackling Dyke is reached today. The valley floor is formed here by a series of major mounds and depressions known as naleds. These were created during periglacial conditions when soliflucted chalky gravels built up around frozen springs then issuing from the valley floor. Subsequent melting of the ice left a series of large depressions and mounds of material which had built up around the former obstructions. Even today the

deeply undulating topography is striking but when one allows for subsequent erosion, caused principally by recent arable agriculture, the condition and appearance of these features in the 4th millennium BC would have been far more dramatic. The mounds certainly resemble barrows and the naturally embanked depressions, enclosures of the henge class. It is not difficult to envisage the first farming communities who encountered them as regarding them as works of their predecessors.

Figure 4.1 - Pre-Cursus landscape.



Mike Allen's work on the ancient environment suggests this part of the valley had remained substantially open since the end of the last glaciation and concentrations of Mesolithic flintwork also found in the area (see fig 4.1) suggests the area was important from an early date. The Cursus incorporates one of these flint scatters, a significant portion of the naleds and on the east side of the valley, a major river cliff. This dramatic feature was created by the same periglacial conditions when melt-water was eroding tracts of the valley floor. Immediately below the cliff a seasonal lake often appears and it is clear the incorporation of this and the cliff is carefully planned. Above the cliff lies a very localised area of clay with flints where concentrations of Mesolithic and Neolithic flintwork are located. This place was clearly an important locale from an early date.

The Cursus continues upslope from this point to just below the crest of the next ridge on Bottlebush Down where the first phase monument terminates. Within the four square kilometres of this part of the Allen valley centred upon Wyke Down, where the Cursus is cut by the Ackling Dyke, lies the densest concentration of Neolithic and Bronze age earthworks along the Cursus corridor. Over eighty are known to date attesting to the special status this area was accorded. Just beyond this cluster and a short distance before the ridge on Bottlebush Down is reached, the first phase or Gussage Cursus terminated. Continuing north east from the Bottlebush terminal the second phase or Pentridge Cursus crosses the ridge and descends into the valley of the Crane where it incorporates another area of seasonally manifest water – Water Lake Bottom. Climbing out of the valley the long barrow Pentridge 19 is integrated into the northern bank and it then follows along a minor ridge passing close to another known natural shaft, where later two henges are created, before ending on Bokerley Down where a cluster of five long barrows and a long enclosure are known.

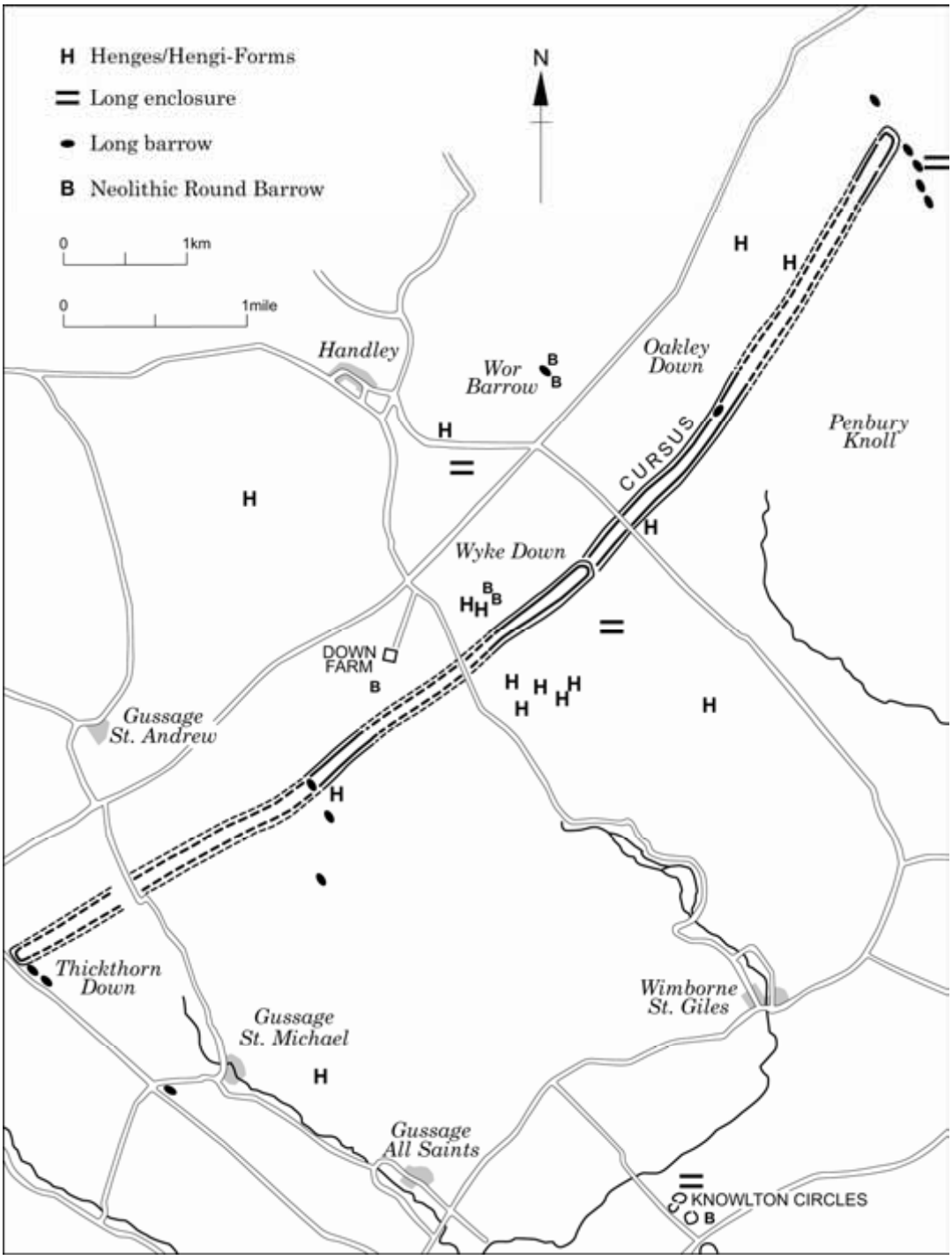
Cursus floruit

As noted earlier the Cursus is associated with at least a dozen long barrows (fig 4.2). Although most are unexcavated, broadly speaking they are likely to span a period of some 700 years from about 3700 BC – 3,000 BC. Other monuments likely or known to date within this time span are long enclosures (fig 4.2), some, if not all, of the known Neolithic round barrows and the remarkable hengi-form enclosure excavated at Monkton up Wimborne in 1997 (fig 4.3). This extraordinary monument is associated with three radiocarbon determinations which centre around 3300 BC suggesting it is broadly contemporary with the Cursus. The Neolithic structures found at this site – pit circle, large (10 x 1.5 metres) flat bottomed circular pit and deep (6.9 metres) shaft is a unique combination of elements of which the shaft and flat bottomed pit are without parallel.

Additionally a multiple grave containing a woman and three children was found cut into the side of the flat bottomed pit. Scientific analysis revealed these individuals had lived in a different geographical region for some time and had travelled to Cranborne Chase on at least two separate occasions. Could this be the first hard proof of gatherings of people from far and wide who were both helping to build and take part in the rituals/festivities associated with the Cursus?

This monument together with a nearby long enclosure represent the earliest elements of a complex group of monuments which lie north of the hamlet of Monkton up Wimborne and to the south of the Cursus (fig 4.2). There is a great variety within this group which includes a double ditched oval barrow, very similar to one excavated at Barrow Hills, Radley (see Barclay & Halpin 1999) and radiocarbon dated to the later 4th millennium BC. However, as we shall see, a greater number of monuments are constructed in the following millennium.

Figure 4.2 - Post – Cursus landscape to 2,000 BC.



After the Cursus is constructed, linking as we have seen, natural phenomena, important locales in the Mesolithic and earlier Neolithic monuments, the Cursus corridor starts to be embellished with numbers of ceremonial and burial monuments. The earliest of these known at present are the henges, hengi-form enclosures and round barrows/ring ditches of Neolithic date. Amongst the first two categories are at least fifteen examples, four of which have been excavated within the last thirty years (fig 4.3) with the remainder known from aerial photography (see appendix). Several Neolithic round barrows/ring ditches are known from excavation and geophysics and are also detailed in the appendix.

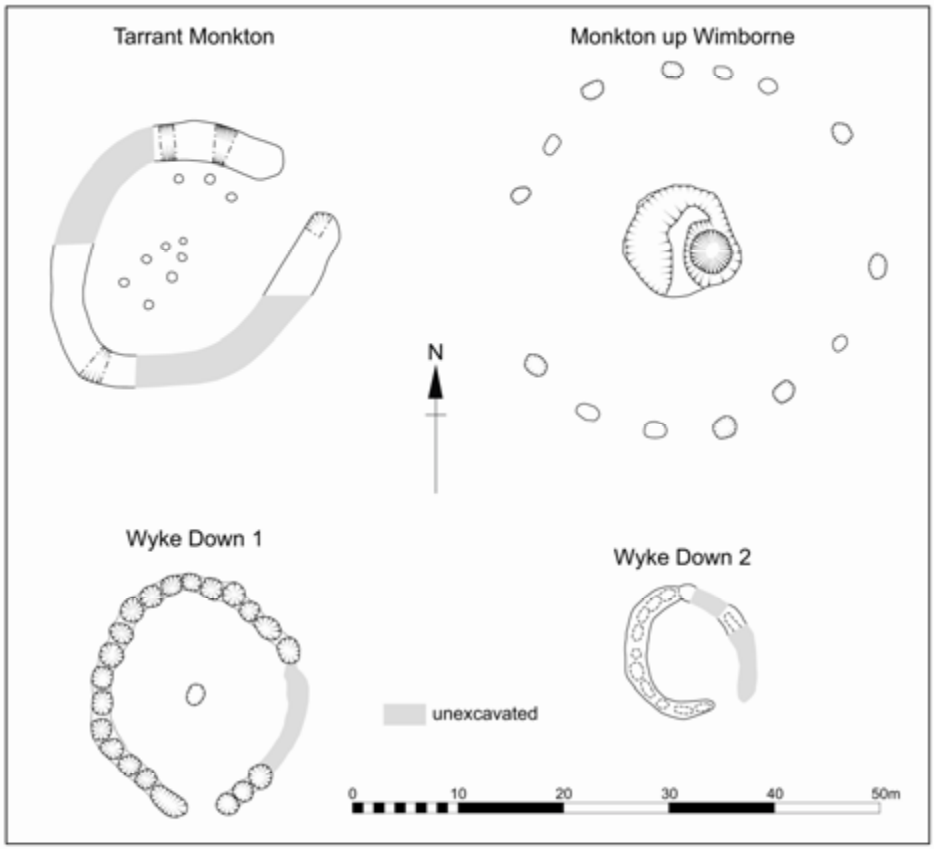


Figure 4.3 Comparative plans of henges excavated on Cranborne Chase

Once again major activity takes place in the Monkton up Wimborne area where a further four henges/hengi-forms, an enclosed pit/post/stone circle and a possible post-alignment are known from aerial photography. Less than a kilometre to the north of this cluster and north of the Cursus at Wyke Down further Neolithic monuments are known. These include two henges within forty metres of each other – Wyke Down 1 and 2. Both were constructed by the digging of narrowly spaced oval pits and are known as pit circle henges. Monuments of this type are also known to be associated with another Cursus complex at Dorchester on Thames. WD 1 was broken by a single entrance with WD2 possessing two. Excavation around WD2 produced part of a rare contemporary settlement including two buildings which produced radiocarbon dates in the earlier 3rd millennium BC. Within the fillings of the postholes and pits were fragments of highly decorated pottery known as Grooved ware and pieces of a fine chalk plaster derived from the walls of the houses. The limits of this settlement were not reached during the excavation and remain to be defined by future work.

Further dramatic clustering of monuments continues into the second millennium BC with the sources of the rivers Crane and Allen marked by large barrow cemeteries at Oakley and Wyke Downs respectively. Flowing eastwards these two arteries feed the much larger Avon and Stour rivers which meet at Christchurch, an area long known to be rich in finds of later Neolithic and early Bronze age date, before reaching the sea.

Towards the end of the second millennium BC the Cursus finally seems to lose its importance with evidence of fields encroaching right up to the monument and by the earlier Iron Age parts of the bank and ditch are being degraded by ploughing.

What was the Cursus for?

By studying the landscape through which the Cursus crosses we can make a number of observations. Firstly it cuts across the prevailing topography which consists of a number of valleys separated by intervening ridges running south east/north west. This course is unusual in the monument class as a whole as they generally run parallel to valley sides. By doing this it links the water courses of the Terrig, Allen and Crane, which as we have seen, are cut by the monument at points where all three only appear above ground on an unpredictable seasonal basis. Clearly water was an important element linked by the earthwork. Secondly, numbers of the ancestral homes of the dead or long barrows are linked to the monument and two integrated, one in each phase. The Cursus terminal banks are also built to a significantly larger scale than the rest of the earthwork suggesting a deliberate attempt to imitate the proportions of the neighbouring long barrows and thus inextricably link the two monuments in the minds of the people.

This arrangement was further reinforced by the addition of further mounds built either on the same alignment as the terminals or pointing at them. The third highly significant observation is the alignment of the first phase Gussage Cursus on the mid-winter solstice. By deliberately ending this monument before the top of the ridge on Bottlebush Down the long barrow within the Cursus on Gussage Down would still be a skyline feature from this point. Observers on a clear mid-winters day could watch and can still watch the course of the sun as it sets directly behind the silhouetted long barrow, linking the ancestors to the Cursus and to the movement of the heavenly bodies, thus creating a monumental avenue incorporating the living and the dead within the workings of nature itself.

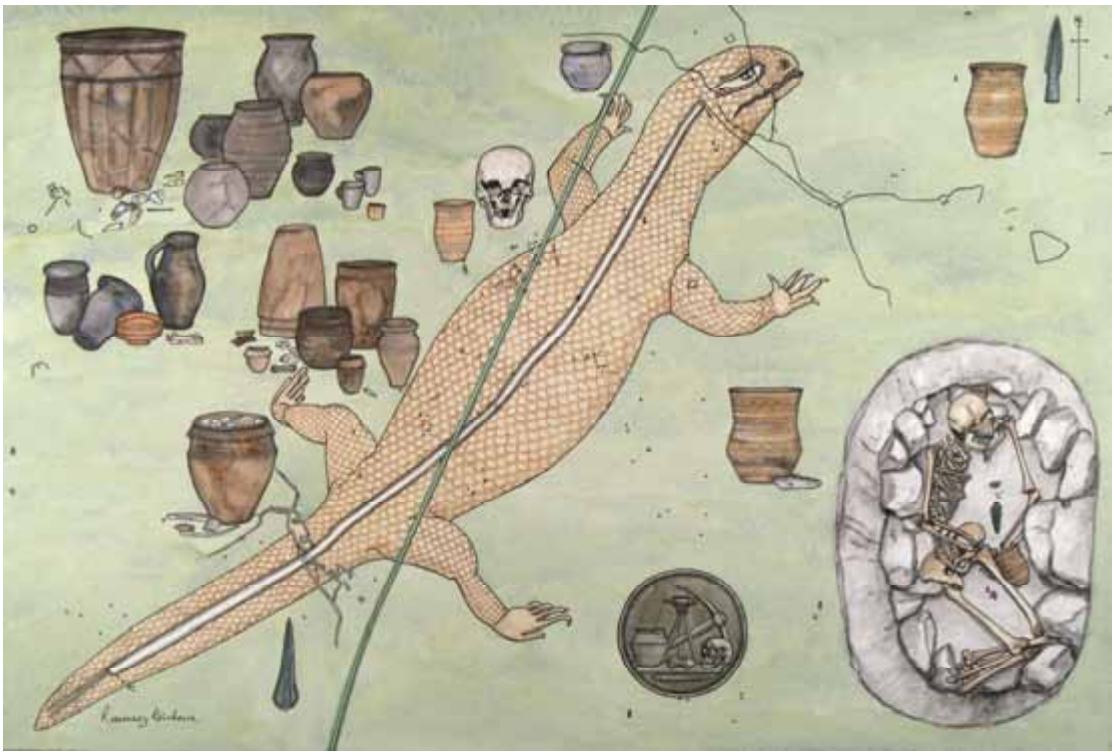


Plate 4.2 – The Dorset Cursus continues to inspire as revealed by this imaginative plan by local artist Rosemary Dickens. The work is taken from her 'Dragon's Trail' portfolio exhibited at Salisbury Museum 2006 © Rosemary Dickens

This phenomena would also have been visible down slope from the terminal and if witnessed from the point above the incorporated river cliff, would on certain occasions have had the added dramatic effect of being reflected in the seasonal lake. It should therefore come as no

surprise to us to discover the largest concentration of Neolithic artefacts recorded along the Cursus route is located at this place. This highly favoured location may well have witnessed gatherings of large numbers of people, perhaps to feast and partake of other activities associated with this and other events. Certainly the evidence provided by the limited investigations at this point suggests very specific activity. Finds of exotic artefacts hint at long distance contacts as is also suggested by the contemporary burials noted earlier at Monkton up Wimborne.

Although hard evidence for specific activities is difficult to obtain from such a remote time ago and from such a huge monument, the surviving evidence recovered so far hints at significant numbers of people coming to the region probably on a seasonal basis, swelling the numbers already here, and initially helping to build the great earthwork. It is not difficult to envisage a whole range of other activities taking place at the time such as gift exchange, hunting, feasting and burial of the dead.

The monumental focus for these activities provided by the Cursus would have helped cement the social bonds between groups from far and wide and may have been the main *raison d'etre* behind its construction.

Appendix – List of henges/hengi-form enclosures in the Cursus corridor

1 Sixpenny Handley, Chapel Down. ST98681619. Class I. Diameter c.30m. NE facing entrance. NMR photographs (J.Boyden coll) 98/1 frame 2 & 3

2 Sixpenny Handley, Town Farm. SU00331678. Class II. Diameter c.20m. Large gap to N, small gap to SE. Possible pit circle form. M.Green photographs 2005

3 Pentridge, Peaked Post W. SU02801842. Class I pit circle. Diameter c.20m. N facing entrance. M.Green photographs 1995. See Green 2000 fig 24.

4 Pentridge, Peaked Post E. SU03281822. Pit circle. Diameter c.20m. C.J.Sparey-Green photograph 1976.

5 Gussage Cow Down. ST99561375. Comprises four irregular segments connected by a narrow, possibly later, ring ditch. Diameter c.12m. M.Green photographs 1995.

6 Gussage St Michael. ST99321132. Class II oval. Diameter c.12m. NW/SE facing entrances. M.Green excavation 2003, forthcoming.

7 Wyke Down 1. SU00661529. Class I pit circle. Diameter 20m. S facing entrance. M.Green excavation 1983/4, Barrett et al 1991. See figure 4.3 this paper.

8 Wyke Down 2. SU00651529. Class II. Diameter 12m. N/SSE entrances. M.Green excavation 1996, Green 2000 & French et al 2007. See figure 4.3 this paper.

9 Bottlebush Down. SU02121619. ?Class I. Diameter c.15m. N facing entrance. M.Green photograph 1983.

10 Monkton up Wimborne. SU01031461. Class I. Diameter c.10m. NW/SE entrances. NMR photographs 1849,653 1980. Also J.Boyden.

11 Monkton up Wimborne. SU00961475. ?Class II. Diameter c.20m. Possible NE/SW entrances,unclear. J.Boyden photograph.

12 Monkton up Wimborne. SU01231472. Pit/post/stone circle hengi-form enclosed by ring

ditch. Diameter c.15m. NMR photographs 4443,32.1989.

13 Monkton up Wimborne. SU01411465. Class I. Diameter c. 25m. N facing entrance. NMR photographs 15810/36.1997.

14 Monkton up Wimborne. SU01451471. Class II. Diameter c.20m. N/S entrances. NMR photographs 4443,32.1989.

15 Monkton up Wimborne. SU01721475. Class II pit circle. Diameter 35m. E/W entrances. M.Green excavation 1997, Green 2000 & French et al forthcoming. See figure 3 this paper.

16 Monkton up Wimborne. SU02681458. Class II. Diameter c.12m. E/W entrances. Adjacent to ring ditch. Photograph J.Boyden.

Neolithic round barrows

1 Sixpenny Handley 40 near Wor Barrow. SU01221738. Pitt Rivers excavation 1893/4. Pitt Rivers Vol IV 1898, Barrett et al 1991.

2 Sixpenny Handley 39 near Wor Barrow. SU01281726. Pitt Rivers excavation 1894. Pitt Rivers Vol IV 1898, Barrett et al 1991.

3 Wyke Down 47. SU00711550. Segmented ditch revealed by geophysical survey. French et al 2007.

4 Wyke Down 44. SU00731541. Segmented ditch revealed by geophysical survey. French et al 2007.

5 Down Farm. ST99901545. First phase ditch Neolithic in date. M.Green/B.Lewis excavation 1980. Barrett et al 1991.

6 Knowlton Great Barrow. SU02541028. Largest round barrow in Dorset

Further reading

Atkinson, R.J.C., 1955. The Dorset Cursus. *Antiquity,* 29, 4-9.

Atkinson, R.J.C., Piggott C.M. & Sandars, N.K. 1951. *Excavations at Dorchester*, Oxon,. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.

Barclay, A. & Halpin, C., 1999. *Excavations at Barrow Hills, Radley, Oxfordshire. Oxford Archaeological Unit, Thames Valley Landscapes Volume 11*. Oxford, OAU.

Barrett, J., Bradley, R. and Green, M., 1991. *Landscape, Monuments & Society: the Prehistory of Cranborne Chase*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Bradley, R.J., 1986. '*The Dorset Cursus: The Archaeology of the Enigmatic', Wessex Lecture III. CBA Group 12*. York: Council for British Archaeology.

Catt, J.A., Green, M. & Arnold, N.J., 1980. Naleds in a Wessex Downland Valley. *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, 102, 69-75.

Colt Hoare, R., 1819. *The Ancient History of Wiltshire Volume II*. London, Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor and Jones.

Drew, C. and Piggot, S., 1936. The excavation of long barrow 163a on Thickthorn Down, Dorset. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, 2, 77-96.

French, C., Lewis, H., Allen, M.J., Green, M., Scaife, R. and Gardiner, J., 2007. *Prehistoric landscape development and human impact in the upper Allen valley, Cranborne Chase, Dorset. (McDonald Institute Monographs)*. Cambridge, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

Grundy, G.B., 1936. Saxon Charters of Dorset. *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 58, 103-136.
Loveday, R., 2006. *Inscribed Across The Landscape – the Cursus Enigma*. Stroud, Tempus.
Pitt Rivers, A.H.L.F., 1898. *Excavations in Cranborne Chase Volume IV*. London, (privately printed).
Stukeley, W., 1740. *A Temple Restor'd to the British Druids.* London.
Sumner, H., 1913. *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase*. London: Chiswick Press.
Tilley, C., 1994. *A Phenomenology of Landscape*. Oxford: Berg.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Rosemary Dickens for permission to reproduce plate 4.2 and to David Parry for permission to include the plan of the henge excavated at Tarrant Monkton in figure 4.3. Rob Reade produced the figures.

Chapter Five
Excavation at High Lea Farm, Hinton Martell, Dorset 2002-6: Barrows, burials and the use of space in the Allen Valley

John Gale

Abstract

Cranborne Chase has long been identified with prehistoric landscapes, and landscapes that in part document the funerary activities of our Neolithic and early Bronze Age ancestors. Parts of the chase have been investigated by archaeologists from the dawn of the 19th century through to the modern day, all of which have contributed importantly to our growing understanding of this rich and diverse landscape. However, some parts of the Chase are less well understood, and in particular the Allen Valley that lies in the south-east has largely escaped the attention of archaeologists. The author has been looking at the ceremonial and funereal features of the valley that date to the later prehistoric period, and in particular has been examining in depth a group of barrows that have all but disappeared at High Lea Farm, between the villages of Hinton Martell and Witchampton. A programme of ongoing excavation and field survey is beginning to reveal secrets of the past that would otherwise have been lost to the plough and may have some relevance to the global issues of heritage conservation and future strategies for the examination of sites that are 'ploughed flat'. The main phase of field investigation is due to be completed in the summer of 2007, and Interim reports are published in the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*.

Introduction

The understanding of the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age funerary landscapes of many parts of southern England are seriously hampered by the fragility of the archaeological remains that they contain. The impact of generations of mechanised agricultural activity has taken its toll, and has frequently reduced such landscapes to nothing more than barely detectable shadows, seen only when the vagaries of the English climate and frequently changing planting regimes conjoin to reveal traces of barrows in aerial photographs via the phenomenon of crop or soil marks.

To be fair some barrows do survive such as those at Oakley Down, near Sixpenny Handley on Cranborne Chase (plate 5.1) where the mounds, banks and ditches of part of this impressive barrow cemetery survive well, and are now protected by statute. However, in many parts of the chalk lands of the south, including large tracts of Cranborne Chase the picture is much less clear.

At High Lea Farm (Plate 5.1) only a few miles to the south east of Oakley Down an extensive barrow cemetery has been almost completely flattened, with the exception of two barrows that cling to the landscape by dint of their partial protection within the headlands of a field. Within the headlands of the field the tractor and its plough lift the plough shares resulting in marginally less damage being done to any underlying deposits.

This story can of course be repeated throughout the British Isles and beyond, but of course applies most directly to those areas that have provided for intensive arable farming, particularly over the last century or so. In east Dorset the archaeological landscape could be said to have generally fared less well compared to that of the west of the county, although there are of course exceptions to this. The topography and soils have lent themselves to

Plate 5.1 - Barrow Landscapes. The Barrow groups of Oakley Down near Sixpenny Handley (left) and High Lea Farm near Hinton Martell (right). On the Oakley Down photograph the barrows can be seen in the grassed field just above the wood. On the High Lea Farm Group they are almost totally ploughed away but are located in the field directly above the farm buildings in the centre of the image. © Dorset County Council.

extensive agricultural exploitation, particularly from the 18th century where mechanical ploughing, and the later introduction of chemical fertilising coupled with varying economic trends have led to shifts from mixed farming regimes to a greater reliance on arable.

In 1959 Leslie Grinsell published the seventh of his regional surveys of barrows in England entitled simply '*Dorset Barrows*'. Followed by a supplement in 1982 these surveys still represent the most complete account of the distribution of barrows in the county with the possible exception of the records held by the National Monuments Record centre at Swindon, which although a better record of the quantification sites is often less complete in associated archaeological and historical detail. In the 1982 supplement Grinsell recorded over 2200 round barrows in the county approximately 400 more than he recorded in 1959. All of them had been discovered via their transposition from aerial photographs as crop, soil or parch marks in the form of the ever present ring-ditch.

It is clear that whilst we are effectively getting better at quantifying the numbers of barrows in the Dorset landscape our overall understanding about either their morphology or cultural associations has not substantially changed since the publication of Paul Ashbee's synthesis – *The Bronze Age Barrow in Britain* in 1960.

As we have seen many of the barrow cemeteries of the Dorset chalk lands, particularly in parts of Cranborne Chase survive at best as one or two upstanding mounds within greater quantities of ring-ditches. In all these cases we collectively know little or nothing about them beyond a total number and a list of diameters of the ring ditches extrapolated from the aerial photographs. That such 'ploughed out' barrow cemeteries are mostly still susceptible to the annual attentions of the plough, inevitably means that whatever does survive is a dwindling resource that can only equate to a similarly dwindling archaeological potential. What does survive in these flat cemeteries of ring-ditches? Is there anything left worth investigating?

Surprisingly there has been little systematic excavation of Bronze Age cemetery sites that could be said to be flat or levelled in recent years. Two examples that have, Roxton in Bedfordshire and Barrow Hills, Radley in Oxfordshire, both located on the flood plains of

major rivers (the Ouse and the Thames respectively), have revealed a wealth of archaeological features and material that would suggest that the absence of above ground remains is no indication of only limited archaeological potential. Both sites contained evidence for pre-barrow structures as well as primary and secondary burial deposits.

Although single barrows have been investigated on the Dorset chalk lands over the years such as the Bell Barrow near Edmonsham excavated by Edwina Proudfoot in 1959, our knowledge on barrow groupings is rather limited. With this very much in mind and building upon some associated field work undertaken at the Knowlton Henge complex by the author in the 1990s, work commenced in the summer of 2002 to try and better understand at least part of the Bronze Age funerary landscapes of Dorset.

Assessment and survey of the known potential within the Allen Valley, East Dorset

The Allen Valley lies in the south-east of Cranborne Chase and its river is one of a small number of streams and rivers that find their source in spring lines emerging from the main body of the chalk to the west. The course of the river, after flowing south–east from its source to the north-west of the village of Wimborne St Giles, quickly turns south towards the Poole basin eventually merging with the River Stour, in the Allen's case in the town of Wimborne some 15km from its source.

Cranborne Chase is an exceptional theme park, with its theme being very much focussed upon the richness of its archaeological landscapes that have been amongst the most intensively studied in north-west Europe. Periodically from the dawn of the twentieth century some of the most influential archaeological studies of prehistoric sites and monuments have been conducted within the chase beginning with General Pitt Rivers at sites such as Wor Barrow in 1896 through to the collaborative work of John Barrett, Richard Bradley and Martin Green in the 1970s and 80s.

Cranborne Chase is dominated by numerous barrow groups, and of course by such monuments as the Dorset Cursus, but up until recently the Allen Valley itself has largely escaped the attention of archaeologists. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that the concentration of known prehistoric features in the area tends to fall off in quantity as you progress eastward off the chalk escarpment.

The Allen Valley is dominated by the late Neolithic Henge complex at Knowlton close to where the river turns south. A small excavation undertaken by the author and Dr Stephen Burrow in 1994 at the largest of these henge monuments, known as the Southern Circle was able to date the construction of the henge to the period 2560-2190 BC. Apart from the henges themselves the valley displays little in the way of monumental evidence for Neolithic activity other than the possibility of some of the round barrows being this early (such as the great barrow – just to the east of the Central or Church henge), and the possible example of a pit circle located near the village of Stanbridge.

Surrounding the henge complex at Knowlton traces of ring-ditches are all too apparent upon aerial photographs and to some extent typify the problem and the circumstances of the erosion of lesser monuments within the landscape. It is through the medium of aerial photography that we have come to better understand the density of ring-ditches within the Allen Valley. Recent work by the aerial photographic section of English Heritage based in Swindon, have transposed their extensive collection of aerial photographs within a 1.5km radius of the southern henge at Knowlton. This exercise revealed the presence of over 150 ring ditches of which less than a dozen are visible as upstanding earthworks with most of these only extant as residual mounds that have been severely truncated by repeated ploughing.

A similar story of poor survival continues as one moves south with the river valley, but the question arises as to whether assessment via aerial photography provides as complete a picture of below ground remains as it might appear. To test this hypothesis a short piece of survey was undertaken in the winter of 1992 by students from Bournemouth University under the supervision of Stephen Burrow. A small area within the Knowlton barrow group (fig 5.1) which was known to contain 3-4 ring ditches was surveyed by fluxgate gradiometer. The survey revealed the presence of at least 8 ring-ditches.

Figure 5.1. Magnetometry survey of part of the Knowlton Barrow group 1993. On this grey scale black = positive white = negative.

Whilst the larger ring-ditches had been detected by the then available aerial photography the smaller ones had not been. It is likely therefore that considerable numbers of such features are yet to be discovered, particularly where aerial photographic coverage is limited. It should also be noted that the conditions which favour the production of ground marks of whatever form visible from the air, are highly dependent on such coincidental variables as crop type, soil type, growing conditions etc. It is also likely that several seasons of photography undertaken over a number of years is required to gain a full picture of below ground archaeology. The detection of negative or cut features such as ditches by the application of magnetometry is much less dependant on so many variables, and generally detection can be achieved in one pass.

The overall distribution of barrow cemeteries within the valley is shown in figure 5.2 (with some minor omissions). There are three distinct barrow groups along the valley, those at Knowlton, The Horton Inn and the High Lea Farm group with a further group lying to the south-west that lies in the parish of Pamphill. With the exception of the latter all of the previous three groups are to be found on the east bank of the Allen. On the face of it this would appear to be a deliberate act as there is no topographical reason why barrows should not have been constructed on the opposing bank. It seems likely therefore that the river itself may have acted as a natural boundary that had been adopted by the communities that built the barrows. Whether this boundary was visualised to demarcate the creation of funerary or sacred lands or whether it was a more formal boundary reflecting separate social groups which is therefore territorial is difficult to determine, but either way the distribution is compelling.

The Horton Inn group is the least well defined of all of the groups and consists of at least six ring-ditches mostly located in the field to the east of the Inn which lies on the B 3078 Wimborne – Cranborne road. Contained within this group is a double barrow and a ring-ditch that contains an inner ditch or slot that was clearly visible as a soil mark in 1997 (NMR 15835/24). Clearly this group would benefit from a future geophysical survey to better define the quantity, extent and form of the features surviving below ground.

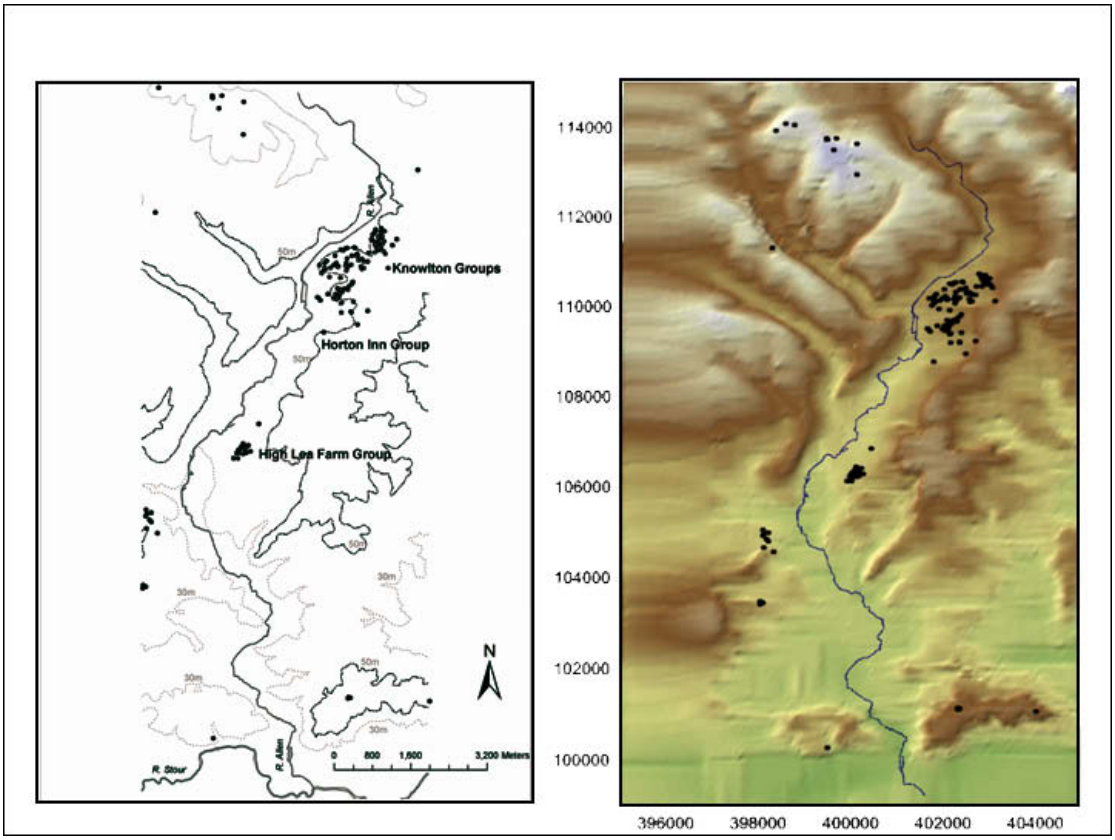


Figure 5.2 - Distribution plots of round barrows/ring ditches within the Allen Valley (drawn from National Monument Records but not necessarily including all those identified on aerial photographs). Left a line drawing highlighting the barrow groups and on the right a relief model depicting the same distributions.

The focus for much of the field work undertaken within this project is currently taking place at the third barrow group within the valley between the villages of Witchampton and Hinton Martell. The group is recorded in the National Monuments Record as the High Lea Farm Group where 10 ring ditches are formally recorded concentrated in a 15 ha field known as Kings Close. During the summer of 1989 when half of this particular field was under a crop of peas it evidenced some spectacular crop marks (NMR 4437/04) which highlighted most of the 10 known ring-ditches plus some others, and also some further marks that would appear to be geological in origin, and are likely to be dolines (also known more colloquially as sink holes). All of the barrow groupings in the valley are located in the close proximity to similar dolines, and it would seem to be unlikely that such associations should be entirely coincidental. It is therefore probable that the juxtapositioning of the barrows and the dolines was a deliberate act by the builders of the cemeteries and may be linked to the contemporary belief systems. These belief systems would have had an element of subterranean or chthonic linkages which would draw them towards entrances into the ground which is how these dolines might have been perceived at the time.

The link between barrow groups and dolines has been noted before by Chris Tilley in his analysis of the Bronkham Hill Barrow group on the south Dorset Ridgeway near Dorchester, but the linkage on several sites within a region has not been significantly researched. Ethnographically the closest link that demonstrates a social groups linkage between landscape features and the ancestors was recently discussed by Mike Parker Pearson in his book (1999) *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. In the mountainous headwaters of the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea the deep sink holes found within the limestone are considered by the Bimin-Kuskusmin tribesmen to be passages to the underworld of the dead and out of which

ancestral spirits arise to both haunt and bless the living. Such linkages between Papua New Guinea and Bronze Age Dorset cannot of course be taken too literally or directly, but the example does provide an insight into the possibilities of interpretation.

Field work at High Lea Farm 2002 -6

On the basis of the largely desk-based work described above a programme of field research was instigated in 2002 and has continued each year (a four week season each summer) that is due to be completed in the summer of 2007. With the permission and support of the owners (The Gaunts Estate) work has concentrated upon the barrow cemetery at High Lea Farm. In this group, as we have seen, there are some above ground remains with aerial photographic evidence for much more extensive remains contained within a relatively small area, largely in the field of Kings Close.

The project's aim from the outset was to attempt to better quantify the surviving features and to assess their state of preservation and in particular to examine the effectiveness of non-intrusive techniques in such a process. To achieve the project's aims a process of geophysical survey followed by intrusive and targeted sampling and then in most cases open area excavation was adopted.

The whole of Kings Close was geophysically surveyed over three seasons beginning in 2002 using a fluxgate gradiometer that took readings every metre. The results of this survey can be seen in figure 5.3 which highlights the presence of seventeen ring ditches within the field. The ring ditches vary in diameter from approximately 15.5m to 39m. Within the group there is a double barrow plus a double ditched barrow. Most striking within the plot is the general articulation of the group which contains three distinct alignments all of which appear to merge or cross with the double ditched barrow in the south-west corner of the field. Whilst it is as yet unknown as to the significance of the alignments particularly in regards to their north easterly orientation, it is clear that the barrows were erected to a prescribed plan arranged in part on the double ditched barrow which can be viewed as the likely point of origin for the others. The double ditched barrow may well be the 'founder' possibly related to an elder or important figure within the community who ultimately used the cemetery.

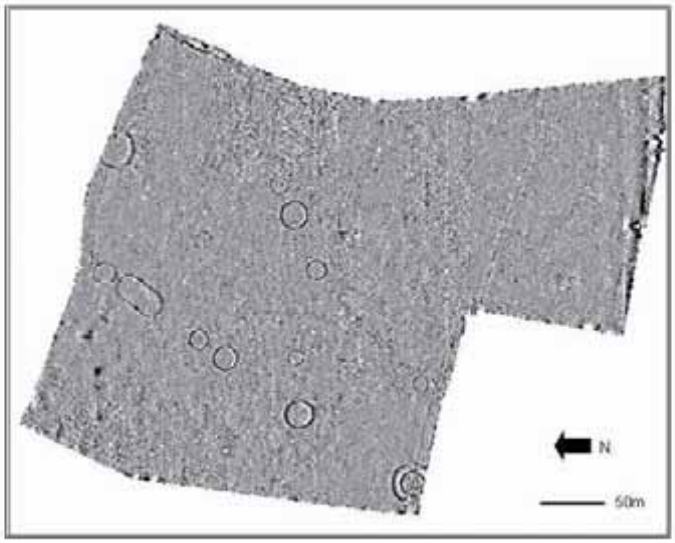


Figure 5.3 - Geophysics plot of Kings Close field within the High Lea Farm Barrow Group. The plot is drawn from a fluxgate gradiometer survey with samples resolution of 1m x 1m. Positive readings are in black and negative readings are in white.

Following this overall survey a number of further barrows were investigated using a variety of geophysical techniques to see if there was any evidence for surviving features but also to evaluate a strategy for the adoption of the best instrumentation to use in the evaluation of such sites on chalk. Using a combination of techniques (caesium gradiometry, electro-magnetics, ground penetrating radar and earth resistivity) it has been possible to maximise the geophysical potential of the barrow cemetery which ultimately led to a more informed and effective excavation strategy.

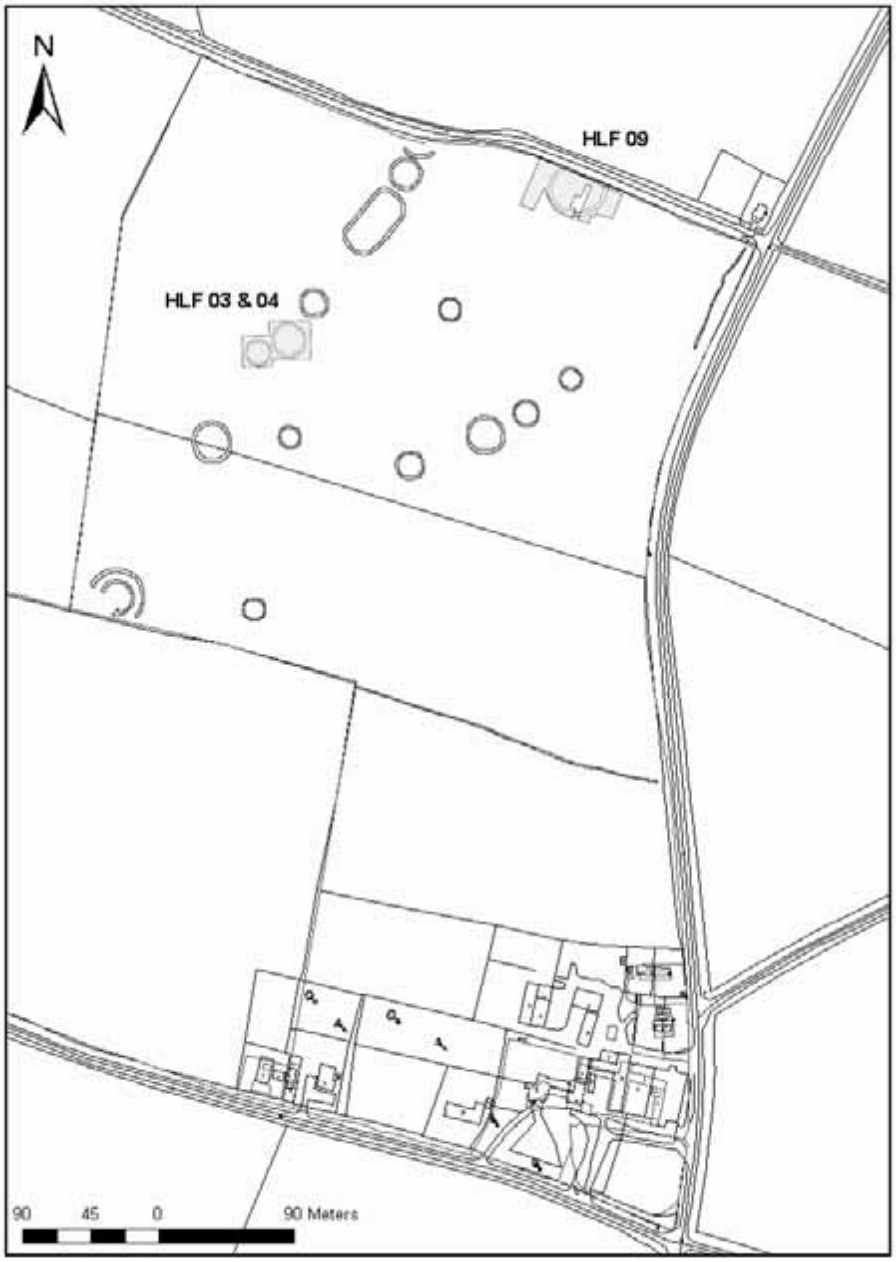


Figure 5.4 Plan of all the ring-ditches in Kings Close identified through the geophysical survey. The barrows excavated are highlighted.

Ultimately four barrows have been chosen for excavation, three of which have been area excavated with the fourth being sampled only. The rationale behind the subsequent choice of barrows was focussed on examining a cross-section of them based upon their predicted state of preservation implied from geophysical derived data. In addition certain barrows were targeted due to the presence of archaeological anomalies also identified through the

geophysical data that were unique to the group or were unusual and needed to be further investigated.

The first large scale excavations on site involved the investigation of ring ditches HLF 3 and 4, (figure 5.4) two ring ditches on the westernmost alignment within the group (although strictly speaking HLF 3 is actually off the alignment). Of all the barrows in the group this pair would seem to have an association, as HLF 3 seems to be in attendance to HLF 4 spatially, a factor further enhanced by the discovery on the geophysics plot produced by the caesium gradiometer (fig 5.5) which shows that HLF 4 has a causeway in its ditch which is adjacent to the nearest point of HLF 3.

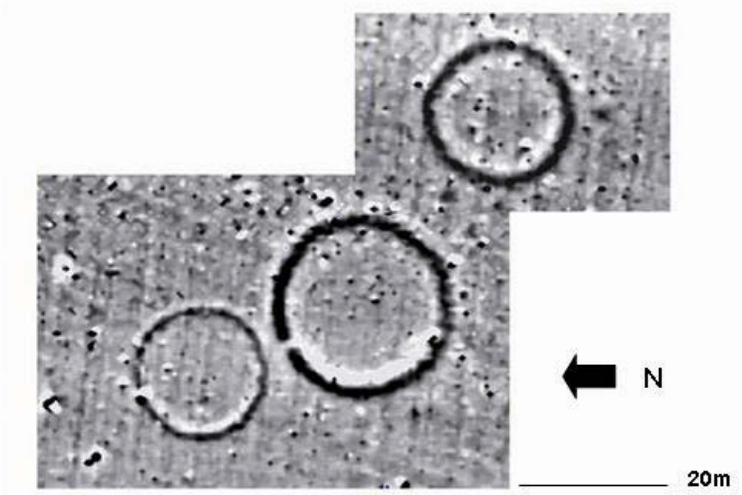
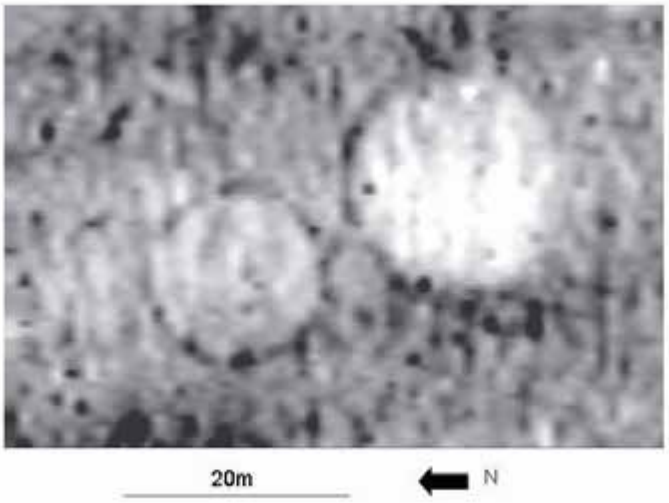


Figure 5.5 - Geophysics plot of a high resolution survey (0.5m x 0.75m) of barrows HLF 3(lower) and 4 (middle). The plot is drawn from a caesium gradiometer survey. Positive readings are in black and negative readings are in white.

The electro-magnetic survey of the same pair of barrows also highlighted that the magnetic susceptibility values of the interiors of both these ring-ditches showed a variance that was not expected. The plot of this variance seen in figure 5.6, shows that HLF 4 had a more negative response than that of its companion which might indicate the presence of a different layer within the enclosed space of each of the two ring-ditches.



F*igure 5.6 - Geophysics plot of EM38B survey of barrows HLF 3 and 4. The plot is of the In-phase values that mark changes in the magnetic susceptibility values recorded. Black is positive and white is negative.*

Upon excavation this did indeed prove to be the case, with HLF 3 having a much more weathered surface underneath the plough soil that contained a greater proportion of soil than that of HLF 4 that may have been partially protected over the centuries by a more resilient barrow mound (plates 5.2 and 5.3). This protection had subsequently left the chalk natural

underneath less exposed to the elements for so long that the chalk remains less weathered, containing less soil within its matrix.

Plate 5.2 - Area excavation of Barrow HLF 4 (looking north)

Plate 5.3 - Barrow HLF 3 during excavation (looking east)

Within the excavation almost all of any original archaeological deposits have been lost. The mounds had been totally destroyed – not entirely unexpected, and only the surrounding ditches survived. The presence of the causeway on HLF 4 was confirmed and close to the inner lip of the ditch on HLF 3 the base of a small pit was recovered that contained the base and lower sides of an urn which in turn contained cremated human remains. Upon examination by Joanna Laver it could be determined that the remains were likely to be of a

single individual – a child of between 2-4 years of age. It is likely that these remains were a secondary deposit within the barrow.

The absence of any central burial pit on either of these barrows may indicate that the original or primary deposit (if there was one!) had probably been placed on the old ground surface underneath a later mound rather than in a funerary pit, and that they have been subsequently destroyed by plough activity. It was also noticed during the excavation of HLF 4 that it appeared to have been placed on a slight rise in the original topography of the field, particularly when viewed from the north-east looking towards the river. This would have originally given the appearance that the barrow from this direction at least looked slightly higher than it might have otherwise have done. Although the field is relatively flat in appearance today this is almost entirely due to centuries of ploughing. Originally the field may have contained small hillocks as can be seen on other parts of the Chase that have little evidence of ploughing.

As was expected these two barrows were thought to represent the worst case scenarios in terms of monument preservation within the group and in 2005 it was time to look at the opposite end of the spectrum.

Both barrows within the field, which survive as very low mounds, occur within its headlands that are located at opposite ends of the field. A trial trench was opened over HLF 9 a barrow which has been partially truncated by the mill road that runs along its northern edge. Geophysical analysis had indicated the presence of several anomalies within the centre of the encircling ring ditch, which indicated that the archaeological preservation would be significantly better than that found elsewhere within the group.

Plate 5.4 - Excavation of HLF 9 showing the central area of the barrow including the central pit, the 'polo' and the portions of the inner and outer stake circles.

Although the excavation of this barrow has yet to be completed it has already revealed a complex history. Before the burial mound was raised the site was chosen for the erection of a number of circular features that are almost certainly linked to the funerary process which

culminated with erection of the mound. At least four pits were dug approximately 1m in diameter on an arc that was approximately concentric with several stake circles that lay inside them. These stake circles contained hundreds of sharpened stakes (6-10cm in diameter) struck vertically into the ground. The outer line of the stake circles had a diameter of approximately 25m. The innermost circle of stakes was arranged, once again concentrically with the others having a 5.5m diameter. This inner ring of stakes, which were set only a few centimetres apart, surrounded the primary burial pit, but was erected before the pit was originally dug. The excavated chalk from the pit was cast up around the outside of the pit itself but was stopped from spreading by the surrounding stake ring (plate 5.4).

Excavation of the pit in 2006 revealed that the pit once opened had placed within it at one end a hybrid form of early Bronze Age urn, however, if this urn was placed as a funerary accompaniment to an inhumation or cremation is not known. This is because the first fill of the pit was re-cut, possibly removing most of the original deposit, into which were placed two cremations side by side that were contained within a wooden frame. A further decorated Food Vessel was placed with one of these cremations and accompanying the other was a section from a deer antler with a boar's tusk.

After the interment of these cremations the pit was sealed and a mound was thrown up over the burial but not before all of the stakes from the stake circles had been removed. The mound was constructed of turf and was approximately 25m in diameter and may have been anything up to 1m in depth at its centre. The quantity of turf required to create such a mound would have covered a large area possibly more than 1 acre. It is unknown as to quite where the turf was cut from but quantities of struck flint were found distributed within it.

Soon after the ditch surrounding the turf mound was cut and the resultant chalk spoil was thrown up over it. Virtually all of this chalk capping has been lost (most of it falling back into the ditch over time) mainly through later plough activity, but partial survival *in situ* was recorded around the lower edges of the mound where it had been partially protected by a build up of colluvium that had formed over it. The ditch itself was a little over 2m wide at its base, was nearly vertically sided and approximately 1m deep. The base of this ditch as with all the other ditches excavated in the group are cut with a great deal of care and was extremely flat. The ditches were clearly not regarded as mere quarries for building material but were carefully constructed, and at the very least meant to be viewed as a complete package and along with the mound created a monument that was intended to impress.

The creation of the chalk capping to the monument can be seen to be an act of closure for the monument by its builders but it is not an end to the monument's use for burial activity. At some time after the chalk cap was placed on the barrow mound a pit was dug into its north-eastern flank and into the pit was placed a sarsen boulder weighing approximately 1.5 tonnes. It is clear that the boulder was deliberately buried or hidden, but it is not known from where the boulder originated. These sarsen boulders are to found locally but at the moment it has not been possible to date when the boulder was buried with any degree of accuracy, it could be at any time after the barrow's construction and up to relatively recent times.

As for the site's continuing use for human burial's HLF 9 must have been viewed as a place of great significance, as a cemetery containing at least 40 graves has been discovered on its eastern and southern edges. The cemetery discovered in 2006 has yet to be thoroughly investigated but is likely to be Anglo-Saxon in date, possibly as early as the 8th century AD. Further investigations into this fascinating barrow will be conducted and hopefully concluded in the summer season of 2007.

Some thoughts on the use of space and place in the funerary landscapes of the Allen Valley, and its interpretation.

The investigation of the interaction between our Bronze Age ancestors and their contemporary landscapes is fundamental to our understanding of the period but it is one which is fraught with many difficulties. Perhaps the greatest of these difficulties is the fragmentary and incomplete nature of the data that archaeologists have at their disposal. This is nowhere more apparent than in the study of barrow distributions within landscapes. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to understand their distributions unless one is sure that the distributions are as complete as we can make them. As we have seen the density of these distributions is largely derived from aerial photographic transcription, but that some, probably the majority, are compromised because of the fragile nature of the resource. To maximise our understanding of these distributions, particularly at the micro scale, it is therefore essential that the application of geophysics be undertaken to recover as much detail as possible.

At the macro scale within the Allen Valley we can see that on the basis of current data the Bronze Age communities that used the valley for burial and the construction of funerary monuments, made a conscious decision to utilise only the east bank of the river valley between the Knowlton complex and the Allen Valley. It is tempting, as discussed previously to see this as the creation of a sacred landscape that is bounded by the River Allen itself. As yet, however, it is not known whether the 'land of the living' was on the other side of the river or whether the river formed a territorial boundary between social groups and that simply the groups within our distribution did not have access to the other side of the river. If the latter is the case then the river is clearly an important focus or place with which a community's dead are associated.

Closely linked to a probable association between the dead and the river, is the association of the dead with the location of the geological features known as dolines. It seems beyond the bounds of chance for each of the groups within the valley to be closely associated with such features. If taken together, the determination of where cemeteries were located would at the very least seem to have been governed by identifiable factors that possibly involved land rights and belief systems strongly associated with the natural world.

At the micro scale it is also possible to consider the possible determining factors for the location of barrows within groupings. This initial work at High Lea Farm has highlighted that a degree of pre-planning is evidenced through the creation of a triple alignment radiating or converging with the double-ditched barrow in the south-west corner of the main part of the group in the field, Kings Close. It is as yet unclear as to the significance of these three separate alignments but the simple intention to create them clearly suggests some form of differentiation between the alignments that do however, find resolution with a singular monument that would be traditionally identified as a 'founder' barrow.

The position of the barrows on these alignments as in other alignments throughout southern England would seem to be randomised, however, initial findings from the excavations at the High Lea Farm group may indicate that such positioning may be determined simply as a wish to place a monument on a slight rise in an attempt to give the completed monument a 'lift' or degree of prominence. This would seem to be the case for both HLF 4 and HLF 9 and may also have been also true for HLF 2.

The creation of sacred places within landscapes would seem therefore to be potentially one in which the early Bronze Age communities of this small part of the world took considered deliberation of, in part through the governing rules of land tenure and belief systems but also perhaps with a degree of individual aesthetic preference – perhaps not too dissimilar from our deliberations today!

Bibliography and further reading

Ashbee, P., 1960. *The Bronze Age Round Barrow in Britain*. London, Pheonix.

Barrett, J., Bradley, R. & Green, M., 1991. *Landscape, Monuments and Society*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Darvill, T. and Fulton, A., 1998. *The Monuments at Risk Survey of England 1995*. Bournemouth and London, School of Conservation Sciences, Bournemouth University and English Heritage.

Gale, J., Cheetham, P., Laver, J. & Randall, C., 2005. Excavations at High Lea Farm, Hinton Martell, Dorset: An Interim report on fieldwork undertaken during 2002-3. *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society*, 126, 160-6.

Gale, J., Russell, M. & Laver, J., 2007. Excavations at High Lea Farm, Hinton Martell, Dorset: An interim report on fieldwork undertaken during 2004-5. *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society*, 128, 100-106.

Grinsell, L.V., 1959. *Dorset Barrows*. Dorchester, Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society.

Grinsell, L.V., 1982. *Dorset Barrows Supplement*. Dorchester, Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society.

Parker Pearson, M., 1999. *The Archaeology of Death and Burial*. Stroud, Sutton.

Proudfoot, E.W., 1959. Report on the excavation of a Bell-Barrow in the parish of Edmondsham, Dorset, England 1959. *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 13, 395-425.

Chapter Six
The Six Species of Deer in our Countryside today.

Dorothy Ireland

Deer have been researched for many years genetically, their habitat, behaviour and a whole host of other reasons. To have a balance within our countryside with other fauna and flora deer need to be managed humanly.

The following paper is an insight to three of our main species of deer within the UK, two (roe and fallow) are frequently seen on the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs.

RED DEER (*Cervus elaphus*)

One of our native deer in the United Kingdom, it is the biggest deer and also our largest British land mammal, the size varying considerably due to their habitat, the red deer we have in the New Forest are considerably bigger than those living in the bleaker areas of the Scottish hills.

It is thought that by the beginning of the seventeenth century, red deer were near to extinct within the New Forest, hence why both James I and Charles II introduced fresh blood from France. We have no records of how many James I imported, but it is thought that Charles II imported no less than 375 red deer, which were released into New Park at Brockenhurst, now the showground for the New Forest Show.

In later years it is very sketchy as to how many survived, but around 1892 it is known about fourteen were recorded having crossed from the Wiltshire border. In 1908 Lord Montagu released a stag and two hinds in Hartford Wood, but it is not known where they came from.

It is not until 1962 when Sir Dudley Forward Bart living at The Old House at Burley found that his small deer park consisting of five hinds, three calves and a young stag found a weak place in the fence and escaped, they established themselves within a place called Harvest Slade steadily increasing in numbers. We now have on the forest approximately 150 red deer an extremely healthy herd.

The male red is called a stag, the female a hind and the young a calf. Their coat in the summer is a deep red brown, but becomes thicker and darker in colour during the winter.

All the points on a red's antler have names, the first being a 'brow-tine', then 'bay-tine' 'tray-tine' 'offer' and 'cup

Plate 6.1 – Red Deer Stag
Copyright Brian Phipps www.brianphipps.net

crown'. The antlers on all deer are grown each year, red and fallow cast them during March/April, however new ones are grown immediately. No matter what the size of an antler they all grow in the same number of weeks. When the antler is growing it is enclosed in a covering of skin called velvet this is enriched by blood vessels and contains tissue.

Antler is completely different from the horn of a cow or goat. Horn once it has grown is a permanent structure during the life of that animal, it is full of keratine, the same substance from which fingernails are made, it is a living thing.

An antler will take about four to five months to complete its growth; the velvet is stripped off revealing the hard boned antler. This is full of calcium, sometimes in the woods an antler can be found that has been partly chewed, mice and even deer themselves will gnaw at them for the calcium.

During the summer the male red deer fatten themselves up in readiness for the autumn breeding season called the rut. The rut takes place towards the end of September into October for the red, fallow and sika. The biggest and loudest voiced stag will hold more hinds in his harem. The calf is born the following May to June time.

There are several meanings to the word 'Hart' found in *The Badminton Diary* (1962).

Hart: Male deer of six years or more. The term hart is still used on the Atholl forest instead of the more usual word stag. The Badminton Diary suggests that hart denotes a 10-pointer.
Hart of First Head. Stag in sixth year.
Hart o Second Head. Stag in seventh year.
Hart of Ten. A 'warrantable' stag, i.e. one of ten points and large enough to hunt. In ancient venery, a stag in sixth year.
Hart of Twelve. A 12 pointer- not necessarily a royal.
Hart Resigned. A stag whose head will not improve further.
Hart Royal. In former times this denoted a hart hunted by the king or queen. Today it would refer to a 12 pointer, with three points atop in the form of a cup or crown and all his rights.
Hart Royal Proclaimed. In former times this denotes a stag that had been hunted by the king and escaped.

ROE DEER (*Capreolus capreolus*)

The second native deer in the United Kingdom, known to some as 'The fairy of the woods'. This is the deer you see mostly around Cranborne Chase. It would appear that the roe became rare in England by the thirteenth century; it was because of introductions made in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century that we now have a very large population of roe. In the New Forest roe made their appearance from about 1870.

The roe deer are much smaller than the red, but still a rich chestnut-brown in colour, an extremely attractive deer. They have no visual tail, but both male and female are easily distinguished from the back (which is how most people see them) with what looks like a powder puff when running off if alarmed, the colour of this being buff to white or even a lemon yellowish colour.

The male is called a buck, the female a doe and the young a kid usually being a twin, however triplets are also known, the MOD on Salisbury Plain have reported on this.

Their year is a little different from the other deer, their rut time is July/August, however, the birth of the young is still around May/June time the following year. It has been known to have

very early births in April in which case their survival depends on the weather. The female has what they call a delayed implantation like badgers and stoats.

Plate 6.2 – Roe Deer Buck
Copyright Brian Phipps www.brianphipps.net

The antlers are cast during November/ December, re-growth is complete by the following March/April and cleaned of velvet by the end of May. They are smaller in appearance typically six points with pearling.

Their food consists of bramble, hazel, fruit, ivy and of course (to their delight) man's garden, runner beans, strawberries, roses. Most of the gardener's hard work can be eaten in broad daylight. They have become quite urbanised and one can sometimes see a roe lying up on a patio after eating the contents of a hanging basket.

They can be seen either alone, or more likely as a family group, however, if the spring bite is good, one could see anything up to 40 in a field. The older female will tolerate at least two generations of daughters around her, however they are fiercely territorial especially the buck, who will not tolerate a young male roe on his patch.

FALLOW DEER (*Dama dama*)

Plate 6.3 – Fallow Deer Buck.
Copyright Brian Phipps www.brianphipps.net

The fallow deer are now becoming established in all parts of southern England, their numbers have increased considerably over the last few years, a nightmare for the farmer who has just grown a field of crops.

There is no clear evidence as to when fallow were first introduced into Britain and, while fossil evidence exists of their presence here in prehistoric times, it is generally believed that they died out here during or after the second interglacial period 250,000 years ago. Evidence shows that the Romans brought fallow deer to England, but there is no clear record of the existence of fallow herds between the fourth and eleventh centuries. It would seem the enthusiasm of the Normans for hunting was responsible for

establishing the existing herds of today.

Fallow deer are quite different again in appearance, their coat is spotted with a variation of the attractive dappled menil, to a white coat and even black. There are some estates that prefer to have one colour, an estate up north prefers to have a black herd, whilst Bramshill Police College would prefer to have white ones. It is no wonder that fallow deer remain a popular parkland species. They have a completely different shape to the antler, which is called palmated (like an open hand). The points on the palm are called spellers.

The male is called a buck, female a doe and the young fawns. Their breeding cycle is the same as the red deer, only difference is the buck has a stand in a wooded area and calls for the does, he will hardly leave that area for fear of losing his status. Their habitat is ideally deciduous or mixed woodland, interspersed with farmland. Food consists of mainly grass, cereals, herbs, fruit and berries.

This should be the most common deer in the New Forest where in William I time the forest was created into a royal hunting forest, today you can still see them from an advantage point at Bolderwood, where at certain times of the day the keeper will feed them.

A fallow buck reaches the peak of his development between seven and nine years of age, he would have been called a great buck. Many names are given to the male in the years proceeding; he would in turn have been a fawn, a pricket, a sorrel, a sore, a bear buck, and a buck, a long apprenticeship for two or three short years of supremacy.

SIKA (*Cervus Nippon*)

Plate 6.4 – Sika Deer Stag
Copyright Brian Phipps www.brianphipps.net

Sika deer are native to Japan and East Asia and they were brought to Britain during the 1800's. Some escaped from private collections and sadly others were let loose on our countryside. There are three varieties of sika in Britain: the Japanese sika, the Manchurian sika and the Formosan sika, both of the latter stand three to four inches taller at the shoulder than the Japanese, and are mainly in parks or private collection.

In the Wessex area, Japanese sika are widespread in Dorset especially around the Purbecks, Arne certainly has a large population. In the New Forest they can be seen in one corner and are kept to a number of around 150. These are thought to be from a collection owned by the then Lord Montagu of Beaulieu escaping over a hundred years ago, and establishing themselves near to Beaulieu. Sika and Red deer can inter-breed, this has happened in Scotland and Ireland, recently Dr Anita Diaz of Bournemouth University carried out DNA testing on the New Forest and the Purbeck sika to see if there was any hybridisation between the two species, her work revealed some interesting findings.

The sika are much darker in colour, more greyish in the female, they like to stay in cover away from the public eye, although the Dorset ones have adapted to fields, and can be seen quite close at Arne. They are the most inquisitive deer out of the species, they like to walk

towards you stamping their feet before running off. The male is a stag, the female a hind and the young a calf, again the breeding calendar is the same as red and fallow, although the stag can still be heard with his penetrating whistle in November/December. Out of all the deer, they have the most vocal range of calls, from the high pitch whistle of one to five whistles, they groan, raspberry blow, lip blow, and 'yak, yak, yak' to other noises too difficult to describe.

Their habitat is often thick coniferous and broad-leaved woodlands, they also like reed beds, and their food is mainly herbs, grasses, chestnuts, acorns and beech mast. Unfortunately, the foresters are not keen on sika or any other deer. The sika stag during the rut time will damage trees very noticeably by what we call boll scoring, making a 'v' in the trunk with its antler, and of course this can then damage the wood for production at the wood mill.

MUNTJAC (*Muntiacus Reevesii*)

Plate 6.5 – Muntjac Deer Buck
Copyright Brian Phipps www.brianphipps.net

Muntjac are the oldest species of deer in the world. Their fossilised remains have been found in Miocene deposits in Europe, which were laid down between fifteen and thirty million years ago. Their shape is virtually unchanged since then. Muntjac have now spread to almost every part of Wessex, they are escapees from a private collection.

They are about the size of a spaniel; their coat in the summer is a rich glossy foxy red/brown. The antlers are much smaller, are shed annually, but the time of year varies between individuals. They breed continuously; a fawn is born roughly every seven months, and with the milder winters this does mean more survive. Both male and female grow long upper canine teeth or tusks which have an extremely sharp point. The male is a buck, female a doe, young are fawns and their habitat is thick undergrowth.

Food is mixed, they are grazers and browsers, they can devastate a bluebell wood in no time, sadly people do not realise they have them in their gardens until something like that happens, so they must be controlled in numbers. They are also known to attack if cornered, it has been known for a muntjac to kill a labrador.

CHINESE WATER DEER (*Hypropotes Inermis*)

The Chinese water deer originates, as its name implies, from the swamplands of China and North Korea. They are known in the deer world as the 'teddy bear' deer as their eyes and nose appear to resemble buttons.

Most are wild in the Norfolk and Cambridgeshire area around the fens, they have not spread like the muntjac, the most noticeable feature again is their long canine tusks.

The male is a buck, the female a doe and the young fawns. The coat colour in winter is variable with pale brown and a peppery grey-brown being common.

The rut is usually between November/December with activity continuing into January, May/June time is when the doe gives birth.

Food is grass and a favourite being bramble. A typical habitat for this small deer is reed beds, scrub woodland grassland and arable land.

Plate 6.6 Chinese Water Deer Buck
Copyright Brian Phipps www.brianphipps.net

Further reading

Sources where most of the above can be found are:

Chapman, N. & Harris, S., (1996). *Muntjac*. Southampton, The Mammal Society & The British Deer Society.

Cooke, A. & Farrell, L., (1998). *Chinese Water Deer*. Southampton, The Mammal Society and The British Deer Society.

Fawcett, J., (1997). *Roe Deer*. Southampton, The Mammal Society and The British Deer Society

Hingston, F., (1988). *Deer Parks & Deer of Great Britain*. Sporting & Leisure Press.

Langbein, J. & Chapman, N. (2004) *Fallow Deer*. Southampton, The Mammal Society and The British Deer Society.

Prior, R., (2000). *The Roe Deer*. Shrewsbury, Swan Hill Press.

Prior, R., (2007) *Deer Watch*. 2nd Edn. Shrewsbury, Swan Hill Press.

Putman, R., (2000) *Sika Deer*. Southampton, The Mammal Society and The British Deer Society

Smith-Jones, C., (2004). *Muntjac*. Powys, Coch-y-Bonddu Books.

Dr Anita Diaz's paper on 'Sika in the New Forest and in the Isle of Purbeck' has been part published in 'Deer' journal of The British Deer Society Spring 2007, and full results of this research have recently been published in the Journal of Zoology (Diaz et al., 2006). The full references for these articles are: -

Diaz, A *et.al.*, (2006). Genetic study of sika (Cervus nippon) in the New Forest and in the Purbeck region, southern England: is there evidence of recent or past hybridization with red deer (Cervus elaphus)? *Journal of Zoology* 270 (2), 227-235.

Diaz, A. (2007) Sika in the New Forest and in the Isle of Purbeck. How hybridised with red deer are they, asks Anita Diaz. *Deer* 14, 19-23.

Chapter 7
A Note on the Medieval Deer Parks of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Katherine Barker

Over the course of the winter of 2005-2006 Katherine Barker was engaged to undertake a survey of deer parks for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB, a project supported by the Dorset Gardens Trust. The work – unexpectedly – yielded some valuable insights into the making of the historic landscape of an area outstanding in more than one way and which were to provide the theme of the paper given at The Chase, the Hart and the Park weekend seminar in Handley. The following is a brief introduction to some of things discovered – and some of the questions raised - which appeared in the Dorset Gardens Trust Newsletter *shortly before and which is published here (see pages 13-36). It was the questions posed relating to the number and identity of the medieval deer parks at Rockbourne that prompted the field visit on the Sunday.*

The author is grateful to Fran Dowse, Editor of the DGT Newsletter, for permission to reprint this essay.

What is a medieval deer park?

This is not a difficult question to answer. How many medieval deer parks there are in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is not so straightforward. This note will not, however, attempt a resumé of the project undertaken last winter, but will instead explore a little of its 'spin off' which has begun to reveal something about the distinctive landscape history of the area as a whole. The origins of at least some of these parks may lie in the pre-medieval and reflect something of the geography of an earlier world. An important part is played here – quite literally – by the area of the AONB. So many things are county-based (and have been for a long time) it is a rare privilege to be asked to embark on a study of a territory whose borders wholly ignore (as it were) those of four shires which run through it; borders – and borderlands – which have been in existence for at least 1200 years.

Medieval deer parks

The peak time for the making of deer parks coincides (more or less) with Exchequer requirement for 'licence to empark' ('planning permission') thus providing us with a written record to complement our understanding of what we see in the historic landscape. By the end of the thirteenth century it is calculated that there were about 3,200 parks in southern England – roughly one to every four parishes. Many small parks were short-lived but their outline remains in many places, 'embedded' in plan and pattern of later fields and woodlands. Very much a status symbol, a local magnate would spend a lot of money on his park. To keep costs down the park perimeter usually followed an oval or sub-circular plan, often a circuit of a mile or more; Blagdon Park on the Dorset-Hampshire border has a circuit of nearly six. Relationship of the park boundary to the local parish boundary can be an indicator of its age.

The bailiff's accounts survive for Harbin's Park in Tarrant Gunville. In 1337 expenses included those for paying 4 men for 3 days 'mending defects in the fencing round the park and in 1372'; mending the old coppice and the gate of the park with nails'. The boundary was important – fallow deer introduced by the Normans are strong animals and need to be kept in – other landowners' deer were welcome to jump in (but not out!) hence references to 'leap gates'. The first Dorset deer park to be written up was by Heywood Sumner in 1919. This was at Rye Hill at Wimborne St Giles which presents a well-preserved boundary bank with a

characteristic steeper inner face above a ditch. The whole was probably topped by a fence of cleft oak stakes and/or wattle fencing. Another park of about 110 acres lies just to the north round Deer Park Farm which also contains a chain of three fish ponds formed by damming the stream. These parks abut the east side to what appear to be a series of early ring-fenced enclosures centred on Wimborne St Giles, formerly Up Wimborne, an outlying estate in an area of former wood and open common.

Venison – fresh meat in the winter – was without price. More than that, enclosed areas, park compartments or *launds*, could afford grazing for cattle and sheep, coppice and standard timber, and were often leased out to maximise profit. Breaking into a park was a crime. In 1294 we learn that William de Bridport with three accomplices were charged by John Mautravers for 'breaking his park at Witchampton and taking game to the value of 40's. Such parks were not normally large enough for actual hunting – more in the nature of a 'reserve' or 'conservancy'. We find occasional references to methods employed for driving and trapping animals in parks which include the use of 'hays' which seem to have been temporary 'runs' of woven wattle hurdling - implying hazel coppicing. From a Germanic/AS word *haga*, *haia*, [wattle] 'hedge' it also denotes a hedged enclosure; 'hay' and 'hays' are common field names. (This is the original meaning of the 'haw' in 'haw-thorn'). A 'hay' could, however, be much bigger. It is the pre-Norman name for a large Essex deer park. An Anglo-Saxon will of 1043 refers to a deerhay at Ongar. We find names in 'hay' or 'hay(e)s' many times in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and their meaning and significance invites further enquiry (see this volume pp 29-33).

Deer parks in the Domesday Book

The Domesday Book lists 35 deer parks – including Ongar. For many entries we read *parcus ferarum silvaticum*, 'wild woodland-animal park'. *Parcus* is a Norman 'Latinisation' of an Old English word *pearroc*, which – like 'hays' – comes from a Germanic word adopted into both Early French and Early English from the eighth century onwards. The same period sees the adoption of the word *forestis* to designate that area administered directly by the crown – the Royal Forest.

Old English *pearroc* simply means 'enclosure', and is found in field names like Parkham, Parkfield and Park Leys – even Park Farm – and nothing to do with deer. We still talk about 'Deer Parks' and the Park has (again) diversified – although each time it still connotes a legally-defined reserve; the National Park, Safari Park, Science Park – and the Car Park.

In Domesday there is a clear correlation in the distribution of woods and deer parks. They tend to go together. Tracts of woodland and Royal Forest occupy marginal lands, that is, places away from centres of population. They are on borderlands; on the Continent they are coincident with frontiers. There are two major borderland areas in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB; the former royal Forest of Selwood along the Somerset/Wiltshire boundary and Cranborne Chase, an extensive area licensed as a 'private' forest. They have complex tenurial histories, a contrasting 'pair' worthy of study. Both are ancient borderlands.

Deer parks on county boundaries

Longleat Park may be descended from a grant of land made to a medieval priory-cum-hermitage – it is not until 1618 when the Stuart kings started to sell outright their rights in Selwood Forest on the Wiltshire-Somerset borders that the Thynne family purchased additional land which became the ornamental deer park of the eighteenth century. Just to the south, Lord Stourton founded a deer park by royal licence in 1422; but again, it was not until disafforestation that the Hoares could embark on the 'aesthetic' landscaping which produced the park of today. In each case the existence of a mansion house within the park is, by definition, post-Medieval.

Blagdon Park actually lies astride the Dorset-Hampshire boundary in Cranborne Chase. It also lies close to the point where the Roman road crosses the county boundary at Bokerley Dyke – intimations here of one-time 'border controls' of people and stock in response to the westward migration and settlement of in-coming Saxons – English-speaking people. Blagdon is a huge park and interestingly, seems to 'pair' another huge one-time park on the Dorset-Devon borderland at Marshwood. There are some indications that something similar once existed for the White Sheet Downs in west Wiltshire, where the Wiltshire boundary extends round north Dorset. Bradley House Park may represent a sole survival of a once now-lost 'great' park which lay astride an early east-west routeway crossing Selwood at Alfred's Tower (see this volume pp 28-29).

Deer parks – and Roman roads

Ongar Great Park is not the only deer park actually crossed by a Roman road. Tarrant Rushton listed in 1296 as a park of 80 acres of wood and pasture is traversed from NNW to SSE by the now lost Roman road on its way to Badbury. Another lost Roman road runs through Witchampton Park, also on its way to Badbury. West of Salisbury, towards the edge of the AONB, a lost Roman road runs along the ridge through Grovely Forest/Park which presents a whole series of enclosures. A name in *graf*, 'grove', suggests the area may once have had a pre-Christian, pagan Celtic significance. We may take it these old routes provided useful access. That said, we know that Columella in the first century BC describes keeping deer, wild pigs and gazelles in wooded enclosures with walls or wooden pales in Roman Italy. No deer parks are known (yet) from Roman Britain but we cannot wholly exclude the possibility that at least some of these later parks represent earlier enclosures, although not necessarily on exactly the same sites. Grovely Park may well support some ancient woodland relics.

It is with reference to borderlands we find interesting Continental references to the word *haga*, *haia*, [wattle]'hedge' or 'hays' in use there from the mid ninth century in the sense of 'defensive palisade'. Echoes here perhaps of those spiky 'hedges-built-like-walls' constructed by the Gauls to impede the movement of Caesar's army serving – surely – as ancient barbed wire. In the ancient borderland country of the AONB we find clusters of 'hays' names north of Longleat at Corsley, 'the clearing at the pass/gap' across what was destined to become the Wiltshire-Somerset border and similarly around the area of the medieval parks of East Knoyle and Mere (OE *ge-maere*, 'boundary') on the Wiltshire-Dorset border (see above).

Rockbourne – or how many deer parks?

Rockbourne, on the edge of the AONB, occupies a 'salient' of Hampshire on the Dorset border and is the site of a major Roman villa. It provides us with a potential case study which concludes this note; a place with a sequence of parks. A royal manor in 1086, in 1307 there were two deer parks in Rockbourne containing 100 acres of large oaks and underwood. One of these was held by the Bishop of Bath and Wells who complained his park had 'been broken into, his deer taken and his rabbits taken with ferrets nests and other engines'. In the mid sixteenth century 'East Park' belonged to the Lord of the Manor and one Sir George Marshall kept the king's horses in 'West Park'. The plan here is drawn from the 1846 tithe map and a 1671 manor map. Of some interest is to discover a 'deerhay' on rising ground just east of the manor house and church. The park labelled 'West Park, Mansions and Gardens' in 1846 has clearly been enlarged and landscaped by the owner of the post-medieval mansion; there is a 'New Park' along the stream. It seems probable that the medieval 'East Park' is represented by the field called Deerehay in 1671. The remaining southern field boundary may provide some evidence of its age and origins; the hedgerow could be interesting. By 1671 the rest of the putative deer park boundary had already been ploughed out of existence; Dunberry Hill is described as 'arable'.

Where next?

A large area of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB embraces that ground where Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, 'Father of Scientific Archaeology,' did much of his seminal work on the prehistoric monuments of the Chase. The southern edge of his Tollard [Royal] Park runs with the Wiltshire-Dorset border, one of its entry points in 1618 is Lauermere Gate, which gave its name to his Larmer Grounds ('amenity park') in the 1880s. (The very name contains Old English *ge-maere* 'boundary'.) A preliminary survey of medieval deer parks in the AONB has highlighted a little of the potential of a borderland landscape study. Through looking more closely at what are known to be medieval deer parks, at what might – or might not be – further enquiry should yield a lot more as to the significance of (among other things) place-names in 'park' and 'hays'. Whether or not they were ever associated with deer is only going to be part of their interest.

Katherine Barker, May 2006

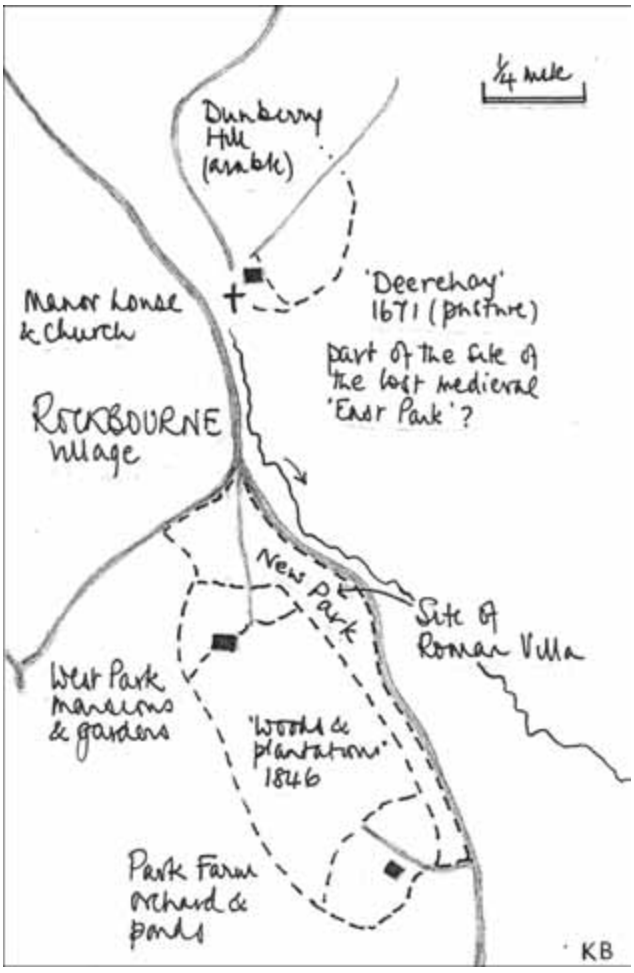


Figure 7.1 - Sketch map of Rockbourne on the Hampshire border re-drawn using information from a manor map of 1671 and the tithe map of 1846 and presenting evidence for two – or three – medieval deer parks.

Members of the November 2006 seminar would like to express their thanks to Lady Studd of Manor Farm Rockbourne, and Laura and Henry Bouskell of Rockbourne Manor for allowing us to explore – respectively – the Deerehay and West Park. The contrast between the two areas is very marked. Suffice to say here that the Deerehay forms a plausible candidate for the missing medieval – possibly pre-Norman – park and invites further field work.

Plate 7.1 - View looking east into Deerehay *which occupies a deep natural hollow in the hillside which rises behind the site of both the church and manor house (see Fig 1.7). The southern boundary of* Deerehay *is well-defined and followed today by a public footpath bounding the edge of the wood which can be seen in the picture. The boundary presents a number of veteran tree stools. The completion of the circuit is no longer evident, Dunberry Hill was under arable by the seventeenth century. A field name in 'deer hay' strongly suggests this area represents an early hedged enclosure for the management – and retention – of deer (see pages 28-32). Such an enclosure may well still have been in existence in 1595 when the Norden map shows a park, bounded by his conventional wooden pale, immediately to the north-west of the church. The* Deerehay *forms something of a natural west-facing amphitheatre in which grazing animals could be closely observed. Unlike later parks, this hay actually adjoins the site of the manor house. Its origins – its date – are a subject for future enquiry; they are likely to be pre-Norman. The relationship with the Roman villa site just a mile down the valley may never be established, but there is no reason to assume that 'landed' interests in venison and game did not survive the end of Roman Britain. It may well represent the 'lost' Medieval East Park.*

Plate 7.2 - Members of the seminar leaving Deerehay *through the gateway on a routeway which climbs north-east up the* Deerehay *dry valley to the Manor House and Castle Ditches fort on the hilltop at Whitsbury. The name of Dunberry Hill may itself reflect that of an early fortified or defended enclosure.*

Plate 7.3 - Members walking north along the western edge of West Park; the open, panoramic character of the land is in marked contrast to that preserved by the Deerehay. *The management of stock in such an area was clearly of a different order from that practised in the* Deerehay. *In the time available, only the most preliminary of surveys could be made, but the remains of the West Park ditch and pale were located along several lengths and a survey of some of the trees is clearly invited. Not least, is the relationship of the Roman villa site which lies between West Park and the stream and was later included in that extension known as New Park.*

It is as an assemblage that the parks of Rockbourne form such an interesting subject; there is here not only the landholding history of this borderland area but its patterns of management which certainly includes the street village which stretches along the Rockbourne Stream linking the two emparked areas.

Index

Page numbers in *italics* denote illustrations.