

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB  
Historic Landscape Characterisation Project

# HISTORIC LANDSCAPE TYPE DESCRIPTION:

## TYPE 6 DESIGNED AND ORNAMENTAL LANDSCAPES



ENGLISH HERITAGE

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## Designed and Ornamental Landscapes in the AONB: An Introduction

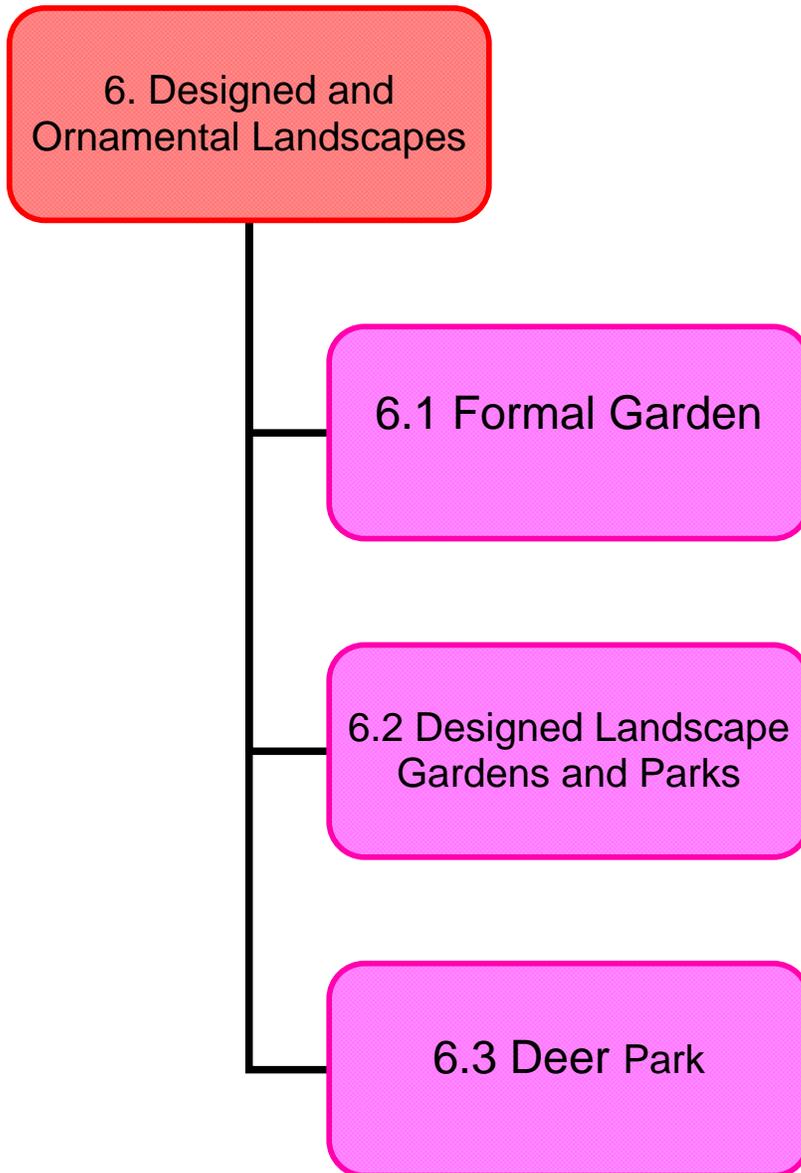
*“The gardens are very beautifully laid out, in a serpentine river, pieces of water, lawns &c., and very gracefully adorn'd with wood. One first comes to an island in which there is a castle, then near the water is a gateway, with a tower on each side, and passing between two waters there is a fine cascade....There is a most beautiful grotto by Mr Castles of Marlybone; it consists of a winding walk and an anti-room.. The park also is very delightful”*

(Bishop Pococke 1754 quoted in Mowl T. (2003) [Historic Gardens of Dorset.](#))

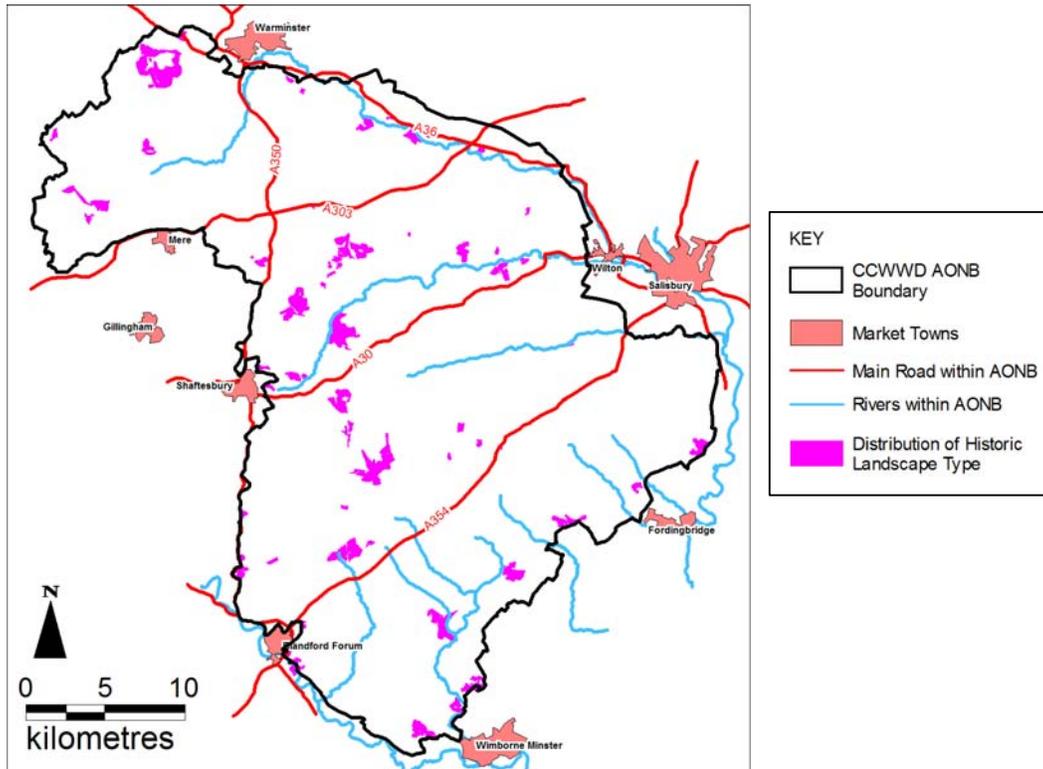
The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB is, by and large, a landscape owned by estates both great and small. It is, therefore, dotted with landscape parks and historic gardens often associated with great houses. Some of these, such as Longleat and Stourhead, are of national renown and are widely visited; others are only known locally. All form important focal points in the landscape, and form areas which are not just pleasing to the eye but are also mentally stimulating and challenging. Many are also associated with the remnants of older parkland features such as medieval deer parks; these are intrinsically linked with the medieval chase which forms such an integral part of the AONB.



Organisation Chart illustrating nested Historic Landscape Types



## 6. Designed and Ornamental landscapes



### Introduction

Created and designed primarily ornamental landscapes, gardens and parks in the AONB often associated with large country houses. These have been identified from modern Ordnance Survey mapping and comparison with historic Ordnance Survey maps. The project was also able to draw on the AONB Deer Park Survey, English Heritage register of parks and gardens and local lists drawn up by the relevant county based Gardens Trust. The rural nature of the AONB means that there are no large scale designed public spaces maintained by local authorities.

It is important to note that many smaller historic gardens were too small to be recorded individual or have been subsumed with the historic houses too which they are adjacent. This is especially the case with small country residences such as manor houses and vicarages.

### Distribution

This type is widely distributed across the AONB, with clusters in the Vale of Wardour and linear distributions across the south-eastern edge of the AONB, and the greensand terrace in the northwest corner of the AONB. There are voids in the distribution, notably across the core of the West Wiltshire Downs, and in the Ebble Valley.

## Principal Historical Processes

The earliest traces of parkland in the AONB are medieval deer parks which exist as previous types in the dataset as their outlines and boundaries often influence subsequent land use. However, the majority of ornamental landscapes in the AONB were created in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as landscaped parks, featuring carefully crafted vistas, planting and ornamental features.

## Typical Historical/Archaeological Components

The designed landscapes of the AONB consist of three main elements: -

- Remnants of deer parks, including park pales and boundaries
- Landscaped parks designed with a great house at its focus. They were often created around walked circuits, extensive views, carriage drives, or water features and often consist of carefully crafted views. They consisted of large areas of grassland interspersed with individual and clumps of trees.
- Formal gardens with geometric layouts, these are often walled.

Some of the larger estates in the AONB will contain all three elements, while some of the small estates just one or two.

## Rarity

Designed landscapes group are uncommon in the AONB by area, but form important focal points in the landscape.



## Survival

Many of the parks and gardens in the AONB declined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the increasing cost of maintenance, for example, Wardour Park. However several of the larger examples are maintained as visitor attractions, such as Longleat, Stourhead and a few still form the focus of large private estates, such as at Fonthill.

## Degree of surviving coherence of the historic landscape components

This type is very recognisable in the landscape; several are visited by large numbers of people. It takes expert knowledge, however, to appreciate the finer nuances in the differences between the different parks and gardens.

## Past interaction with other types

The type is associated with historic houses. In addition, as centres of great estates the parkland often formed a focal point which then exerted great influence on the surrounding countryside.

### **Evidence for time-depth**

The parks and gardens of the AONB often evolved through several stages and often retain evidence of medieval activity.

### **Contribution to the present landscape character**

This type has had a considerable influence on the landscape character of the AONB, which belies the small area which this type covers. It also adds immensely to the aesthetic value of the AONB.

### **Key Statistics**

Total Area:	2,960 hectares, 3.01% of the AONB.
No. of Polygons:	This Subtype is comprised of 118 polygons, 2.66% of the total number of polygons digitised.
Av. Polygon Size:	Each polygon averages 25.08 hectares in size.
Occurrence:	Uncommon.
Previous Coverage:	3,554 hectares, 3.61% of AONB was Designed and Ornamental Landscapes at the point when this type was at its most prevalent.
Total Recorded Coverage:	The total recorded coverage of this type is 4516 hectares, 4.59% of the AONB.

### **Constituent Types**

[6.1 Formal Garden](#)

[6.2 Designed Landscaped Gardens and Parks](#)

[6.3 Deer Park](#)

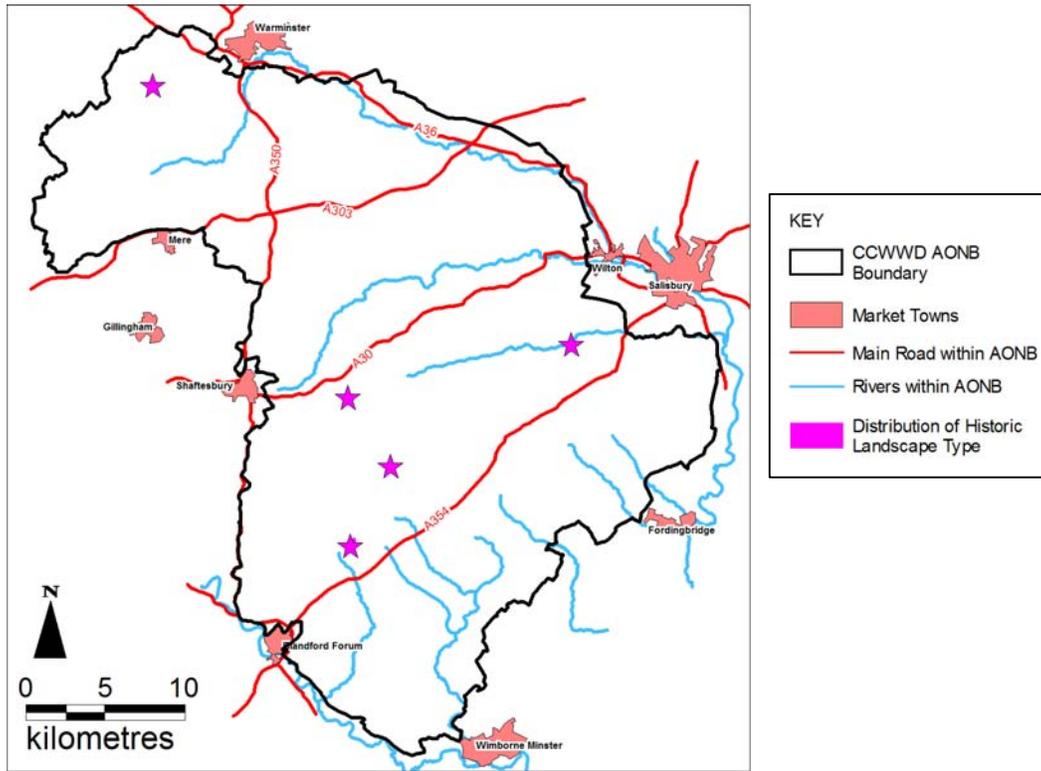
### **Parent Type**

None

### **Suggested Sources**

Barker, K (2006) Medieval Deer Parks of Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. CCWWD AONB: Cranborne.

## 6.1 Formal Garden



### Introduction

Historic formal gardens often associated with historic houses. These are smaller scale features than the designed landscaped parks with their associated gardens. Many of these do not feature on the English Heritage register of parks and gardens, but may be listed on the relevant county based Garden Trust local list. These have been identified on modern day Ordnance Survey and through comparison with historic Ordnance Survey maps.

**The identification of historic gardens in the Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset is limited by the scale of the project. The dataset does not include all historic gardens because many are too small to be recorded at this scale or have been recorded as part of the footprint of an historic house. This includes many of the gardens associated with manor houses, especially in the valley bottoms of the AONB. The fact that map based sources has been used means that the majority of gardens identified at this scale have a formal layout.**

### Distribution

Historic gardens have been recorded across the central section of the AONB and one example in the north-east corner. The gardens recorded are as follows: -

- Walled garden at Longleat
- Garden associated with Faulston House
- Formal gardens associated with Ferne House

- Walled garden at Rushmore
- Formal gardens at Eastbury Park
- Formal gardens at Steepleton House

**Of course this represents a fraction of the historic gardens which exist in the AONB but which have been subsumed under other types, including important gardens at Breamore, Boveridge House, Breamore, Chettle, Cranborne Manor, Gardens Edmondsham, Gaunts House, Kingston Lacy, Wimborne St Giles, and the walled garden at Pythouse.**

The best source of information on these is the relevant county based Garden Trust local list.

### **Principal Historical Processes**

The majority of these gardens date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century; several such as Longleat and Rushmore are situated away from the main houses and grounds suggesting they may be walled kitchen gardens. Others form traditional formal gardens with geometric beds and pathways and water features. This is a tradition which is continuing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the creation of an area of formal gardens at Ferne House and also at Shute House.



### **Typical Historical/Archaeological Components**

Gardens with a formal layout, including a geometric design, water features and gravel paths. Many of the examples recorded are walled.

### **Rarity**

Formal gardens are rare in the AONB especially when compared against the larger and more common landscaped parks and gardens.

### **Survival**

The footprint of these formal gardens often survives more than the features within it.

### **Degree of surviving coherence of the historic landscape components**

This type is very recognisable in the landscape due to its formal layout, but is quite small in scale.

### **Past interaction with other types**

The type is associated with landscaped parks and historic houses.

### **Evidence for time-depth**

The creation of formal gardens removes traces of previous land uses.

### **Contribution to the present landscape character**

This type has a small influence on the landscape character of the AONB, they exist as intimate spaces which can only be fully appreciated within their immediate settings.

### **Key Statistics**

Total Area:	47 hectares, 0.05 % of the AONB
No. of Polygons:	This Subtype is comprised of 7 polygons, 0.16% of the total number of polygons digitised.
Av. Polygon Size:	Each polygon averages 6.75 hectares in size.
Occurrence:	Rare
Previous Coverage:	58.44 hectares, 0.06 % of AONB was Formal Gardens at the point when this type was at its most prevalent
Total Recorded Coverage:	The total recorded coverage of this type is 67.64 hectares, 0.07 % of the AONB

### **Constituent Types**

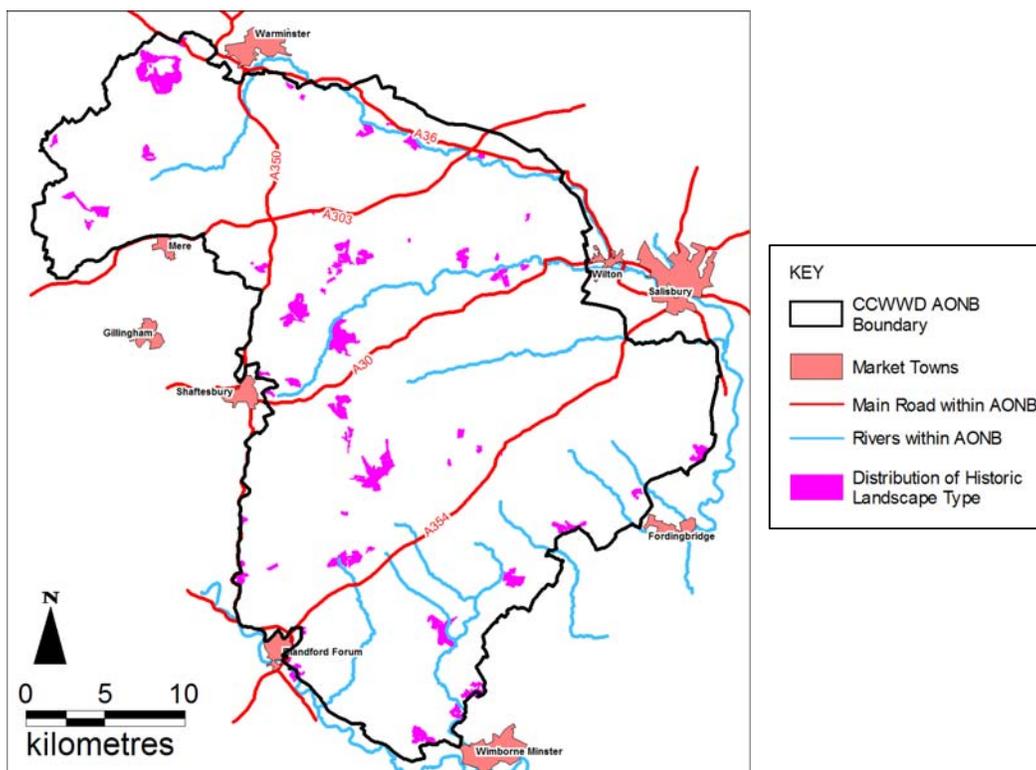
None

### **Parent Type**

[6 Designed and Ornamental Landscapes](#)

### **Suggested Sources**

## 6.2 Designed Landscape Gardens and Parks



### Introduction

Deliberately and carefully created landscapes and parkland commonly associated with large country houses created primarily in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These have been identified from modern Ordnance Survey maps and through comparison with historic Ordnance Survey maps. Some of these are recorded on the English Heritage register of parks and gardens and also on the relevant county Gardens Trust local lists.

### Distribution

These occur across the AONB with notable clumped distributions through the Vale of Wardour. Linear distributions along the south western edge of the AONB and along the greensand terrace in the north western edge of the AONB. There are notable voids in the distribution across the core of the West Wiltshire Downs, through the Ebble Valley, and between Shaftesbury and Blandford Forum.

### Principal Historical Processes

The majority of designed landscape gardens and parklands in the AONB were created in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with a great house at their focus. Several of the designed parklands in the AONB are associated with known designers, such as Capability Brown at Longleat, while others were designed by the park owners.

The elements within these parklands are carefully composed with carefully planted avenues and clumps of trees, and ornamental features such as grottos, temples and

statues. This is most elegantly demonstrated by the Arcadian landscape of Stourhead, designed by the owner Henry Hoare II, which consists of a series of deliberately constructed views as the circuit of the garden is taken.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the emphasis shifted towards laying out gardens with specimen trees and exotic plants, such as the arboretum in the park at Wimborne St Giles, or public pleasure grounds, as at the Larmer Tree.

Many areas of parkland declined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to increasing maintenance costs. This means that some of the parkland in the AONB today is in a neglected or eroded state. In some cases the woodland which forms part of their design has grown up obscuring both wide and focused views. For example the landscape park at Wardour Castle now forms farmland and the swan shaped lake created in the shadow of the old castle has been partially backfilled. Many of the historic parks and gardens are now open to the public and are maintained as visitor attractions, examples include Stourhead, Longleat, Chettle, and Dinton Park. Several of these are owned by the National Trust, but many are also in private hands.

The process of creating designed parkland landscapes is also continuing to this day, with the redesign of the park at Ferne House.

### **Typical Historical/Archaeological Components**

Eighteenth century parkland was designed with the great house as its focus. They were often created around walked circuits and carriage drives, or water features such as created serpentine lakes, streams and waterfalls. They are also associated with a host of secondary features which are particular to these landscapes, including garden features, grottos and follies, ha-has, summer houses, green houses, and walled gardens.



### **Rarity**

Designed and ornamental parks and gardens are uncommon within the HLC dataset by area. However, these landscapes, and their associated house, form important foci in the landscape of the AONB.

### **Survival**

Nearly all the large designed parks of the AONB survive today. They are in a differing condition depending on whether they are being actively managed or used as farmland.

### **Degree of surviving coherence of the historic landscape components**

This type is very recognisable in the landscape; however, the complex meanings and layout of these landscapes cannot be fully appreciated without some expert knowledge.

### **Past interaction with other types**

The type is associated with historic gardens, recent woodland, man-made lakes, and historic great houses.

### **Evidence for time-depth**

Many of these designed landscapes preserve evidence of previous phases of parkland and of former medieval deer parks.

### **Contribution to the present landscape character**

This type has had a considerable influence on the landscape character of the AONB. They form key foci within the landscape and many of them are some of the most visited locales in the AONB.

### **Key Statistics**

Total Area:	2881 hectares, 2.93% of the AONB.
No. of Polygons:	This Subtype is comprised of 109 polygons, 2.46% of the total number of polygons digitised.
Av. Polygon Size:	Each polygon averages 26.43 hectares in size.
Occurrence:	Uncommon.
Previous Coverage:	3884 hectares, 3.44% of AONB was Designed Landscapes at the point when this type was at its most prevalent.
Total Recorded Coverage:	The total recorded coverage of this type is 3847 hectares, 3.91% of the AONB.

### **Constituent Types**

None

### **Parent Type**

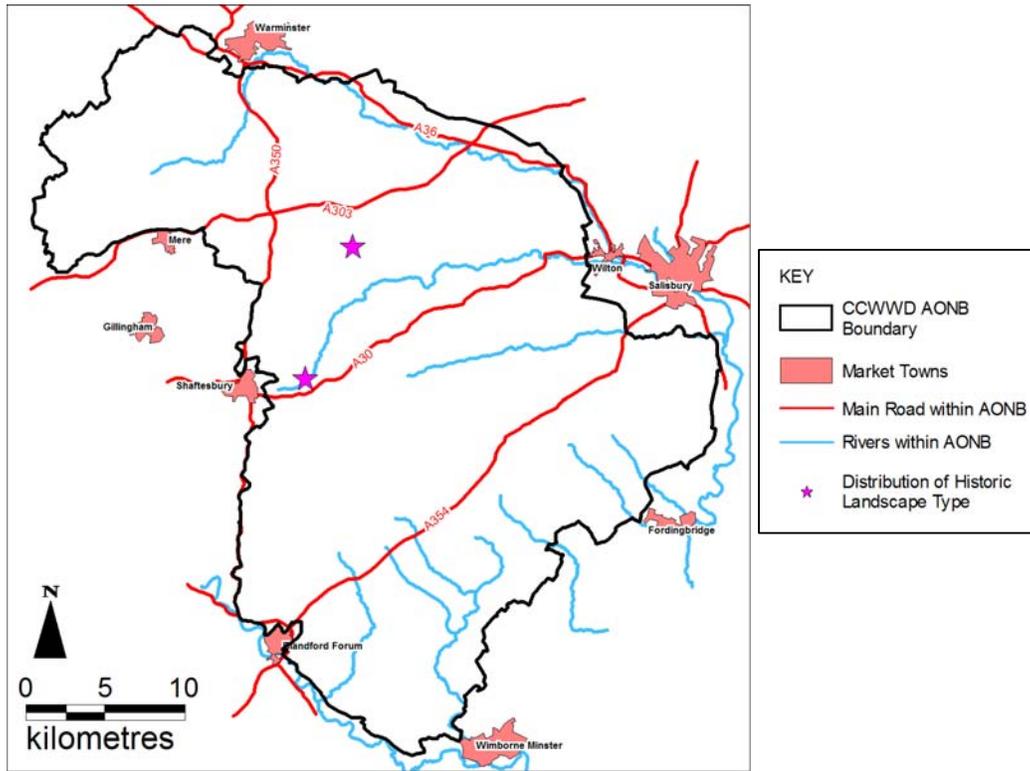
#### [6 Designed and ornamental landscapes](#)

### **Suggested Sources**

Mowl, T. (2003) Historic Gardens of Dorset. Tempus Ltd: Stroud

Mowl, T. (2004) Historic Gardens of Wiltshire. Tempus Ltd: Stroud

## 6.3 Deer Park



### Introduction

Areas of parkland used for the rearing and management of deer. The two surviving examples in the AONB, recorded as present types, are relic deer parks which maintain the footprint of two deer parks which existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This is a much more restricted distribution than known locations of all deer parks. The majority of the evidence for deer parks survives as previous types in the HLC dataset and date to the medieval period. These have been identified through comparison with historic ordnance maps. Deer parks are only recorded in this dataset where their form and morphology still affects land use and the morphology of the land in the present day.

The AONB is fortunate that it was able to commission a study of the deer parks in the landscape by Katherine Barker, which the HLC project was also able to use.

### Distribution

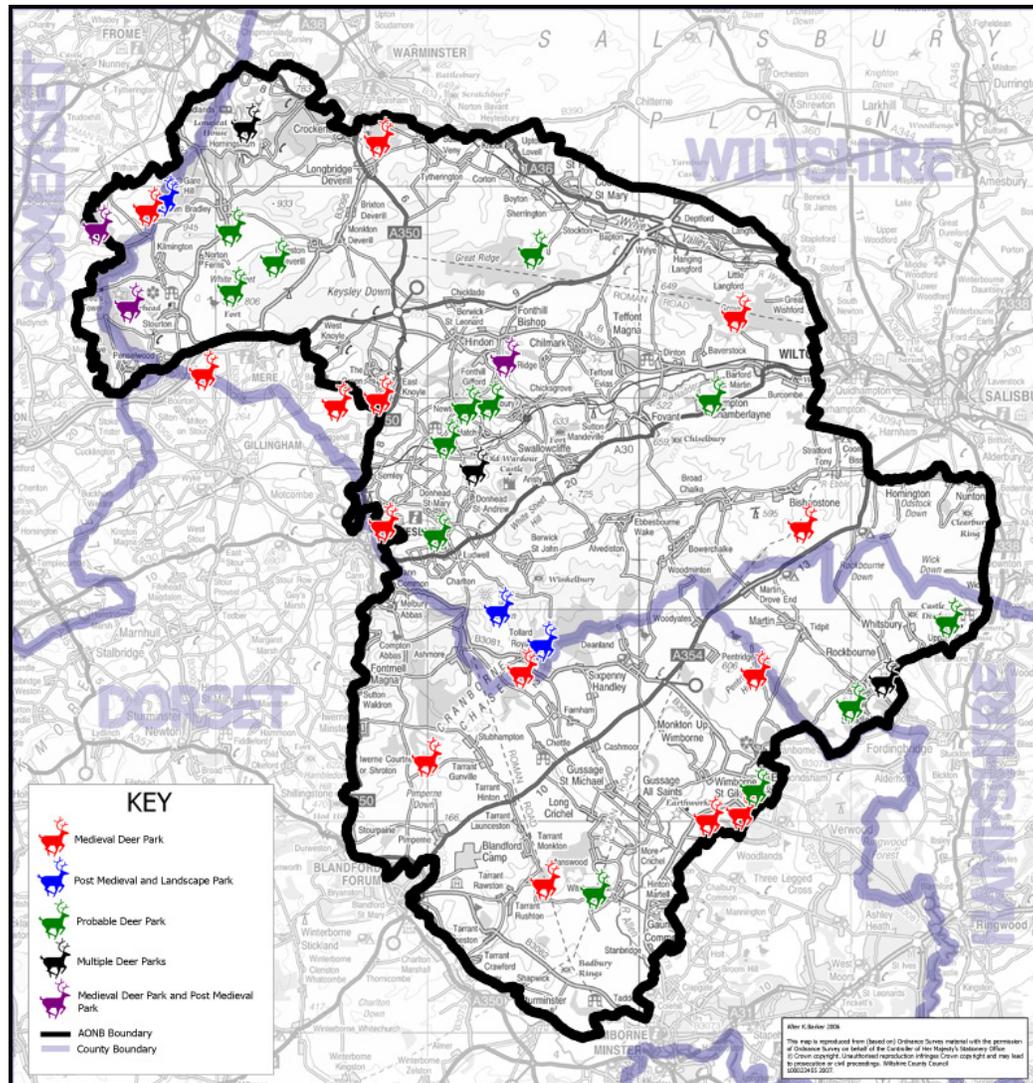
The first surviving relic park exists within the boundary of Fonthill Park in the Vale of Wardour. It is identified as a deer park on the Epoch one historic Ordnance Survey map 1843-1893 and its boundaries exist today. The second relic park exists at Donhead Hall; this is identified as a deer park on the epoch three historic Ordnance Survey map (1904-1939).

Formerly deer parks existed across the whole AONB (see figure 26 below) but there appears to have been voids in the distribution, notably through the Wylde and Ebble Valleys and in the area centred on Gussage St Michael.

### Principal Historical Processes

The peak time for the creation of deer parks was the medieval period. The primary function of these parks was as game reserves and hunting grounds, but they also contributed to the wider medieval economy and as areas of contemplation and recreation (Liddiard 2003). A desk based survey, using published sources, has been undertaken of the medieval deer parks of the AONB (Barker 2006), which gives a brief report on each site. Some of these deer parks continued into the post medieval period, and were incorporated into the 18<sup>th</sup> century landscaped park. Seven parks are identified as previous types in the dataset, including the parks of Wardour, Longleat and Harbins Park.

Figure 26: Location of known deer parks in the AONB



In reference to the deer parks recorded as current types in the dataset, Katherine Barker's study indicates that the park at Donhead Hall included in 1840 '12 acres in High Park and 19 acres in Low Park'. It is possible that this is an 18<sup>th</sup> century landscaping of an earlier medieval deer park (Barker 2006: 32). With regard to the deer park at Fonthill, it is still shown on the current OS map west of Fonthill House and is identified on historic 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping as a remnant of the much older medieval deer parks which existed here. By 1715 there was no deer left at Fonthill as the wall of the park had fallen into disrepair (Barker 2006: 35)

### **Typical Historical/Archaeological Components**

In contrast to medieval hunting forests or chases medieval deer parks cover relatively compact areas, sometimes as small as 40 hectares. They were strongly enclosed by earthworks, paling fences, hedges and walls. Features associated with deer parks, and often still associated with indicative place names, include; kennels, lodges, hunting stands, warrens, fishponds, quarries, gardens and barns. Common place names associated with deer parks include park, hay, hatch, and lawn (Muir 2000).



### **Rarity**

Deer parks occur rarely in the AONB dataset but that is because they are only recorded where they affect land use in the modern day. Evidence for them is more common in the landscape of the AONB than this dataset suggests.

### **Survival**

The surviving relic deer parks recorded represent a small percentage of the number of deer parks in the AONB, many of which have been recorded as previous types.

### **Degree of surviving coherence of the historic landscape components**

Small sections of the boundaries of these parks often survive, with some even being fossilised intact in the landscape, as at Harbins Park.

### **Past interaction with other types**

The type is commonly associated with ancient woodland and areas of ancient assarting. They are often replaced by 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century landscaped parks.

### **Evidence for time-depth**

The deer parks often represent the earliest phase of land use surviving in today's landscape.

### **Contribution to the present landscape character**

This type adds important historical depth to the landscape of the AONB.

### **Key Statistics**

Total Area:	32 hectares, 0.03% of the AONB.
No. of Polygons:	This Subtype is comprised of 2 polygons, 0.05% of the total number of polygons digitised.
Av. Polygon Size:	Each polygon averages 16.03 hectares in size.
Occurrence:	Rare.
Previous Coverage:	955 hectares, 0.87 % of AONB was Deer Parks at the point when this type was at its most prevalent.
Total Recorded Coverage:	The total recorded coverage of this type is 1049 hectares, 1.07 % of the AONB.

### **Constituent Types**

None

### **Parent Type**

[6 Designed and Ornamental Landscapes](#)

### **Suggested Sources**

Barker, K (2006) Medieval Deer Parks of Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. CCWWD AONB

LIDDIARD, R. (2007) The Medieval Park New Perspectives. Windgatherer Press: Cheshire.

Muir, R (2000) The NEW Reading the Landscape. University of Exeter Press.

