



Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# Historic Environment Action Plans

Theme 5: Hunting Landscapes










This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.

The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These summaries are divided into two groups:

1. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by area
2. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by theme

These core documents are accompanied by documents which provide background information, supplementary information and detail on the methodologies used to create these documents.

A series of icons help you navigate this suite of documents:

-  **Background** - Provides an introduction to the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans and provides background information on the history and archaeology of the landscape **(B1 to B10)**
-  **Area** - Summarises key characteristics of discrete geographical areas within the AONB, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each area and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(A1 to A12)**
-  **Theme** - Summarises key characteristics of historic environment themes, each document then sets out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each theme and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(T1 to T14)**
-  **Supplementary** - A series of documents which explore supplementary issues of relevance to the Historic Environment Action Plans **(S1 to S2)**
-  **Method** - Introduces the methodology behind the production of the Historic Environment Action Plans **(M1 to M3)**

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## Introducing the Theme Statements

Fourteen distinct Historic Landscape Themes have been identified in the AONB. These were chosen by the HEAP Steering group as representing the topics which best encapsulate the historic character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

The theme descriptions aim to provide an overview of each theme which encapsulates the main features of the Historic Environment present and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent.



The process through which the Historic Landscape Character themes were identified, and mapped, and the sources of information used to create these descriptions is documented in the methodological statement 'Creating and Describing Historic Character Themes'.

## Introduction to Theme 5: Hunting Landscapes

*“In a highly picturesque Part of the County..an Inviting Spot for a Sporting-Box..situated on the verge of Cranbourne Chase, (now disenfranchised) near Lord River’s Hunting Lodge”*

*Sale particulars for Woodcotts Farm and Manor – 19<sup>th</sup> Century*

The aim of this document is to provide an overview of the impact that hunting and hunting landscapes have had on the AONB and to focus on the evidence of physical surviving remains of these activities in today’s landscape.

The history of the Cranborne Chase, Medieval hunting forests, fox hunting and game shooting have all contributed to the landscape seen today.



Medieval Manuscript

### Summary of Key Characteristics

- A Medieval hunting chase (Cranborne Chase) and two Medieval hunting forests (Selwood and Grovely Forest) cover the vast majority of the AONB. These are particularly important as the special rules which governed them affected the development of land use and the appearance of the area. This is especially the case with the Cranborne Chase which was not disenfranchised until 1829.
- The Chase as a whole is dotted with Medieval deer parks, and warrens; their relationship with the enveloping chase (in terms of status and function) needs further study.
- The landscape has also been affected by the history of ownership over Chase rights. This was in crown hands in the Medieval period, but was transferred to the nobility in the Post Medieval period. This period saw five main families vie to control these rights. The changing political fortunes of these families can be read not only in the way the landscape was managed but in the grand houses and parks these families constructed.
- The inner Chase bounds, centred on Tollard Royal, form an area in which these restrictions were most rigorously enforced and were split into a series of five walks. Outside of this main area both Chettered Walk and Alderholt Walk were also important foci within the overall Chase bounds. These walks coincide with surviving areas of ancient semi-natural woodland and lodges.
- Post disenfranchisement fox hunting became the major focus of hunting activity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This legacy is still visible in the landscape through place name evidence, the places where coverts were created and the location of kennels, and remaining an important activity until the last 5 years.
- Today the hunting legacy continues but the emphasis is on the shooting of peasants and partridge, and deer stalking. These activities play a major part in the rural economy and has had a landscape scale impact with the creation of associated structures, the planting of game cover crops, the creation of game farms and the retention of management of woodland for game. Deer stalking and fox hunting are important other activities.

### Linkages to other Historic Landscape Character Statements

This statement forms one of 14 AONB wide Historic Landscape Character Theme descriptions. These are accompanied by a series of 12 Historic Landscape Character Area descriptions which cover the whole of the AONB. These documents together build up a picture of the key characteristics of the Historic Environment of the AONB at a landscape scale. These statements combined inform the Historic Environment Action Plans created for the AONB landscape.

Other Themes of particular relevance to this theme are:



Theme 1: Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership






Theme 4: Historic Parks and Gardens in the Landscape



Theme 10: Routeways in the Landscape

Historic Landscape Character Areas of particular relevance to this theme are:

-  Area 1: Longleat to Penselwood Hills and Kilmington (for Selwood Forest)
-  Area 6: Great Ridge and Grovely Woods (for Grovely Forest)
-  Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood (for the Inner Bounds of the Cranborne Chase)

## History and Context

### ***Introducing the Chase, Forests, Warrens and Parks of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs***

The modern perception of Medieval hunting forests is of great swathes of trees, but in the Medieval period it meant a place that was outside normal laws. Both the terms 'Forest' and 'Chase' meant hunting grounds and were terms used in legal documents and disputes from the Medieval period onwards, and there is often overlap and uncertainty in their usage and distinguishing between them.

Within the AONB there were three areas recognised as Medieval hunting forests – Selwood Forest in the northwest, Grovely in the northeast and Badbury in the far southeast. There is also one large hunting chase, the Cranborne Chase, a geographical name still in modern usage.

The Chase and Forests within the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB all shared several factors in common:

- They had defined boundaries but were unenclosed.
- They were governed by special laws, called 'forest law' and 'chase law' respectively
- The special laws upheld the primacy of the beast that were hunted (deer, boar) and the habitat and vegetation (known as 'vert') on which they relied.
- The crown or magnate who held the forest or chase rights reserved the exclusive right to hunt certain kinds of animals such as deer and wild boar. The latter was hunted to extinction in England by the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
- It is also important to recognise that hunting rights in the Chase and the hunting forests were separate to land ownership. Although the forests and chases often had royal estates at their core, the land within the chase or forest could be split into a multiplicity of land holdings. The hunting areas were superimposed on top of patterns of land ownership and the hunting rights overrode the rights of individual landowners in common law. It was this that often caused great tension between landowners and the crown or lord of the chase.
- Landowners and tenants were restricted from undertaking certain activities if they were deemed to interfere with the deer or its habitat, this included hunting, grazing, the cutting of timber or furze, pannaging, enclosing land, emparking

deer or even entering the forests at special times of Both the Chase and the hunting forests were in crown hands for at least part of their history, during the Medieval period.

- The hunting rights also brought in revenue in other respects from the harvesting of timber, the exploitation of other resources and the collection of fines for infractions of the law.

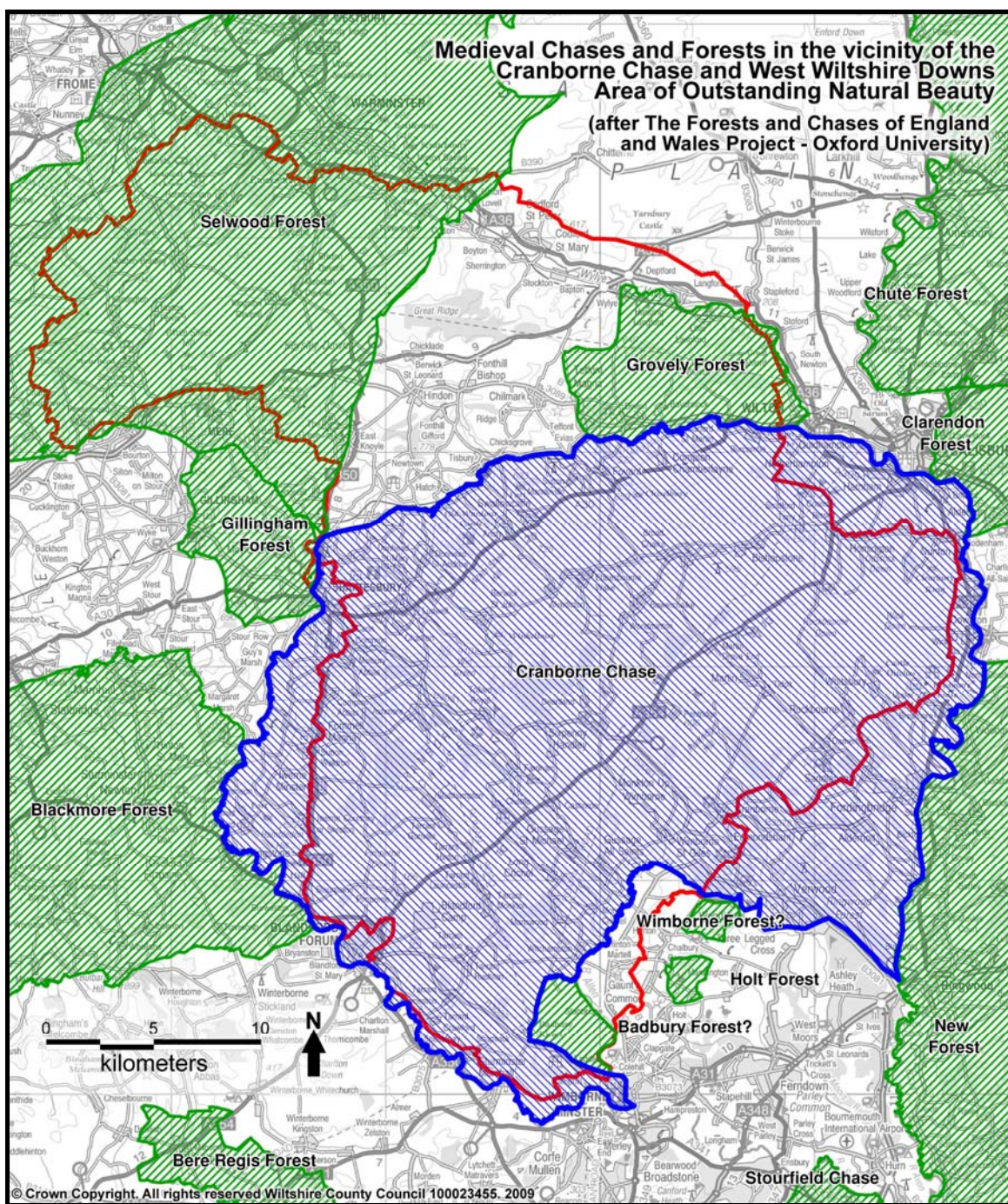


Figure One: Medieval Chases and Forests in the vicinity of Cranborne Chase

- In order to undertake these activities landowners, tenants and commoners alike had to hold special 'rights' which were strictly defined. These included the rights to collect firewood, collect building material, graze certain animals, and assart land. The rights stipulated the areas in which the activities could take place and the times of year they could be undertaken.
- Travel was also more strictly controlled; individuals were required to pay a toll to use roads to cross the areas, especially during the breeding season for deer.
- The forest or chase law was upheld by a warden who in turn appointed a forester and under keepers. These posts conveyed with them special privileges, including land, and the rights to cut timber. Anyone apprehended breaking forest law was tried at a special court – this court was known as an 'eyre' or 'swanimote' at various times and was presided over by a high ranking noble or a jury of freeholders respectively.
- When it became necessary to define the area of the hunting ground this was achieved through a formal perambulation of the boundaries followed by a registration of these boundaries. These formal documents allow historians to identify the area which was, at least theoretically, subject to chase or forest law.

In the case of the Cranborne Chase, Hawkins (1980) in his work on the history of the Cranborne Chase has suggested that the main way that it differed from the surrounding hunting forests was in the way that the law was administered. The penalties exacted in the Chase Courts for infractions of the law being less stringent in general than those in the hunting forests.

Local land owners could hold some rights to hunting and deer management. This included the 'rights of free warren'. This was a legal expression providing local lords permission by the king to hunt small game on their own estates. The presence of pillow mounds for the keeping of rabbits is a physical manifestation of these rights and were an important status symbol.

In addition, landowners could 'empark' an area of land for the keeping of deer. These formed living game larders but were also important statements of wealth and importance. Theoretically this could only be done under royal license. Deer parks occur in the AONB both inside and outside of hunting areas and could be the source of great contention. Their remains are often a visually dominant feature of the AONB.

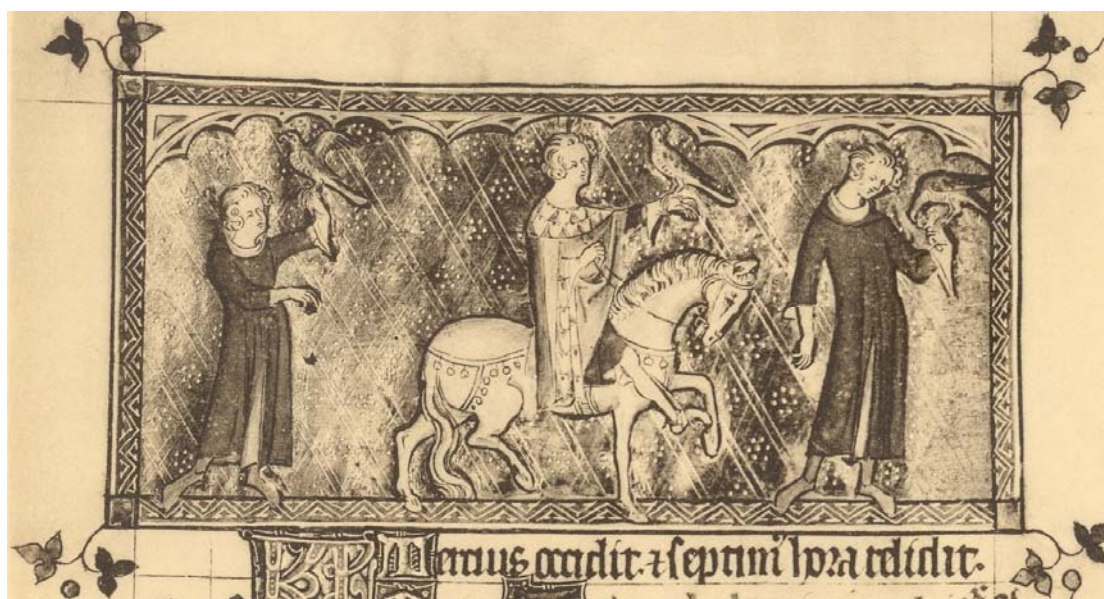
The Medieval hunting areas of the AONB also shared some key physical characteristics:

- They each had a swathe of veteran woodland at their core. This tended to consist of high forest (oak and elm) and large areas of coppice, predominantly hazel.
- They each had a royal estate at their core.
- They focused on marginal, geographically remote land. In the case of the AONB this was on higher ground away from prime farmland. They also often straddled historic county boundaries, suggesting they were located in marginal areas, and provide evidence for the old boundaries of counties.
- Although they had woodland at their core, there was a range of land uses within their borders, including open fields, and settlements,

- The boundaries of the areas fluctuated radically during the Medieval and Post Medieval periods but in the core areas the rights persisted. It is in these areas that the hunting areas have left the most lasting legacy.

The individual character of each of the hunting areas will be discussed below but it is crucial to emphasise that these 'hunting rights' have had a lasting impact on the character of the landscape seen today:

- The special laws which governed the hunting areas meant that land was enclosed and woodland cleared later than in surrounding areas and therefore remained open, unenclosed and actively afforested.
- The restriction of certain activities by hunting law meant that ancient woodland was retained.
- Ancient landscapes were preserved into the Modern period, including for example early fields and remnant common land.
- There is an important legacy of deer parks in the landscape, either surviving as archaeological earthworks or converted in Post Medieval landscape parks.
- Other features associated with the management of the hunting areas survive including lodges.
- The successive Lords of the Chase in the Post Medieval period enhanced their status through the purchase of great estates and the creation of landscaped parks and great houses.



Medieval Past times: Hawking

### ***The decline of the hunting areas and the rise of fox hunting***

During the eighteenth century there was a growing incompatibility of advancements of modern agriculture and the preservation of deer. The decline in the hunting of deer was matched by an increase in fox hunting. The legacy of fox hunting is more subtle and includes kennels, the planting of coverts and well kept hedges to jump.

**Modern Hunting Landscapes**

The form of hunting which has the most influence on the landscape today is shooting. Organised pheasant and partridge shoots have a extremely important role in the economy of the area and range from small family run shoots to large corporate affairs run by the big estates.

**Key dates in the history of hunting landscapes**

There are some key datable turning points in the development of the hunting landscapes of the AONB which are helpful to bear in mind.

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| AD 1066         | Normans arrive in England and begin to create hunting areas.  |
| AD 1086         | The Forest of Grovely mentioned by name in the Domesday Book. Cranborne Chase in the possession of Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror. At her death it is granted to Robert Fitzhammon. |
| AD 1176         | Selwood Forest first referred to in an administrative record.   |
| Circa AD 1200   | Forests and Chases at their greatest geographical extent.   |
| AD 1460         | Cranborne Chase returns to crown lands.   |
| AD 1616         | Lordship of the Chase granted to Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury.   |
| AD 1620         | Vernditch Chase sold to the Earl of Pembroke.   |
| AD 1627         | Remnants of Selwood Forest disafforested with the wastes and commonable lands being divided.  |
| Circa AD 1650   | Grovely disafforested.  |
| AD 1671         | Chase rights pass to Earl of Shaftesbury  |
| AD 1692         | Chase rights sold to the Frekes of Shroton subsequently passing by inheritance to the Barons Rivers.  |
| AD 1730 to 1745 | Thomas Fownes of Stepleton pioneers 'modern' fox hunting on the Cranborne Chase, introducing the first specialised fox hunting in the west country  |
| Circa AD 1780   | Fox hunting takes off in the AONB.  |
| AD 1829         | The Cranborne Chase is disenfranchised.   |

**Key Sources**

An introduction to the "Forests, Chases, Warrens and Parks in Medieval Wessex" by J. Bond is available from an edited volume called 'The Medieval Landscape of Wessex' by Mick Aston and Carenza Lewis (1995) published by Oxbow.

Volume IV of the Wiltshire County History edited by Elizabeth Crittall provides an overview of the history of the Medieval Hunting Forests and Chases in Wiltshire (1959).

A short introduction to the history of the 'Cranborne Chase' is provided by E.H. Lane Poole in his book 'Damerham and Martin A Study in Local History' (1976) published by Compton Russell.

Desmond Hawkin's book 'Cranborne Chase' (1980) provides an overview of the history and character of the chase.

## Landscape Scale Characteristics and Components

### 1. The Medieval hunting areas of the AONB

#### 1.1 The Cranborne Chase

##### *Background*

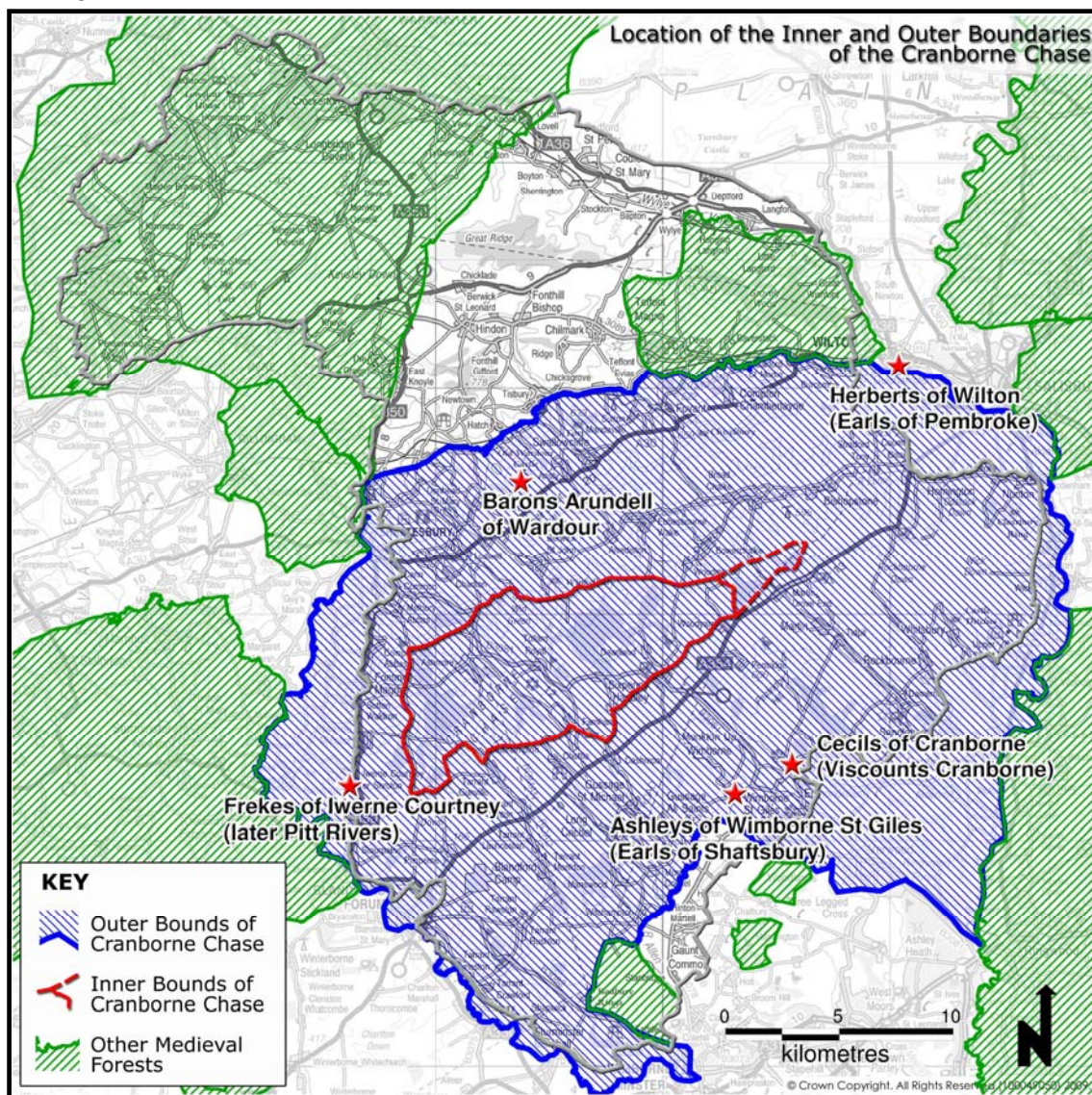


Figure Two: The outer and inner bounds of the Cranborne Chase and the location of the main residence of the key players post Medieval history of the chase.

The Cranborne Chase covered a large part of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB. The inner bounds of the Chase straddled the ancient Dorset -Wiltshire border, comprising an area of approximately 40,000 acres, while the outer bounds covered an area of approximately 800,000 acres. The valuable rights (both financially and in terms of status) to hunt on the Chase first came into crown hands during the reign of William I and during the Medieval period they passed between the crown and

magnates close to the crown before passing back to Edward IV in 1460. The Chase rights remained in Crown hands until the reign of James I when they were granted to Robert, Earl of Salisbury. By this time the Chase rights could only be effectively exercised over the inner bounds and in 1671 the valuable rights to hunt in Vernditch were sold to the Earl of Shaftesbury. In 1692 the remaining rights were sold to Thomas Freke of Shroton passing through inheritance to the Baron Rivers, who held the rights until their disenfranchisement in 1829.

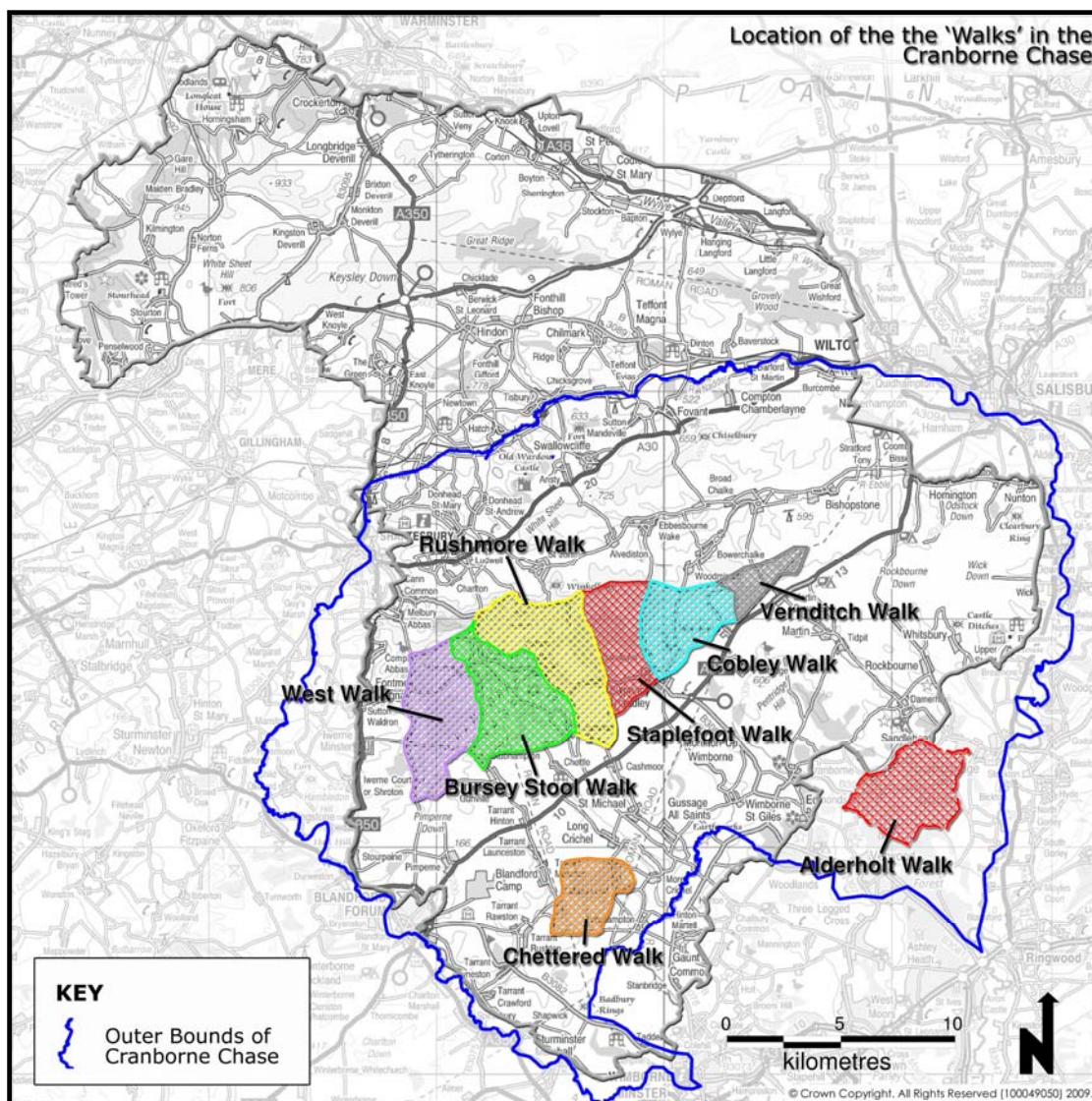


Figure Three: Location of the Walks in the Cranborne Chase

In Medieval times the majority of the land in the area was in the hands of the crown or ecclesiastical magnates. This often bought the monasteries and abbeys in dispute with the Lord of the Chase. In the Post Medieval period, when the Chase had finally passed out of Crown hands, its history is integrally linked with the fortunes of five families – the Barons Arundell of Wardour, Herberts of Wilton (Earls of Pembroke), Frekes of Iwerne Courtney (later Lord Rivers), Ashleys of Wimborne St Giles (Earls of Shaftesbury) and the Cecils of Cranborne (Viscounts Cranborne). These families were also key players in the acquisition of land following the dissolution of the monasteries, but their

relevance here is that they took key roles in either controlling the Chase rights or disputing their legitimacy.

The inner Chase, in which the Chase laws were most strictly applied, was split into a series of walks. These provided the infrastructure through which the hunting grounds could be maintained. There were eight named 'Walks', and six of these were grouped into the inner Chase bounds, forming the heartland of the Chase. From west to east these were West Walk, Bursey Stool, Rushmore, Staplefoot, Cobley and Vernditch. The latter walk, Vernditch, was sold off as discussed above in 1671. In each walk the majority of the area was woodland which was divided into copses. Hawkins (1980), for example, describes how Cobley Walk was divided into an unbroken block of 50 copses on Thomas Aldwell's map of 1618. Large parts of this woodland still survive. The other walks were Alderholt and Chettered. Alderholt lies outside the modern boundary of the AONB and was the largest walk with a very different landscape character, comprising an area of acid heathland forming a large area of commonland and waste in the Medieval and early Post Medieval period.

The Chettered Walk still exists in a diminished form as Chetterwood between the valleys of the Allen, the Tarrant and the Chalk stream.



*View into the Inner Bounds of the Cranborne Chase looking South*

#### *The landscape scale impact of the Cranborne Chase*

- The greatest impact that the Chase rights had can be seen in the historical development of land use. The restrictions that the rights placed on enclosure and woodland clearance meant that Medieval patterns of land use survived here for much longer and, by dint of that survival, remain much more legible in today's landscape. For example this influence can be seen at Ashmore where

the open Medieval fields survived into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the common land near Rushmore which survived until this period. Today these are areas of 19<sup>th</sup> century enclosure.

- Where clearance of woodland or enclosure of the forest waste (scrub land) did occur it was much smaller scale and piecemeal, and this process can be read in the series of tiny assarts which have nibbled into the woodlands on the inner Chase and at Chetterwood.
- Large swathes of coppice survived into the 19<sup>th</sup> century within the inner Chase bounds and in Chetter Walk. Large areas remain today despite the clearance which took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century between Vernditch and Stonedown Wood and the conversion of some areas of woodland to high forest and conifers.
- Across the wider landscape the parliamentary enclosure movement seems to have lagged in the area of the outer bounds, with much enclosure occurring 50 years later, in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, than in surrounding areas.
- The Chase has left a built legacy in the villages of Cranborne and Tollard Royal. Both were the centre for the Chase courts in the past and in the surviving fabric of Medieval hunting lodges at Cranborne Manor and King Johns house at Tollard Royal.
- The restrictions on travel imposed by the Chase rights seems to have influenced the position of the main thoroughfare south and east from Salisbury. This bypassed the Chase heading south via Cranborne to Wimborne and north via the Oxdrove (see the Routeways Theme for more information). The main east west route across the Chase, the modern A354, did not rise in importance until the turnpike acts of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- The importance of the Post Medieval lords of the Chase, and the other important landowners with whom they vied for status, can be seen in the great houses and parks they constructed such as at Wimborne St Giles, Wardour and Wilton. This legacy is discussed further in the Land Ownership and boundaries theme.
- The disenfranchisement of the Chase in 1829 has also left a lasting physical legacy in the creation of Rushmore Park, as Lord Rivers gave up his rights to hunt across the chase not only in return for money but for the ability to buy land which would not have otherwise been for sale to create his parkland at Rushmore.

For more detail see Historic Landscape Character Area 10: Wooded Chalk Downland of the Cranborne Chase and Chetterwood.

## 1.2 Selwood Forest

### *Background*

The royal forest of Selwood was located on the boundary between Somerset and Wiltshire, covering a large part of the north west of the AONB. The Victoria County of History of Wiltshire has discussed the history of Selwood Forest from a Wiltshire perspective, this reveals that the hunting area encompassed large woodlands that existed at the time of Domesday (AD 1086) and included the four royal manors of Westbury, Warminster, Heystebury and Mere. At its greatest geographic extent in the 13<sup>th</sup> century forest law affected the whole of the northwest of the AONB as far east as the edge of the West Wiltshire Downs. However, by the reign of Edward III in the 14<sup>th</sup> century disafforestation had reduced the area to a small area not more than two miles wide lying along the Somerset and Wiltshire border. This sudden decline was due to a programme of disafforestation by Edward III in response to pressure over the stringent laws that hunting areas imposed and over abuses of rights. This approximate area continued under forest law until its eventual disafforestation in 1627. It is this area straddling the AONB boundary which has therefore been most affected by the imposition of forest law.



*View from Whitesheet Hill looking westwards to Selwood*

### *The Landscape scale impact*

- The geology of this area is greensand as opposed to chalk as with Grovely and the Cranborne Chase. But the topographic position on high marginal ground above the river valleys systems is very similar.
- As with the Cranborne Chase the greatest impact that the Medieval hunting forest had can be seen in the historical development of land use.
- This includes the survival of a great swathe of veteran woodland straddling the county boundary of Wiltshire and Somerset and the long history of forest management in this area.
- The founding of two great landscape parks by leading families at Stourhead by Lord Stourton and Longleat by the Thynnes both associated with earlier Medieval deer parks.
- The piecemeal clearance of woodland around Penselwood and Zeals resulting in a very distinctive form of enclosure.

- The survival of large swathes of common land and rough grazing east of Longleat were legally converted to plantations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century after the disafforestation of the area.
- The lack of settlement within this core area.

For more detail see Historic Landscape Character Area 1: Longleat to Penselwood Hills and Kilminster

### 1.3 Grovely Forest

#### *Background*

The royal hunting forest at Grovely is mentioned by name in Domesday. It is situated at the crest of the west Wiltshire downs upon a chalk plateau capped with clay with flints. According to the Victoria County History of Wiltshire at its greatest geographical extent in the 13<sup>th</sup> century the royal forest covered the whole of the modern day extent of Grovely Wood and much of the surrounding woodland. However, a perambulation of the boundary in AD 1300 fixed the western boundary as running north east from Burcombe to near Little Langford, thus excluding the western side of the modern extent of Grovely Forest. By AD 1600 the forest comprised an area of fourteen coppices corresponding to the former extraparochial district of Grovely Wood (now part of Barford St Martin), and owned by the Pembroke estates. It is this area which was therefore most influenced by forest law, and was controlled by the Earls of Pembroke at Wilton throughout the Post Medieval period. By about AD 1650 Grovely had been disafforested.

The forest of Grovely is also associated with another great area of woodland to the east called Great Ridge. Unlike all the other ancient forest in the AONB this was never part of a Medieval hunting area and the reason for this and the survival of the woodland without the protection afforded by the hunting rights warrants further attention.

#### *The landscape scale impact*

- As with the Cranborne Chase the greatest impact that the Medieval hunting forest had can be seen in the historical development of land use.
- The survival of the extraparochial district into the 1950s and its associated ancient boundaries.
- The survival of a great swathe of veteran woodland straddling the ridge of the West Wiltshire Downs.
- The lack of settlement within this core area.
- Where clearance and enclosure of woodland did occur it was much smaller scale and piecemeal and this process can be read in the series of tiny assarts which have nibbled into the edge of Grovely Woods
- The later survival of ancient rights in this area manifests itself culturally in Great Wishfords annual Oak Apple Day on 29<sup>th</sup> May. On this day, Great Wishford villagers claim their ancient rights to collect wood from Grovely Wood. This tradition is said to date back to 1603, when the charter of rights to collect wood in the royal Forest of Grovely was confirmed by the Forest Court. The rights themselves date back to several centuries before 1603. This occurred not long before the forest was disafforested in 1650 demonstrating that the forest rights were hotly disputed throughout the forests history.

For more detail see Historic Landscape Character Area 6: Great Ridge and Grovely Woods.



*Grovely Woods*

## 1.4 Warrens

### *Background*

Local land owners could hold some rights to hunting and deer management. This included the 'rights of free warren'. This was a legal expression providing local lords permission by the king to hunt small game on their own estates.

### *The landscape scale impact*

- The physical impact of these rights is represented by the pillow mounds which have been recorded in the county Historic Environment Records. These are pillow-shaped, flat topped rectangular mound often surrounded by a shallow ditch, used to farm rabbits. There are 17 examples recorded in the AONB both within and outside the Medieval hunting areas, with a cluster in the northwest of the AONB around Whitesheet Hill. However, it is likely that many examples remain unrecorded, perhaps associated with the many deserted Medieval villages in the AONB.

## 1.5 Deer Parks

### *Background*

The peak time for the creation of deer parks is the 13<sup>th</sup> century, by the end of this century it is calculated that there were about 3,200 parks in Southern England – roughly one to every four parishes (Bond 1995). 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. In physical form the Medieval deer park was surrounded by a ditch and bank with a wooden fence (known as a pale) on top of the bank. The ditch was on the inside, thus allowing deer to enter the park, but making it more difficult for them to leave.

The landscape within a deer park was manipulated to produce a habitat that was both suitable for the deer and some depending on size also provided space for hunting. Tree dotted lawns, tree clumps and compact woods provided pasture over which the deer were hunted and wooded cover in which the deer could shelter. The deer park provided venison - fresh meat in the winter, coppice and standard timber, and grazing for cattle and sheep where this did not interfere with the deers habitat. Such parks are perceived to be more in the nature of a ‘reserve’ or living game larder, compared with the long distance ‘chase’ which could be enjoyed across the Medieval hunting areas.



*Mere Park Pale*

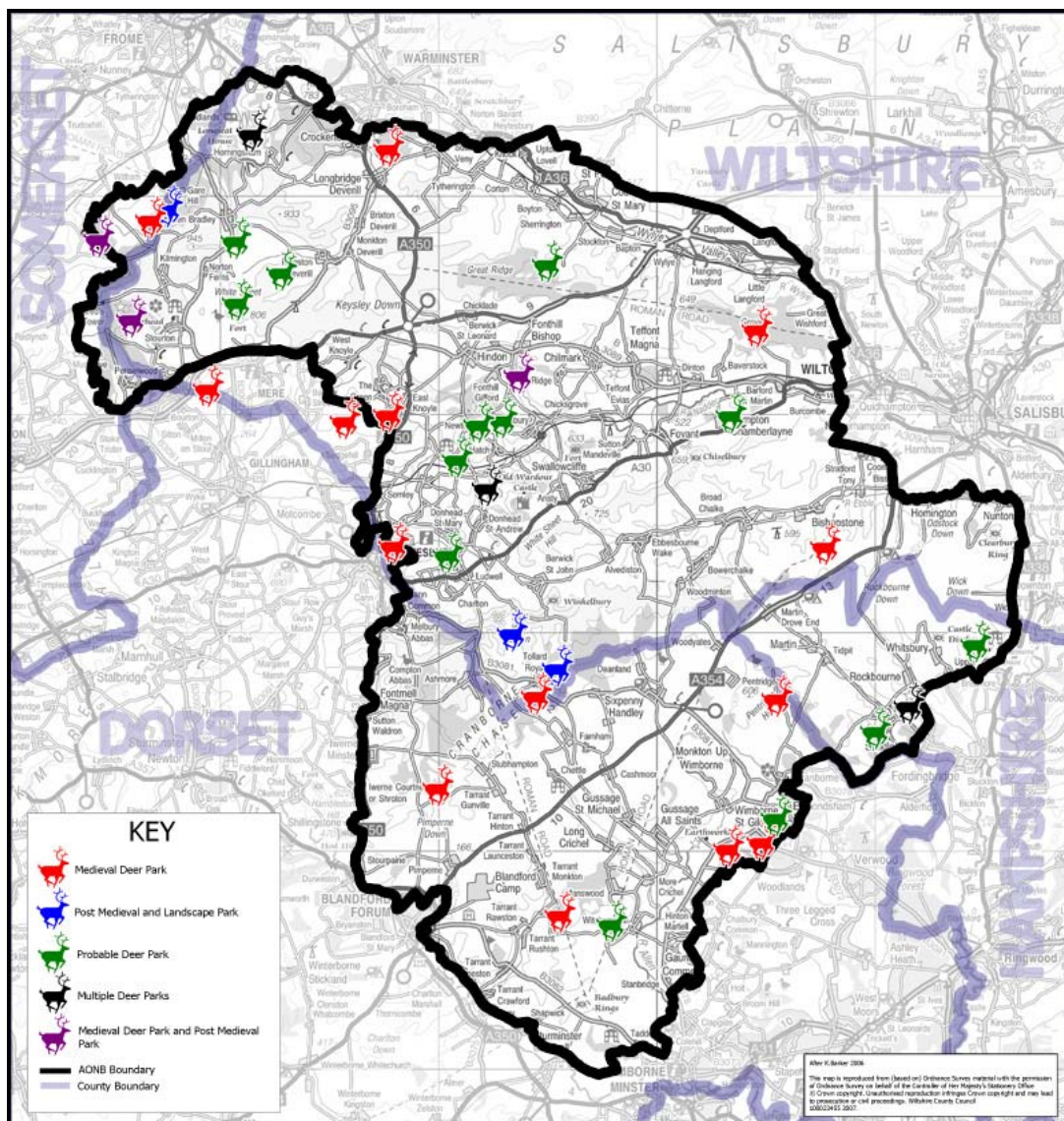


Figure Four: Medieval Deer Parks in the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

#### The landscape scale impact

- A desk based survey of Medieval deer parks in the AONB recorded the locations of 17 parks and another 14 probable locations. These numbers add to the 16 deer parks recorded in the county sites and monuments records.
- The surviving evidence for these deer parks range from place name evidence, such as Lawn Farm at Fonthill, slight earthworks in fields as at Mere, to extant lengths of park pale as at Wardour Castle to finally nearly complete examples fossilised in the landscape as at Harbins Park. Several have been subsumed into later designed landscape parks. Many have not as yet been surveyed and researched in the field, including all the probable locations recorded in the desk based assessment.

## 2. 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Fox Hunting

### *Background*

Fox hunting in the AONB really took off around the 1780s, the same time as the disenfranchisement of the Chase rights was beginning to be discussed in earnest. However the Lord Arundells of Wardour are recorded as maintaining a specialised pack of hounds for fox hunting from 1790. Three fox hunts exist in the AONB landscape today and there is one Beagle pack (for the hunting of hares).

### *The landscape scale impact of fox hunting in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century*

- The main landscape scale impact of the rise of fox hunting has been the maintenance, and possibly creation, of small areas of woodland to provide shelter for the quarry, sometimes called 'coverts'. These can be identified in the landscape using place name evidence, such as 'Hare Covert' on East Codford Down. These blocks of woodland were of course used for a number of other purposes, including as timber resources and shelter belts, this means that it is difficult to gauge the true impact of this kind of game cover, but this additional use meant that they were less likely to be ploughed out. In addition areas of gorse were also maintained for foxes
- Another land management activity is the maintenance of hedgerows, especially their heights, but anecdotal evidence suggests that this has not had such a great impact as in other areas, for example Lincolnshire. Perhaps due to the already open nature of much of the downland and the late enclosure of fields limiting the number of mature wooded hedges that needed to be managed so that they could be jumped.
- The other main impact is the creation of specialised kennels for the keeping of packs. This could sometimes be on a grand scale, for example James Farquharson, a wealthy local landowner came into ownership of the surviving wing of Eastbury House and used it to accommodate his hunt servants, horses and hounds. Eastbury could stable 50 horses and the kennels could house seventy-five couple of hounds.
- In the modern day the existence of a local hunt also provides an inexpensive means for local landowners to dispose of their fallen stock. These local hunts are still active despite the Hunting Acts 5 year age.

## 3. Game Shooting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

### *Background*

The shooting of game birds as a sport first took off in England with technological improvements in shot guns in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and as game species such as Grouse became extinct in Southern England. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century shoots have overtaken fox hunting as the most important hunting activity undertaken in the AONB. They were made fashionable in the Edwardian period by Edward VII and latterly by George V. But the First World War has a major impact on their viability with a loss of

keepers and labourers in the land. Fox hunting enjoyed a resurgence following this period but as the car took over shooting became more popular from the 1960s onwards. There is also a tension between these activities as a prerequisite for the successful rearing of game birds is the control of vermin including foxes by gamekeepers. The shoots in the AONB comprise of both Pheasant and Red Legged Partridge. Formerly the native Grey Partridge was the quintessential game bird but their numbers went into decline from the 1960s following the intensification of agriculture.

The single greatest change that has occurred in the last century seems to have been the almost total reliance on game that is reared and released for the purpose of sport hunting rather than utilising wild game with the exception with the rise in popularity in deer stalking from the 1970s onwards.



*Game Cover crops on the side of Chalk Escarpment*

#### *The landscape scale impact*

- In 2007, the AONB undertook a survey of game management within the area entitled “Raising Our Game”. This indicated that the game resource is now largely managed by the people who own the land and the shoots of the AONB are characteristically low intensity operations. Most of the participants come from the area, if not the immediate locality, and some shoots rent lands from their neighbours.
- The shoots and fisheries sampled did not spend great amounts of time or money on maintaining game habitat, but were prepared, however, to expend resources in creating new seasonal habitat, particularly in the form of game

cover crops and hedgerows, and on breeding birds. The study showed that game managers are trying to enhance a landscape that is already good for game by the judicious planting of small areas of woodland and the planting of small numbers of individual trees around their shoot or fishery. While tree and woodland planting was on a comparatively small scale, the amount of new hedgerow established by shoot and fishery owners was much larger. Nearly 16 km of hedgerow was put in over three years which represents a significant increase in the amount of hedgerow habitat in the area.

- The reliance on reared game means that there is at least one game farm in the AONB and that many woodlands contain fenced rearing areas and feeding stations which have a visual if not long-term impact in the woodlands.
- The amount of game cover crops planted in the AONB landscape is also fairly substantial, for example in the Ebbles Valley one family run shoot plants 65 acres of game cover crops each year due to the lack of woodland on the estate. However, with game cover crops there is a greater emphasis on providing winter cover for released pheasants and partridges rather than spring and summer cover for breeding wild game and other wild bird species.

#### 4. Deer Stalking in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

##### *Background*

Deer are still perceived as a highly valued sporting quarry but are now primarily hunted via stalking. The practice of hunting deer on horse back with hounds appears to have been extinguished in the AONB along with the Chase rights. In addition, fallow deer have now been overtaken by roe as the main deer quarry species

##### *The landscape scale impact*

- The importance of deer stalking as a landscape scale activity is most keenly felt in areas where it is not a regular pastime. In these areas deer numbers are much greater and the area of woodland which is being managed often requires substantial fencing to exclude deer. This lack of game management can therefore have a striking visual presence in individual woodlands.

### Historic Environment Actions



See Background paper 9 for a full list of Historic Environment Actions and the stages identified in their implementation.

#### **ACTION 9: Gain greater understanding of the components of the Medieval hunting areas of the AONB.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - The Historic Environment Action Plans have identified the Medieval hunting forests of the AONB (Cranborne Chase, Grovely Forest and Selwood Forest) as one of the most important components of the historic landscape of the AONB. However although the history of these areas has been studied

their physical archaeological and historical components have not received similar attention. The role of the Medieval hunting areas, combined with the ecclesiastical powers who dominated land ownership within the AONB, and the relationship to land use and feudal society is poorly understood.

**The Potential Mechanism** – A forum could be established of local people and experts to direct research into the Medieval landscape of the area. This would help to fill the gap in our knowledge of the landscape legacy of Medieval hunting areas of the AONB.

**ACTION 15: Increase understanding of Medieval landscape elements of the AONB by academics, teachers and public.**

**The Threat and the Opportunity** - There is perceived to be a lack of appreciation of the Medieval components of the AONB's landscape: settlements, buildings, castles, fields, pastures, woodlands, roads, mills, hunting chase, parks, etc, all of which contribute greatly to the fabric and character of the AONB as it survives today.

**The Potential Mechanism** - The lack of appreciation of the Medieval components of the AONB landscape could be combated by a seminar and the creation of a research framework that encourages and sets out a range of achievable goals for further research in the area.

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| Method     | S1  | Planning and Historic Landscape Character: A Guide for the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB   |
|            | S2  | Forces for Change Operating on the Historic Environment of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB at a Landscape Scale and their Past, Current and Future Impacts |
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Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



## Historic Environment Action Plans

**[www.historiclandscape.co.uk](http://www.historiclandscape.co.uk)**

This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans, or HEAPs for short. The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics.



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