



## **Historic Environment Action Plan West Wight Chalk Downland**

**Isle of Wight County Archaeology  
and Historic Environment Service**

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## HEAP for West Wight Chalk Downland.

### INTRODUCTION

*The West Wight Chalk Downland* HEAP Area has been defined on the basis of geology, topography and historic landscape character. It forms the western half of a central chalk ridge that crosses the Isle of Wight, the eastern half having been defined as the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*. Another block of Chalk and Upper Greensand in the south of the Isle of Wight has been defined as the *South Wight Downland*. Obviously there are many similarities between these three HEAP Areas. However, each of the Areas occupies a particular geographical location and has a distinctive historic landscape character.

This document identifies essential characteristics of the *West Wight Chalk Downland*. These include the large extent of unimproved chalk grassland, great time-depth, many archaeological features and historic settlement in the Bowcombe Valley. The Area is valued for its open access, its landscape and wide views and as a tranquil recreational area. Most of the land at the western end of this Area, from the Needles to Mottistone Down, is open access land belonging to the National Trust.

Significant historic landscape features within this Area are identified within this document. The condition of these features and forces for change in the landscape are considered. Management issues are discussed and actions particularly relevant to this Area are identified from those listed in the Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions.

### ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

#### **Location, Geology and Topography**

- Western part of Island's central chalk ridge, stretching from the Needles in the west to Shide (south of Newport) in the east.
- Topography varies:
  - From the Needles to Brighstone Down it comprises a high, steep-sided ridge of unenclosed chalk grassland
  - From Brighstone Down the ridge widens to form a dissected plateau extending to the Calbourne/Carisbrooke road in the north and to Westridge Down, Chillerton Down and Garstons Down in the east.
  - At the eastern edge of the plateau the Bowcombe Valley lies beneath Bowcombe Down, running from Cheverton to Carisbrooke. The northern side of the Bowcombe Valley is within this HEAP Area.
  - Higher ground to the south-east of Carisbrooke village is occupied by Carisbrooke Castle, Mount Joy Cemetery and the suburb of Shide.
- Geology is Upper Chalk and Middle and Lower Chalk, overlain in places on Mottistone Down and the dissected plateau by Angular Flint Gravel.
- Combes within the western part of this Area are dry. Within the Bowcombe Valley the Lukely Brook rises south of Bowcombe and flows north-east into River Medina.
- At western end of this Area the chalk deposits form coastal cliffs at the Needles, West High Down, Tennyson Down, Afton Down and Compton Down.
- Thin alkaline soils support calcareous grassland in western part of Area.
- Gravel cappings, mainly on dissected plateau, support deeper and slightly richer soils but these are still classified as Grade 4 agricultural land.
- Pockets of Grade 5 land on Cheverton Down, Dukem Down & Garstons Down but Bowcombe Valley is better quality Grade 3 agricultural land.

## Defining Attributes and Principal HEAP Types

- The *West Wight Chalk Downland* terminates in The Needles, truncated offshore chalk stacks that form an iconic symbol of the Isle of Wight
- Dramatic coastal chalk cliffs lie between The Needles and Compton Bay.
- Western part of Area is mainly unimproved chalk grassland with recent scrub woodland on Tennyson Down and 20<sup>th</sup> century plantations on Shalcombe Down, Chessell Down and Westover Down.
- Dissected plateau in central part of Area contains plantation woodlands including Brighstone Forest  
This region also contains improved grasslands, and arable fields of *small-medium* (3-6 ha), *medium* (6-12 ha) and *large* (size over 12 ha).
  - Some woodland classified as *ancient woodland* and *replanted ancient woodland* exists around the edges of the plateau e.g. at Ashengrove, in the Apesdown Valley and at Westridge Copse.
  - However, Pope (2003, 52) has commented that 'it is unlikely whether much truly ancient woodland survives on the chalk, where ancient cultivation terraces are frequently detected within valley-side woodland'.
- The north side of the Bowcombe Valley has *small-medium* fields and valley-floor pasture.
- No farms or settlements on high chalk ridge at western end of Area.
  - Dissected plateau has only a few *dispersed* farmsteads set within combs on northern edge of plateau.
  - Most of the settlement within this Area is in the Bowcombe Valley. This contains *dispersed* farmsteads, small settlements at Bowcombe, Plaish and Clatterford, and the village of Carisbrooke.
- The historic centre of Carisbrooke lies at the junction between the *West Wight Chalk Downland* and the *Northern Lowlands*.
  - For convenience, the historic development of Carisbrooke prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century is discussed within this HEAP document.
- The man-made monument of Carisbrooke Castle dominates the eastern end of this HEAP Area.
  - Suburban housing lies to the east of Carisbrooke Castle and Mount Joy Cemetery.
- This Area contains few motor roads but has an excellent network of byways and bridleways, some of which are long distance routes.
  - B3401 defines the northern edge of this Area between Calbourne and Carisbrooke.
  - A3055 (Military Road) runs through this Area from Freshwater Bay to Compton Bay.
  - B3323 runs north-east from Shorwell to Carisbrooke down the Bowcombe Valley.
  - B3399 cuts through a gap in the downs between Brook and Chessell and Lynch Lane cuts through another gap between Brighstone and Calbourne.
  - The 'Tennyson Trail' is a byway running from east to west along the crest of the *West Wight Downland* from Carisbrooke to the Needles. Much of it is on the route of an ancient highway.
  - The 'Worsley Trail' also runs east-west from Chillerton Down to Brighstone Down within this HEAP Area.
- Chalk pits and quarries are a distinctive attribute of this Area.
- Designated Historic Parks of Westover and Swainston on English Heritage Register are mainly within *Northern Lowlands* but also extend into this HEAP Area.
- Military fortifications at the western end of this Area are Old Needles Battery and New Needles Battery, with Carisbrooke Castle at the eastern end.
- Golf Course on National Trust land at Afton Down.

## Principal Historical Processes

- At the end of the Ice Age Britain's climate warmed and most of the landscape, including chalk downland, became covered in woodland.
  - Woodland may not have become established on those areas of the chalk ridge most exposed to strong sea-borne winds such as Tennyson Down and High Down, which Chatters (1984, 8) suggests were well grazed before human modification of the landscape.
- Earliest Neolithic farmers cleared small areas of woodland on chalk downs and greensand for grazing and cultivation from 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC.
- Much of the chalk and greensand remained wooded until succeeding Early Bronze Age from c. 2300 BC when extensive clearance took place, allowing grazing and cultivation (Scaife 2003, 25-27).
- Chalk downs used for construction of burial monuments in Neolithic and Bronze Age times.
- Small fields on the chalk downs, defined by *lynchets*, were cultivated during prehistoric and Roman times.
- An ancient route along the crest of the West Wight chalk ridge, much of it followed by the modern 'Tennyson Trail', is thought to be prehistoric in origin although ancient tracks can rarely be accurately or scientifically dated.
  - Part of the route within Carisbrooke Parish is marked as 'Roman Road' on the OS 6" map of 1866 but there is nothing to suggest a Roman origin.
- Air photographs provide evidence of past activity, probably mainly of prehistoric date.
  - Sites have been located on air photographs throughout the Area, notably at the Needles, Tennyson Down, Shalcombe, Newbarn Down, Little Down, Apesdown, Gallibury Fields, Garstons Down, Dukem Down, Bowcombe Down, Idlecombe Down and Clatterford.
- There is a particular concentration of sites and finds in and around the Bowcombe Valley.
  - The hill-fort at Chillerton Down is one of only two known defensive Iron Age sites on the Isle of Wight, possibly suggesting a lack of inter-tribal rivalry (Tomalin 2006, 13).
  - An Iron Age pottery assemblage is recorded from Mount Joy (Tomalin 1992).
  - Evidence of Late Iron Age occupation and Roman building at Bowcombe.
  - Evidence of Roman villas at Clatterford and Carisbrooke
  - Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are known from Bowcombe Down and from the site of Carisbrooke Castle.
- Another important Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery existed within this Area at Chessell Down (Arnold 1982, 13-72).
- Finds suggest existence of Middle Saxon trading settlement in Bowcombe Valley (Ulmschneider 2003)
- An Anglo-Saxon charter allegedly dating from 826 AD granted the estate of Calbourne to the bishopric of Winchester.
  - This estate stretched across the Island from the north to the south coasts and included land in this Area.
  - Within this Area the eastern boundary of the Anglo-Saxon Calbourne Estate (and of the Anglo-Saxon mother parish of Calborne) followed the combe running south from Ashengrove and crossed higher ground to the distinctive landmark of Gallibury Hump (a Bronze Age *round barrow*) before descending to the edge of this Area between Limerone Down and Fore Down.
  - The western boundary crossed this Area between Chessell Down and Westover Down.
- An Anglo-Saxon charter of 968 AD granted the estate of Watchingwell to the nuns of Wilton Abbey.
  - A very small portion of this estate to the east of Ashengrove lies within the *West Wight Downland Area*.
- The earliest defensive enclosure on the hill-top site of Carisbrooke Castle (the lower enclosure) has been interpreted as a Late-Saxon *burgh* of early 11<sup>th</sup> century date (Young 2000, 191) but Tomalin (2002) suggests a late-Roman date

- Later defences of Carisbrooke Castle were constructed from Norman times onwards, the latest phase being a bastioned trace of late Tudor date surrounding the medieval castle (Young 2000, 189-200)
- The Island's chief settlement at time of Norman Conquest was Bowcombe, either on the site of the present Carisbrooke village or higher up the valley where the present hamlet of Bowcombe and Bowcombe Manor House are sited (Margham 1993, Edwards 1999g).
- Domesday manorial centres are recorded within this Area at Bowcombe (Carisbrooke Parish) and Cheverton (Shorwell Parish) but most of the *West Wight Chalk Downland* was apportioned between manors holding the majority of their lands to the north or south of this Area.
- Two mills were recorded in Domesday Book within the manor of Bowcombe.
- The Domesday Survey also records that the monks of Lyre (a Norman Abbey) held a church within Bowcombe Manor.
  - Lyre established the small Priory of St Mary at Carisbrooke by 1147 to collect revenue from its Island holdings (Hockey 1982, 17, 36).
  - The priory church also acted as the parish church of Carisbrooke.
- There was a water mill belonging to St Mary's Priory, situated at the northern end of Spring Lane.
- Carisbrooke may have been laid out or re-planned as a *regular row settlement* in the late 11<sup>th</sup> or early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Margham 1993, Edwards 1999g).
  - Small medieval settlements may have developed at Bowcombe, Plaish and Clatterford but the shape and size of these settlements are first depicted accurately on the OS 1793 map.
- Early parochial units (created after the establishment of Christianity on the Isle of Wight in the late 7<sup>th</sup> century AD) may have been coterminous with secular estates and all seem to have included a section of the central chalk ridge.
  - These 'mother parishes' were divided into smaller parochial units from late Saxon times onwards but the medieval parishes nearly all included some open downland (either on the central ridge or on the southern downs).
  - Chalk downland was apportioned between individual manors within each parish and often named after these manors.
- Most chalk downland within this HEAP Area seems to have been used as manorial common grazing in medieval times but arable *open-field* cultivation may have taken place on the south-facing slope of Bowcombe Down and to the south of Carisbrooke Castle.
  - *Strip lynchets* provide archaeological evidence of medieval cultivation on steep slopes in a few places e.g. Chillerton Down.
  - Arable use of high downland or steep downland slopes in medieval times may have been intermittent, corresponding to periods of population pressure.
- In the 13<sup>th</sup> century Quarr Abbey acquired *granges* at Rowborough and Shalcombe as downland grazing for their flocks of sheep (Hockey 1970, 55, 84; Hockey 1991, Map 10).
- The present valley-floor pastures beside the Lukely Brook from Bowcombe to Carisbrooke may have been used as *common meadow* in medieval times.
  - Various small meads and meadows are named on the Carisbrooke Tithe Map of the 1840s but by that date would have been private fields.
- Defensive beacons were sited on the chalk downs and other high points during medieval times to warn of French attacks.
  - Within the *West Wight Chalk Downland* these beacons may have been sited on Mottistone Down at Harborough Barrow, at Lavendone alias Garstons Down, near Lorden Copse to the north-east of Shorwell and on Alvington Down alias Bowcombe Down (Basford 1980, 133-134).
  - The Tennyson Monument on Tennyson Down is on the site of the Nodes Beacon. A beacon is first recorded on 'Freshwater Down' in 1638. Earthwork banks close to the Tennyson monument could be associated with this beacon.

- Enclosure of downland on the Isle of Wight took place mainly as a result of private agreements between landowners rather than by Act of Parliament.
  - There are no Parliamentary Enclosure Acts relating to this HEAP Area.
- Downland Enclosure probably started in the early post-medieval period and small enclosures such as Gallibury Fields (shown on the OS 1793 map) may date from this period.
  - Newbarn Farm to the east of Calbourne may have originated as a farmstead cultivating newly enclosed downland.
  - Much of Newbarn Down still remained as grazing land in 1793. However, regular fields are shown on the OS 1793 map surrounding Newbarn Down and within the area known as Gotten Leaze.
  - Most of Bowcombe Down was still unenclosed in 1793 but Idlecombe Down had been taken out of Bowcombe Down and enclosed in 1780.
  - By 1862 Gallibury Down had been enclosed and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century most of Bowcombe Down had been enclosed and ploughed.
- Early downland enclosures were probably used as private grazing land but later enclosures were probably used for arable agriculture.
- Downland at the western end of this Area from the Needles to Mottistone Down was harder to cultivate or improve because of its poor soils and exposed situation.
  - Only Tapnell Down, Wellow Down and part of Shalcombe Down had been enclosed in this part of the HEAP Area by 1793.
  - Most other downland in this part of the HEAP Area survived as permanent and unenclosed grassland into the 20<sup>th</sup> century when it came into the ownership of the National Trust.
- Small chalk pits at base of downs are probably mainly of post-medieval date and associated with marling of fields. Chalk was also used as a building material close to the downs.
- A few larger old chalk pits are more prominent features in the landscape.
  - During the reign of Henry VIII the courts for the hundred of West Medine were held at 'Westmedine le Pitte', which has been identified as Pan Chalk Pit at Shide.
  - From 1895 Pan Pit provided material for cement production at the Medina Cement Works. A goods train departed from the pit itself and took the chalk to Medina Cement Mills until the closure of the works in the 1940s.  
[http://www.aggregate.com/pdf/bV\\_PI.pdf](http://www.aggregate.com/pdf/bV_PI.pdf)
  - Whitepit Quarry, on the south side of Whitepit Lane, is of unknown date. It is now occupied by a small modern housing estate.
- By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century there were three mills using water power in and around Carisbrooke – a paper mill to the south of Clatterford, Kent's Mill at the junction of Miller's Lane and Castle Street, and the former Priory Mill at the northern end of Spring Lane (Edwards 1999g, 7).
- The OS 1793 map shows Clatterford as a small settlement beside Clatterford Shute, distinct from Carisbrooke but linked to it by Nodgham Lane.
  - By 1862 Clatterford Road had been laid out, linking Clatterford and Carisbrooke, and development had started along this road.
- Carisbrooke Cemetery was established at Mount Joy, to the east of Carisbrooke Castle, in 1858.
- In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century some suburban development took place along Watergate Road and at the western end of Shide Road, south of Newport.
- Swainston Park lay mainly within the *Northern Lowlands* Area to the north of the Newport-Calbourne road but the OS 1793 map indicates that it extended across the road into the *West Wight Downland* Area.
  - In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the folly known as 'The Temple' was built within Swainston Park on the south side of the road.

- Westover Plantation was established on Westover Down in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - This plantation formed part of the designed landscape of Westover Park (see *Northern Lowlands* HEAP Area document).
  - Westover Plantation now lies within the Forestry Commission woodland of Brighstone Forest
- Old Needles Battery was built from 1861-1863 as one of the chain of *Palmerston Forts* guarding the Solent.
  - The Military Road was constructed in 1860s to provide rapid access to southern coast and passes through this Area between Freshwater and Compton. The road was metalled and partially rerouted in the 1920s.
- The New Needles Battery was built in early 1890s.
  - Between 1955 and 1971 New Needles Battery was a testing site for the 'Black Knight' and 'Black Arrow' rockets developed by the Cowes based engineering firm of Saunders Roe (Medland 1995, 79-83).
- A lighthouse was established on the Needles Headland in 1786 and was replaced by the existing lighthouse on the furthest Needles rock in 1859.
- A coastguard station had been built at the Needles Headland by 1909.
- A golf course was established on West High Down in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Medland 1995, 58) but is no longer in use.
  - The golf course shown on Afton Down on the OS 1898 25" map is still in use.
- Forestry Commission woodland was planted in the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century on land that had previously been mainly unenclosed grassland.
  - Tree planting caused some damage to archaeological earthworks and masked them but ensured that these earthworks remained unploughed.
  - In recent years some forestry plantations have been felled and the land returned to grazing (e.g. on Mottistone Down).
- Radio/TV masts were erected at Rowridge and Chillerton in 20<sup>th</sup> century and are still in use.
- Previously uncultivated areas of downland were ploughed up from 2<sup>nd</sup> World War until 1980s.
  - Since that time it has not been profitable to plough up additional areas of chalk downland but arable agriculture still takes place on the downs.
  - However, significant areas of formerly ploughed downland have been converted back to permanent grassland in recent years e.g. Pay Down.
- Houses were built along Nodgham Lane and Whitepit Lane in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- A large modern chalk quarry currently operates on Cheverton Down.

### **Archaeology and Built Environment (details in HER)**

- The Afton Down *Long Barrow* and the Tennyson Down *Mortuary Enclosure* (where bodies of dead were exposed prior to burial) are *Neolithic* earthworks.
- Circular ditched enclosure of possible *Neolithic* or *Iron Age* date to the east of Tennyson Monument (Wessex Archaeology 2005. Vol 1, 18; Vol 268)
- Numerous *Bronze Age round barrows*, many surviving as earthworks although others are ploughed.
- Barrows of particular significance include the following:
  - 'Five Barrows' on Brook Down barrows, actually eight barrows including examples of *bell barrows* and *disc barrows*
  - 'Harboro' Barrow on Mottistone Down, possibly used as a medieval beacon
  - 'Gallibury Hump', one of the Island's largest round barrows and still an important feature in Anglo-Saxon times when it was used as a boundary mark in the Calborne estate charter.
- Earthworks within Brighstone Forest and on Newbarn Down are the best preserved remains of a prehistoric *field system* on the Isle of Wight.
- An Earthwork on Chillerton Down appears to be the unfinished remains of an Iron Age Hillfort (Tomalin 2006, 13).

- Buried remains of Roman villas at Rock, Clatterford and Carisbrooke (Isle of Wight County Council 1992).
  - Buried remains of a Roman building (possibly a villa) at Bowcombe.
- Anglo-Saxon cemeteries of 6<sup>th</sup> century AD excavated at Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Arnold 1982).
  - Small cemetery of similar date excavated at Carisbrooke Castle in the 1980s (Young 2000, 86-97 & 190).
- Lower Enclosure at Carisbrooke Castle, possibly of late Anglo-Saxon date.
- Motte and bailey earthworks at Carisbrooke Castle lie below slightly later stone defences of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with later medieval additions and an outer artillery fort of late Tudor date (Young 2000, 194-196).
- Modern archaeological excavations within this Area include that of a Bronze Age *ring ditch* at Apesdown, a ploughed Bronze Age *round barrow* on Newbarn Down, work at Carisbrooke Castle and limited investigations of the Tennyson Down *Mortuary Enclosure* and Clatterford Roman Villa (for details see HER).
- Earthworks mark medieval parish boundaries on the unploughed downland ridge.
- Earthworks also demarcate different land uses or the land of different manors.
  - An earthwork along the lower edge of the chalk downland in Freshwater Parish may have marked the boundary between the common manorial grazing land and Easton Common Field.
  - A ditch between West High Down (now Tennyson Down) and East High Down divided the manorial grazing of Weston Manor from that of Prior's Freshwater (Wessex Archaeology 2005. Vol 1, 13-14. Vol 2, 169).
- Medieval *strip lynchets* on Chillerton Down, Little Down and elsewhere provide evidence of medieval arable agriculture.
- Earthworks opposite Rains Grove on the Carisbrooke-Shorwell road lie close to the medieval *grange* of Rowborough (see above under 'Principal Historical Processes') and may be connected with the grange.
- Carisbrooke has a medieval church and a layout of medieval origin comprising a single street with buildings on either side.
  - Buildings within the historic village centre at Carisbrooke are mainly of brick and of 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date but there are a few cottages of possible 17<sup>th</sup> century that are stone-built or have stone foundations.
  - Several buildings are former 18<sup>th</sup> century coaching inns, including the 'Eight Bells' Public house (Page ed. 1912, 221).
- A Waterworks was established on the site of Carisbrooke's Priory Mill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the millpond still exists to the south of the 'Eight Bells'.
  - The converted remains of Kent's Mill survive to the west of Castle Street and the overgrown remains of its millpond lie to the north of Millers Lane.
  - There are fords across the Lukely Brook in Castle Street, in Spring Lane and at Clatterford.
- Farmsteads and cottages within this Area are mainly built of stone (either Bembridge Limestone, found to the north of this Area or Greensand, found to the south).
  - The earliest farmhouses are of 17<sup>th</sup> century date (e.g. Rowborough) but most are 18<sup>th</sup> century or 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - The hamlet of Bowcombe contains 19<sup>th</sup> century stone-built estate cottages.
- Remains of 'The Temple', an early 19<sup>th</sup> century folly, originally within Swainston Landscape Park.
- 19<sup>th</sup> century Needles Lighthouse.
- Old Needles Battery is largely intact and is care of National Trust.
- Remains of New Needles Battery (also in care of National Trust) and rocket testing site.
- Original course of the Military Road survives (much of it as right of way F35) between Compton and Freshwater.

- The Tennyson Monument is a granite-built Celtic cross erected on East High Down in 1897 in memory of the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (who lived at nearby Farringford). The down was renamed 'Tennyson Down' in his honour.
- Modern earthworks include remains of former golf courses on West High Down and 2<sup>nd</sup> World War anti-glider trenches on Tennyson Down.
- Half-size replica beacon on the northern edge of High Down was erected by Totland Parish Council to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

### Relationships with other HEAP Areas

- Historically, this Area had a close relationship with the *West Wight Downland Edge and Sandstone Ridge*, and with the *South-West Wight Coastal Zone*.
- Parishes in *Freshwater Isle*, *Thorley/Wellow Plain* and *Northern Lowlands* HEAP Areas all had manorial open grazing on the *West Wight Chalk Downland*.
- *West Wight Chalk Downland* HEAP Area shows many similarities with *East Wight Chalk Ridge* and *South Wight Downland*.

### Time-Depth

- Chalk grassland was created within much of this HEAP Area in the Early Bronze Age as a result of human clearance of woodland.
  - Surviving areas of unimproved grassland provide a link with the Island's prehistoric past.
- Archaeological earthworks date from the *Neolithic* period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Majority of earthworks are *Bronze Age* burial mounds but other remains include the prehistoric *field system* within Brighstone Forest and the hillfort at Chillerton.
- Motor roads within this Area (with the exception of the Military Road) all originated as routes linking settlements and presumably existed before the time of Domesday Book, when these settlements were first mentioned.
  - Many of the existing rights of way within this Area are shown on the OS 1793 map but some could be of a much earlier date.
  - The Tennyson Trail is thought to be of prehistoric origin.
- Bridleway CB21 from Ashengrove to Rowridge is on the eastern boundary of the Anglo-Saxon Calbourne Estate and Mother Parish.
  - Bridleway CB6 from Rowridge to Brighstone Forest lies slightly to the west of the parish/estate boundary which was ploughed out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - The line of the boundary is then preserved as the eastern edge of Brighstone Forest and as field boundaries from the forest to the edge of this Area.
- The western boundary of the Anglo-Saxon Calbourne Estate/Mother Parish between Chessell Down and Westover Down is preserved as an earthen bank within a forestry plantation.
- Some parish boundary earthworks on the chalk ridge may possibly date back to Anglo-Saxon times but most are of medieval origin.
- Right of way N146 preserves the line of the medieval parish boundary between Carisbrooke and Gatcombe.
  - Right of way SW48 runs close to the medieval parish boundary between Carisbrooke and Shorwell and briefly follows this boundary.
- Carisbrooke Castle is the only secular medieval building within this Area but Carisbrooke village has a medieval church with a fine 15<sup>th</sup> century tower.
- Carisbrooke village preserves evidence of its medieval layout.
- Unenclosed and unimproved chalk grassland within this HEAP Area preserves a good deal of its medieval and post-medieval character as manorial common land.
- Some earthworks (e.g. on south-east slope of Chillerton Down) indicate episodes of medieval arable agriculture on the chalk downland.

- Surviving boundaries delineate the various parcels of land that lay within the medieval Rowborough Grange.
  - The 20<sup>th</sup> century forestry plantation on Shalcombe Down lies within the northern part of the medieval Shalcombe Grange
- Existing field patterns on the south-east side of Bowcombe Down may originate from enclosure of medieval open fields but are much modified by later amalgamation and re-organisation.
- Small pasture fields in Bowcombe Valley may be on site of medieval common meadow.
- Surviving boundaries on the chalk ridge and chalk slopes provide evidence for downland enclosure in the post-medieval period.
  - For instance, boundaries on Idlecombe Down can be related to a dated enclosure agreement of 1780.
- Chalk pits are probably mainly of post-medieval date.
- Sites of *ancient woodland* and *replanted ancient woodland* on dissected plateau at eastern end of this HEAP Area may have been wooded since at least 1600 and possibly from much earlier (but see Pope 2003, 52).
- Farmsteads and cottages in the landscape date from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- 19<sup>th</sup> century features in the landscape (and seascape) include the Needles Lighthouse, Old Needles and New Needles Battery and coastguard cottages on Needles Headland.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century landscape change is very visible in the form of forestry plantations and of very large fields created by the removal of earlier field boundaries in the eastern part of the Area.

#### **Contribution of Historic Landscape to Present Landscape Character**

- This Area has the greatest *time-depth* of all the HEAP Areas in terms of visible landscape components.
- Present landscape exists as a direct result of historic processes ranging from the prehistoric clearance of woodland on the chalk to the creation of forestry plantations and large arable fields in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The unimproved chalk grassland, surviving mainly in the western part of this Area and first created by prehistoric woodland clearance, contributes greatly to present landscape character.
- Archaeological earthworks, particularly of prehistoric date, are numerous and contribute significantly to present landscape character.
- Historic roads and rights of way are important within this Area.
- Historic settlement patterns and historic buildings contribute significantly to present landscape character in the Bowcombe Valley.
- Medieval landscape features include boundaries marking out parishes and property holdings.
- Post-medieval landscape features relating to enclosure can be easily traced in the modern landscape.
- Buildings and structures onshore and offshore at the Needles Headland recall the Island's past military history and the danger to shipping posed by the Needles Channel.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century changes such as the creation of forestry plantations and boundary removal within earlier enclosure landscapes have played a major role in shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century landscape.

#### **Values, Perceptions and Associations**

The *West Wight Chalk Downland* provides some of the most iconic images of the Isle of Wight, familiar to mainlanders and to visitors from abroad, as well as to Islanders. For most people the value of the *West Wight Chalk Downland* is probably a matter of sensory perception and aesthetic appreciation above all else, although the ecological and archaeological value of the Area is well understood.

- A sensory snapshot of the Area might include the following 'images' from walking the Tennyson Trail:
  - The changing landscapes of the trail - passing through wide arable fields, plantations of beech and conifer and open downland.
  - A sense of freedom – being able to walk for miles in an unenclosed landscape.
  - Springy turf beneath the feet.
  - Tiny chalkland flowers.
  - Standing at the top of Mottistone or Brook Down on a sunny, frosty day, looking north to purple/ brown beech plantations in their winter colours.
  - The first clear view of chalk cliffs from Mottistone Down.
  - Standing beside the Brook Down barrows and feeling a link with prehistoric ancestors.
  - Feeling on top of the world – or at least the Isle of Wight – surveying the Island's southern coast and northern lowlands, the Solent, and beyond to the New Forest.
  - A sense of the sea, ever-strengthening as Freshwater Bay comes into view, then up the steep slope of Tennyson Down to the call of seabirds from the nearby cliffs.
  - Onwards to the wind-swept landscape of the Needles Headland, looking down on the startling colours of the Alum Bay cliffs to the north and reminders of a military past.
  - Passing across the drawbridge of the Old Needles Fort - down a short tunnel and amazingly, looking out on the Needles Rocks and the Needles Lighthouse – the full stop at the end of a journey.
  
- The Bowcombe Valley provides different sensory impressions – the impact of Carisbrooke Castle on its chalk hilltop contrasting with the intimacy of the valley itself. Other images might include:
  - The peacefulness of the Likely Brook and its damp, sheep-grazed pastures.
  - The tower of Carisbrooke Church glimpsed from Plaish meadows – dramatic and majestic in the distance
  - Hedgerows of hazel studded with promroses.
  - Carisbrooke's 'spirit of place' defined by the water of its streams - enjoyed by dogs and children splashing through fords.
  
- Other impressions of the *West Wight Downland* include:
  - The wooded and grassy combes of Newbarn, Ashengrove and Apes Down
  - The stark arable landscape of Westridge Down.
  
- Associations with famous people include:
  - Carisbrooke Castle and Charles I – imprisoned here from 1647 to 1648.
  - Tennyson Down and the Poet Tennyson after whom it is named. Tennyson lived nearby at Farringford and declared that the air on High Down (now Tennyson Down) was worth 'sixpence a pint'.

### Research and Documentation

- Historic Environment Record is basic resource for archaeology, built environment and historic landscape character (includes HLC layer).
- 'The Vectis Report' (Basford 1980) assessed damage to archaeological features on chalk downland but an updated condition survey is now required.
- Unpublished report on the history of Isle of Wight Downlands prepared for Isle of Wight County Council (Cahill 1984).
- The Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan includes a 'Lowland Calcareous Grassland Habitat Action Plan'.  
<http://www.wildonwight.co.uk/resources/publications/haps/CalcareousGrasslandHAP.pdf>
- 'Carisbrooke: A Study in Settlement Morphology' (Margham 1993).
- 'West Wight Landscape Assessment' includes land within this HEAP Area (LUC 2005).

- Archaeological and Historic Environment surveys describe the landscape history and monuments on land owned by the National Trust (Currie 1999; Wessex Archaeology 2005).
- 'Historic Carisbrooke Archaeological Assessment Document' produced as part of extensive urban survey of Isle of Wight's Historic Towns (Edwards 1999g).

### **Amenity and Education**

- The *West Wight Chalk Downland* is a tranquil rural area.
- Carisbrooke Castle is a major tourist attraction in the care of English Heritage.
  - Carisbrooke Castle Museum, operated by a Charitable Trust, has displays on the history of the castle and on Island history. It is the home of the Isle of Wight Council's School Museums Service and provides education resources and activities.
- The Old Needles Battery and the New Needles Battery, both in the care of the National Trust, are open to the public and provide displays on the defence of the Island and on the Black Knight/Black Arrow rocket programme.
- Most of the land at the western end of this Area, from the Needles to Mottistone Down, is open access land belonging to the National Trust.
- The Area is excellent for walking with many rights of way including the long distance Tennyson Trail (all of which is within this Area) and Worsley Trail (partly within this Area).
- Between Compton and Freshwater the Military Road offers spectacular views to car, coach and bus travellers.
- The historic landscape offers excellent opportunities for field education of both school children and adults due to the existence of numerous archaeological earthworks, the great time-depth in the landscape, the long distance views of other HEAP Areas and the interaction, historically, of this HEAP Area with adjacent Areas.
- There are good opportunities for community projects interpreting the chalk downland in the context of local trails.
- Good opportunities for demonstrating inter-relationships between semi-natural and historic environments.

### **Features of Particular Significance within this HEAP Area**

- Surviving areas of unimproved chalk grassland which provide a link with the Island's prehistoric landscape and partly retain their medieval character as areas of unenclosed grazing land.
- Archaeological earthworks of all periods, but particularly Bronze Age *round barrows*.
- Buried archaeological remains, particularly in the Bowcombe Valley.
- Historic rights of way.
- Boundaries relating to historic estates, medieval parishes, landholdings and enclosure.
- Valley-floor pasture in the Bowcombe Valley.
- Historic settlements in the Bowcombe Valley, particularly Carisbrooke with its various components – medieval village plan, church and other historic buildings, millponds and fords.
- Carisbrooke Castle.
- Needles Old Battery and Needles New Battery.
- Needles Lighthouse.

## **VULNERABILITY**

### **Rarity and Typicality**

- Uncultivated downland was once a common historic landscape type in southern England.
  - However, a large percentage of England's unimproved chalk grassland was lost to agricultural improvement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Isle of Wight now contains 10% of the total surviving extent of this habitat and historic landscape type in south-east England, much being in this HEAP Area.

- The *West Wight Chalk Downland* has a range of archaeological earthworks typical of unploughed downland and once common throughout southern England but now much less common as a result of 20<sup>th</sup> century destruction of downland.

### **Coherence**

- Western part of Area has good coherence as a landscape of open, uncultivated chalk downland.
- Dissected plateau has been more altered by recent land uses such as afforestation and large-scale cultivation but retains an essential coherence as a rural agricultural landscape.
- The Bowcombe Valley has an essential coherence as a landscape derived from medieval cultivation and valley-floor grazing, dominated by Carisbrooke Castle.
- The eastern end of this Area has been affected by the expansion of suburban development along Whitepit Lane and at Shide.

### **Condition and Fragility**

- The overall numbers and condition of archaeological earthworks declined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of downland ploughing.
- Afforestation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century caused some damage to archaeological earthworks but protected them from possible ploughing.
- Historic boundaries relating to parishes, landholdings and enclosure have been lost in some places as a result of agricultural change
- Survival of chalk grassland is dependent on grazing and has been affected in some places by cessation of grazing and subsequent growth of scrub.
  - However much of the *West Wight Chalk Downland* is managed by the National Trust and other conservation bodies, primarily by means of grazing and scrub removal.
- Archaeological earthworks on the downs have been affected by erosion caused by human feet, wheeled vehicles and animals.
- Rabbit burrows have damaged Bronze Age burial mounds.
- Carisbrooke Roman Villa is on the English Heritage 'Buildings at Risk Register'.
- The rural character of Carisbrooke is affected by the volume of traffic passing along Carisbrooke High Street.
- The New Needles Battery is only partially intact.

## **CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

### **Forces for Change**

- Climate change may not have significant adverse effects on the chalk grassland.
  - Hotter, drier summers are better for chalk grassland as an ecological habitat and some species have responded positively. In this respect, it is important that both south and north facing downland slopes are retained as chalk grassland to provide different habitats.
- Sea level rise and increase in number of storms may lead to more rapid erosion of coastal chalk cliffs.
  - The Military Road between Compton and Freshwater is likely to fail within the next 50 years as a result of deep cracks in the chalk strata.
  - The Needles Old Battery is under medium-term threat from coastal erosion
- Potential future applications for wind turbines (planning permission currently exists for one site on Cheverton Down).
- Greater recreational use.
- Current Forestry commission policy is to remove plantations on the downs where possible and this will allow conversion to permanent grassland.
- Agricultural change in formerly cultivated areas.

- In recent years some arable land on chalk has reverted to permanent grassland through *Countryside Stewardship* and *Environmental Stewardship*.
- Recent global price rises for grain may lead to renewed pressure on unploughed marginal land and discourage farmers from taking marginal land out of cultivation.
- Conservation projects funded by grant aid (e.g. Higher Level Environmental Stewardship, Heritage Lottery Fund, Sustainable Development Fund).

### Management Issues

- Active ploughing of archaeological earthworks has largely ceased in this area. However, where ploughing has taken place too close to earthworks in the recent past this is contributing to active erosion.
- Some buried archaeological sites are still subject to ploughing.
- Need to support projects for reversion of cultivated or afforested land.
- Need to maintain grazing regimes which conserve both historic landscape character and biological diversity.
- Erosion and rabbit damage on archaeological earthworks and on downland generally.
- Increased erosion as a result of greater recreational use, specifically erosion caused by wheeled vehicles using Byways Open to All Traffic and damage to downland and archaeological earthworks caused by these vehicles when they deviate from byways.
  - The Tennyson Trail is now open to motorised vehicles only by permit (available to disabled drivers or vehicles carrying disabled passengers) in summer months.
- Need to continue existing monitoring of forestry operations to ensure that archaeological earthworks are not adversely affected.
- Need to assess proposed new woodland planting prior to grant allocation to ensure it does not lead to environmental or landscape issues.
- Possible loss of tranquillity as a result of greater recreational use.
- Need for field survey to identify and record all surviving archaeological earthworks on land not covered by National Trust surveys.
- Need for condition survey of archaeological earthworks on chalk downland.
- Need to retain historically significant boundaries.

### Conservation Designations

- Virtually all of the HEAP Area is within the *AONB* except for a very small suburban zone to the south of Newport.
- 58 *Scheduled Monuments* (some containing more than one site), most being Bronze Age burial mounds but including two Neolithic burial monuments; field systems; enclosures; Chillerton Down Iron Age hillfort; Roman villas at Clatterford, Carisbrooke and Newport; Carisbrooke Castle; and Old Needles Battery.
- *Conservation Area* at Carisbrooke
- 39 *Listed Buildings* (fewer listed than in some other HEAP Areas because much of this area is high downland). These include farmsteads, Old Needles Fort, Tennyson's Monument, country houses of Swainston and Westover, Carisbrooke Roman villa, Carisbrooke Castle and 17 houses in Carisbrooke.
- Historic Parks at Westover and Swainston included on the English Heritage Register are mainly within *Northern Lowlands* but also extend into this HEAP Area.
- The coastal part of the HEAP Area is within the Tennyson *Heritage Coast* and is also within the South Wight Maritime SAC.
- The western part of this Area falls within the Isle of Wight Downs SAC.
- *SSSI's* within the HEAP Area are 'Headon Warren and West High Down', 'Compton Down', 'Mottistone Down', 'Calbourne Down', 'Rowridge Valley' and 'Garstons Down'. The first three sites are also SACs for their chalk grassland.
- 33 *SINCs* within the HEAP Area, including downland, nearly all the woodland, the Plaish valley-floor meadows and the environs of Carisbrooke Castle.
- *Local Nature Reserve* at Shide Chalk Pit.

## **FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

The Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions are set out in a separate document. These objectives and actions are generic and many of them are relevant to various HEAP Areas. Those that are most relevant to this HEAP Area are cited below.

- A12.** Complete Field Patterns HEAP.
- A13.** Identify field patterns of significance.
- A14.** Complete Rural Settlement HEAP.
- A17.** Investigate and record condition of all archaeological earthworks within the Open Land and other HEAP Types.
- A18.** Complete Open Land Type HEAP, building on earthwork condition survey and setting out best management practices.
- A19.** Investigate funding and potential for 'ground-truthing' of selected AP sites.
- A21.** Complete HEAP for Trees and Woodland.
- A22.** Complete HEAP for Parkland/Designed Landscapes.
- A23.** Complete HEAP for Roads, Lanes, Tracks and Rail Lines.
- A24.** Complete field survey of historic Rights of Way.
- A26.** Complete HEAP for Mineral Extraction.
- A27.** Complete HEAP for Military HLC Type.
- A28.** Complete Boundaries HEAP.
- A29.** Complete Climate Change HEAP.
- A30.** Investigate potential for projects to identify archaeological features within cultivated and non-cultivated land.
- A31.** Encourage detailed field survey of selected earthworks and features.
- A32.** Facilitate supply of HEAP and HLC information to land managers, farm advisers, farmers and funding bodies.
- A33.** Facilitate use of HLC information to assess importance of hedgerows affected by hedgerow removal notices.
- A34.** Advocate protection of buried archaeological features within cultivated land.
- A35.** Promote conservation of historic farm buildings and ensure that character is maintained if converted.
- A36.** Support maintenance of downland and heathland by appropriate grazing regimes.
- A37.** Support proposals for reversion of cultivated land, improved grassland or plantation woodland that will result in restoration of historic downland or heathland.
- A38.** Support proposals which minimise damage to archaeological earthworks from agriculture, recreational activity, forestry or rabbits, and improve settings of earthworks where necessary.
- A39.** Promote the retention of significant field patterns.
- A41.** Ensure that woodland and forestry planting and management conserves historic landscape character and does not damage archaeological features.
- A42.** Support the re-introduction of traditional management of woodland where appropriate.
- A57.** Facilitate pedestrian access to all HEAP Areas and HEAP Types.
- L8.** Encourage field survey of historic quarries and pits.