

Historic Landscape Characterisation Project



E.Rouse

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB with English Heritage

**Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

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“ ‘I can see it now’, was a favourite expression of his when relating some incident in his past life. Whenever a sudden light, a kind of smile, came into his eyes, I knew that it was at some ancient memory, a touch of quaintness or humour in some farmer or shepherd he had known in the vanished time – his father, perhaps or Old John, or Mark Dick, or Liddy, or Dan'l Burden, the solemn seeker after buried treasure.” (Hudson 1987: 219)

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation Project was carried out between January 2007 and June 2008 by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership with the support of English Heritage.

The project was undertaken by the HLC Project Officer Emma Rouse BA (Cantab) MA AIFA

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June 2008

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Preface

This report summarises the results from an 18 month study of the historic landscape character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. This project forms part of a National Programme, developed by English Heritage in the early nineties, which is continually evolving with ongoing development and changes in methodology, technology and application. The projects tend to be carried out in partnership, often at a county or district level scale.

Whilst this project has been underway the European Landscape Convention has come into force in Britain (1st March 2007). "It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes", and defines landscape as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". Historic Landscapes are clearly very significant elements in this definition of landscapes, where human perceptions and human interactions with nature are so important. The Convention also brings with it obligations towards the protection, management, and planning of all landscapes, urban as well as rural. Sub regional projects, such as Historic Landscape Characterisation, relating to the cultural, historic and heritage aspects of landscapes clearly help to implement the objectives of the Convention in a tangible way.

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is an archaeological method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. The aim of the project is to characterise the distinctive, historic dimension of today's environment and will allow the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to better conserve and enhance the historic, archaeological and cultural features within their distinctive landscape setting.

Acknowledgements

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation project was carried out by Emma Rouse BA (Cantab) MA AIFA on behalf of the AONB and English Heritage. The project was funded by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB and English Heritage.

The AONB would like to acknowledge the advice and assistance provided by Graham Fairclough, Peter Herring and other members of the English Heritage Characterisation Team.

The project drew upon methods and ideas from a wide range of previous Historic Landscape Characterisation projects and those still in progress. Particular mention must be made to the Dorset HLC, Hampshire HLC and the North Wessex Downs AONB & West Berkshire HLC. Thanks go to Mellissa Conway, and Duncan Coe of the West Berkshire Archaeological Service.

The project was supported by a steering group drawn from the AONB, English Heritage, and relevant County Archaeologist. Thanks go to Claire Pinder, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council; Helena Cave Penney, Assistant Archaeologist, Wiltshire County Council and David Hopkins, County Archaeologist, Hampshire County Council.

Special thanks to members of the AONB team for their guidance and help.

Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AP	Aerial Photographs
CCWWD	Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs
EH	English Heritage
ID No.	Unique identity Number
GIS	Geographical Information System
Ha.	Hectares
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
Km	Kilometres
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NWD	North Wessex Downs
OS	Ordnance Survey
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SSSI	Special Site of Scientific Interest
WB	West Berkshire

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Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



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1.1 Introduction

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION (HLC) is an archaeological method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimension of the present day landscape. It forms part of a National Programme developed by English Heritage in the early nineties and is continually evolving with ongoing development and changes in methodology, technology and application.

HLC is concerned with the totality of the landscape, providing a broad overview of the complexity of the historic environment in a given area. It is concerned with mapping the commonplace and locally distinctive and identifying time depth in the landscape.

Mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) plays a central role in both the creation of the HLC dataset and in the presentation of the results.

This report presents the results and findings of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty HLC. The primary purpose of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The AONB cannot achieve this purpose without a fuller understanding of the landscapes' cultural and historic evolution. Historic Landscape Characterisation will help provide this fuller understanding.

1.2 The Guiding Principles of Historic Landscape Characterisation

All Historic Landscape Characterisation Projects undertaken are underpinned by a series of guiding principles (Clark et.al. 2002: 6): -

- **Present not past:** it is the present-day landscape that is the main object of study
- **Landscape as history not geography:** the most important characteristic of landscape is its time-depth; change and earlier landscapes exist in the present landscape
- **Landscape not sites:** HLC-based research and understanding are concerned with area not point data
- **All aspects of the landscape,** no matter how modern, are treated as part of landscape character, **not just 'special' areas**
- Semi-natural and living features (woodland, land cover, hedges etc.) are as much a part of landscape character as archaeological features; **human landscape – bio-diversity is a cultural phenomenon**
- Characterisation of landscape is a matter of **interpretation not record, perception not facts;** understand 'landscape' as **an idea**, not purely as an objective thing
- **People's views:** it is important to consider collective and public perceptions of landscape alongside more expert views

- Landscape is and always has been dynamic: **management of change, not preservation** is the aim
- The process of characterisation should be **transparent**, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used
- HLC maps and text should be easy to understand, **jargon free** and **easily accessible** to users
- HLC results should be **integrated** into other environmental and heritage management records e.g. Sites and Monument Records (SMRs) or Historic Environment Records (HERs)

It is also crucial that this project has a clear definition of what is meant by landscape. This project defines Landscape as: -

"an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors."

1.3 Introducing the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a landscape of national significance. The AONB covers an area of 983 square kilometres, and falls within four counties: Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire. See figure 1

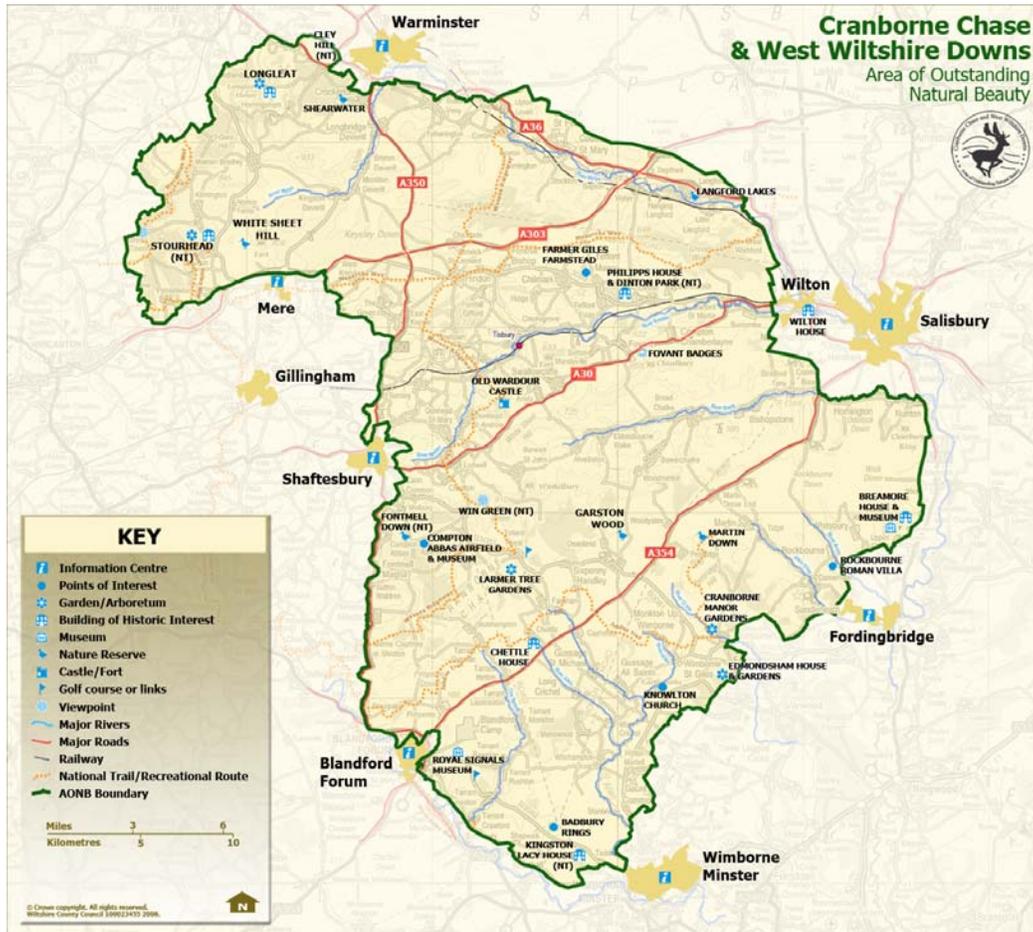
It forms part of the extensive belt of chalkland which stretches across southern England and abuts the Dorset AONB and includes part of the South Wessex Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1981 and confirmed in October 1983 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. It is clear from the Act, subsequent government sponsored reports, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 that natural beauty includes wildlife, scientific, and cultural heritage. It is also recognised that in relation to their landscape characteristics and quality, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are equally important aspects of the nation's heritage and environmental capital. The primary purpose of the AONB is to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The AONB covers the administration areas of eleven Local Authorities: four county councils – Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset; and seven district councils – Salisbury, West Wiltshire, East Dorset, North Dorset, New Forest, Mendip and South Somerset.

West Wiltshire District Council, Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council, along with Kennet District Council and North Wiltshire District Council, are due to merge into one new authority called Wiltshire Council by May 2009.

Figure 1: Location of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB



1.4 The Aims of the CCWWD AONB Historic Landscape Characterisation

The main aims of the Historic Landscape Characterisation are to help the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB to:

- Better understand the historic elements of the whole landscape of the AONB
- Raise awareness and understanding of the unique cultural heritage of the area amongst local people, visitors and the wider population
- Provide a tool for managing the historic environment and the integrated management of the landscape as a whole
- Inform planning decisions
- Provide a framework for policy making and research agendas
- Enhance the county based SMR/HERs

The HLC will be used to:

- Add to the information about the landscape held by the AONB
- raise awareness of the special nature of the area

- develop a sense of identity for the AONB
- inform planning decision making and minimise the adverse environmental impact of new development
- offer integrated management advice
- feed into the AONB Management Plan

1.5 References

CLARK, J. et.al. (2004) Using Historic Landscape Characterisation. English Heritage & Lancashire County Council.