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View of the village and parish from Fore Down

Shorwell Parish Landscape Character Assessment

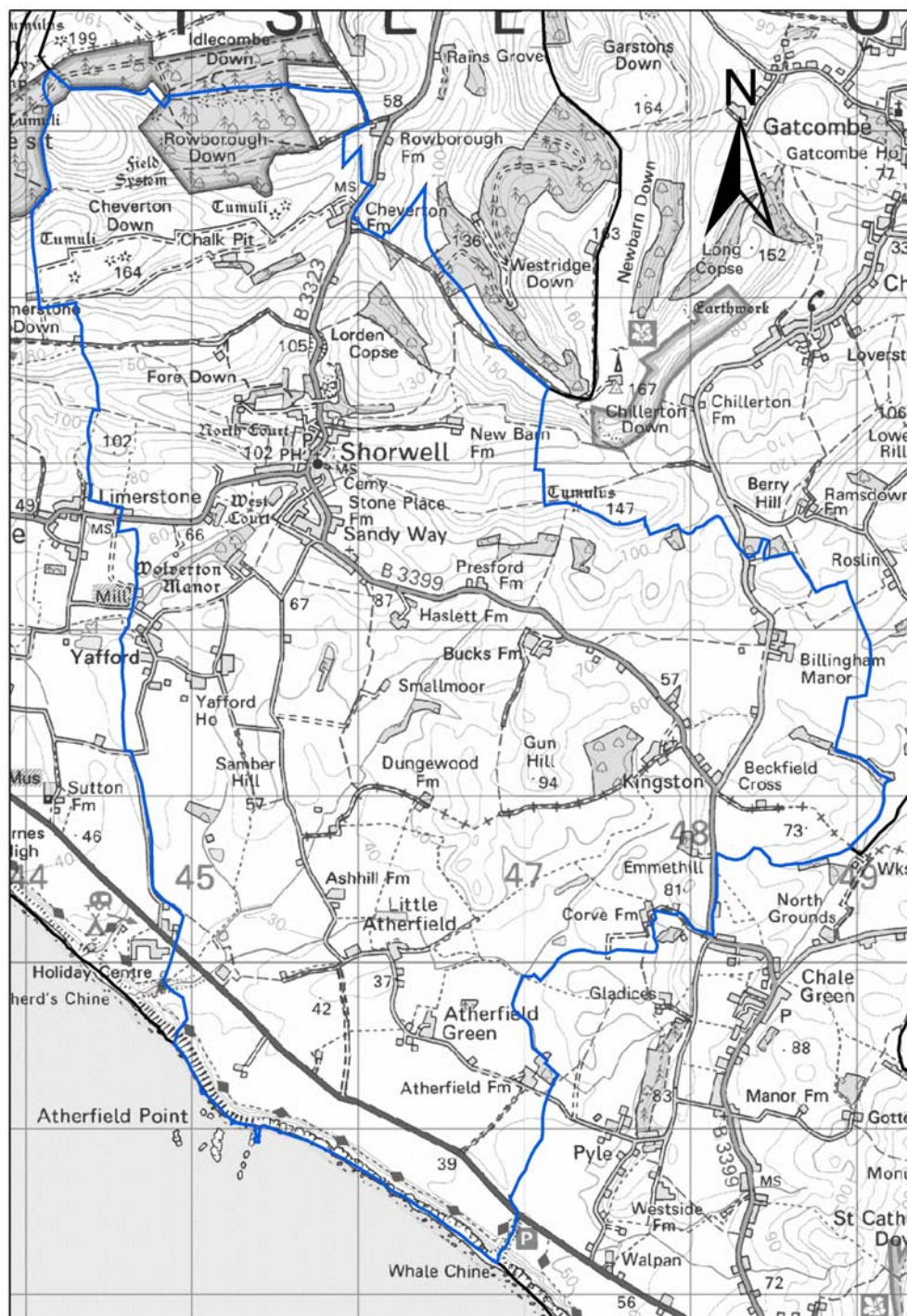
1 The Parish of Shorwell in the Isle of Wight

The Parish of Shorwell is situated in the south-west of the County of the Isle of Wight. It runs from Rowborough Down in the north, to Whale Chine in the south, from Limerstone and Yafford in the west to Billingham in the east. A Parish of contrasts with open rolling downland, wet meadows and pasture, expansive flat arable fields, copses and woodlands, an eroding coastline, and many fine historic buildings. Surviving relatively unscathed from some less sympathetic development of the twentieth century, the parish can be described as quintessentially English, retaining many traditional characteristics of a rural area. This relative constancy belies the fact that, as with all places, Shorwell Parish has seen many changes through the years, with each generation leaving its own mark. The beauty of this special place was first formally recognised by the nation when the whole of the Parish of Shorwell was included in the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designation in 1963.

The scenic quality of today's landscape is a result of how the people of this beautiful place have earned their living and forged their lives throughout history up to the present day; a blanket of diverse landscapes are a direct result of land use dictated by an underlying complex geology. In order to better know where we are today and to guide us in our decisions for the future, we need to have a better understanding of this important landscape story. By reading the landscape narrative left by our forebears and being aware of the language they used, we can ensure that when we ourselves come to write our story of place, we complement this long saga and leave for future generations a continuing rich, interesting and inspiring tale.

The landscape of the parish of Shorwell can be better appreciated by recognising the importance of the relationship between people and place through time. This leads to a realisation that landscape is more than just scenery, and natural beauty encompasses many different things, both natural and as a result of human intervention. Landscapes are perceptual, possessing various meanings for people. They are often a source of inspiration, relaxation and solace to both local people and to visitors. Places and the sights, smells and sounds associated with them can often evoke personal responses, triggering memories. All these factors are part of the 'story of place'.

Map 1 – Shorwell Parish



2. Landscape Character Assessment –

The technique often used to try and quantify these complexities and assist us to understand the ‘story of place’ is called Landscape Character Assessment¹. The methodology recommended by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage seeks to identify the key features and special characteristics of an area that give it its distinctive qualities, and to involve communities in describing and assessing what is valued in their area.

The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership promotes the use of Landscape Character Assessment within approaches to community planning. As a result of a presentation given at a Rural Community Council Seminar on Parish Planning in early 2004, the AONB Unit was pleased to be asked by the Shorwell Parish Plan Co-ordinating Group to help in the Parish Plan process by taking part in an environmental work group charged with describing the special character of Shorwell. A specific request was made to include a local Landscape Character Assessment to complement the Parish Plan process. The Environmental Working Group was convened from interested members of the local community, many of whom had a great wealth of existing knowledge about the parish, its environment and history. This paper provides a summary of this detailed and extensive work and then uses this information to identify geographical areas within the parish that share common characteristics as part of the Landscape Character Assessment process.



View of Shorwell village from Ladylands.

¹ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England & Scotland. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage CAX 84 2002

3. Defining the Elements of the Landscape

3.1 The Natural Environment of Shorwell Parish

The geology and topography (landform) of the area are the building blocks of the landscape of the Parish of Shorwell. The type of soils and underlying rocks, the slope and aspect of the land, and access to water have all contributed to settlement pattern and land use through the ages and to the present day. How people have chosen to use these physical elements of landscape has had a direct impact upon native plants and animals by providing opportunities for, and threats to, their habitats.

3.1.1 Geology

The table below lists the principal geological rock types within the area –

Rock Type	Formed	Area (hectares) in Parish
Upper Chalk	90 – 80 Million years ago	234.7
Lower Chalk		229.5
Upper Greensand	100 Million years ago	115.5
Gault	110 Million years ago	54.6
Lower Greensand	120 Million years ago	1287.6
Wealden	140-125 Million years ago	19.6

The oldest rocks within the parish are the red, green and grey freshwater sands and clays of the Wealden. Laid down in shallow swamps and river beds, these rocks contain many plant remains, pine logs and fossilized dinosaur footprints. At the end of this geological period the sea level across the world gradually started to rise, causing swamps and rivers to be flooded by a shallow sea. It was in this environment that the fossil rich Lower Greensand was deposited. When eroded the Lower Greensand provides some of the best soils on the Island for cultivation. Gault, again rich in fossil remains, is a soft grey mudstone which weathers to a sticky clay. Its position in the geological sequence on the Island has resulted in the dramatic landslides that can be seen in other locations such as the Undercliff. The gradual deepening of the shallow seas led to the formation of Upper Greensand consisting of shelly sands and glauconite, a green mineral deposit. Layers of a hard silica deposit known as ‘Chert’ are often also found within this rock type. The deepening of the sea then led to less deposition of sand and mud with an increase in small remains of calcium rich microscopic fragments of shelly parts of tiny algae; these formed tiny spheres which in turn created the Lower and Upper Chalk. This rock sequence was folded into a monocline around 30 million years ago at the time of the formation of the Alps. The Upper Greensand and Chalk in the vertical limb of the fold gave rise to the chalk downs and sandstone hills within the parish with the older rocks forming the coastal plain towards the sea.



Stone Place

3.1.2 Topography

There are a number of distinct landforms within the parish which contribute to its overall landscape. The most dominate of these - running approximately on an east-west axis and offering a backdrop to much of the area are the chalk downs (Cheverton Down, Gallibury Fields, Rowborough Down, Fore Down, Renham Down & Northcourt Down). The highest point above sea level in the parish being near to Gallibury Hump close to Gallibury Fields is in the north-west at 200 metres above sea level. (SZ442854)

To the north of the chalk downs the landscape opens into the Bowcombe Valley. To the south of the chalk downs after a significant dry valley or combe there are a series of sandstone hills, again on an east-west axis with an extending southern promontory towards Little Atherfield at Warren Hill and Gun Hill. These hills range from 134 metres above sea level at Gore through to 65 metres at Little Atherfield. In the west of the parish they feel more enclosed due to the close proximity of the downland to the north. The further east you travel the more exposed and open the hills become, especially at Gore and Warren Hill. Further south and to the east and west of the sandstone hill promontory lie the flat open coastal plains which lead out towards the coastline and the cliffs above the beach, ranging from 65 metres above sea level at Little Atherfield through to 20 to 30 metres above sea level along the cliff top.

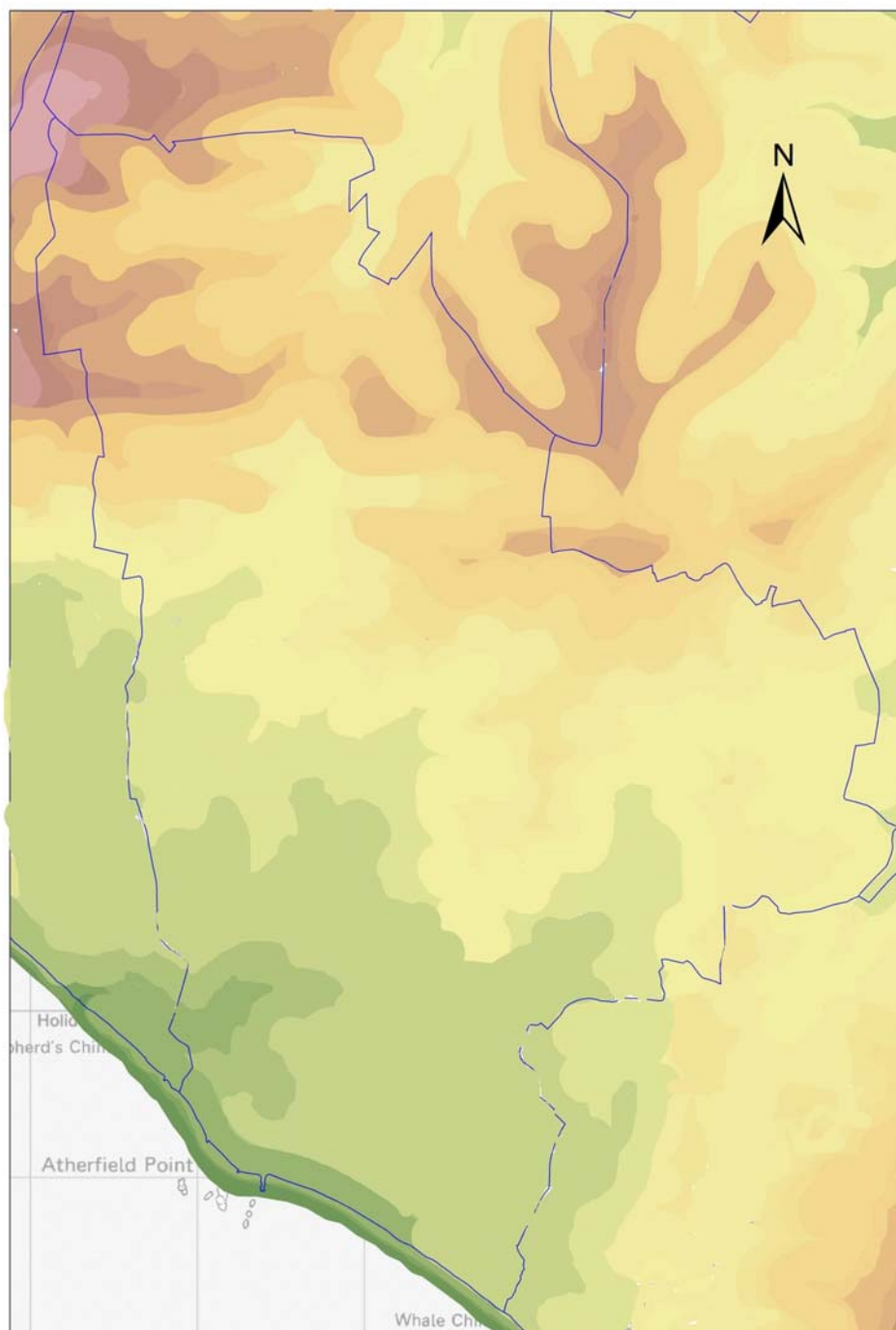
Finally, the two deeply incised coastal features at Whale Chine and Shepherd's Chine mark the parish boundary to the south-east and south-west respectively. 'Chines' are an important geological feature, they are steep sided valleys where water flows have cut through clays and sandstones and left a channel in coastal cliffs to reach the sea. These naturally incised water-courses continue to provide important access points to the seashore and beach in areas of high and steep cliffs.



Cheverton chalk quarry from the Worsley Trail, Fore Down

Map 3 – Topography of Shorwell Parish

(Diagrammatic representation based on contour data, height in descending order: pink, brown, orange, yellow, light green, mid green, dark green.).



3.1.3 Watersources (Hydrology)

Water and its use have always been an important factor in the settlement and land use of the parish. Water, features in many of the place names of the area - indeed Shorwell itself is thought to derive from ‘the spring or stream by the steep slope’.² Acting as a natural water storage area or aquifer the chalk downs filter rainfall; which then occurs as natural springs at the base of the downs or in other low-lying areas in the Greensand formations. Many natural springs flow into wetland areas, ponds and withybeds, wending their way towards the coast. The Shorwell Stream rises in Northcourt and divides at the Crown Inn into the old mill race for Poplyngs Mill and then re-uniting with the main stream continuing through the parish via Yafford to Grange Chine at Brighstone, the Atherfield Brook towards Shepherd’s Chine, a spring near Billingham makes it way eastwards into the River Medina which flows north to the Solent, and a small water course runs through Whale Chine. The Environment Agency’s Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)³ provides an overview of the resource seeking to–

- Provide reliable supplies of water for the public
- Protect rivers and wetland areas from the effects of unsustainable abstraction
- Share water between conflicting demands in the face of changes in legislation and climate.

The CAMS describes the surface and ground water conditions of the Shorwell Stream and Atherfield Brook



Shorwell Stream –
a) in the grounds of the Crown Inn



b) at the Moor



Atherfield Brook -
a) in farmland



b) at Shepherd’s Chine

Watercourse	Surface/Ground Water	Assessment
Shorwell Stream	Surface Water	Water available
Shorwell Stream	Ground Water	Over abstracted
Atherfield Brook	Surface Water	Over abstracted
Atherfield Brook	Ground Water	Over licensed

The main reason for the above assessment is the intensive use of the area for agricultural activities and the need for water storage and irrigation for arable crops.

² The Place Names of the Isle of Wight – AD Mills 1996

³ CAMS

Wells & Pumps



Well in the garden at Northcourt

Wells are the historic means by which people gained access to clean water and around which settlements were built. The following table identifies those found during this study:

Settlement	Location (No. of sites)
Atherfield	Atherfield Farm (1)
Billingham	Billingham Cottage (1), Billingham Manor (1)
Rancombe	Site of former house (1 abandoned)
Cheverton	Cheverton Farm (1)
Shorwell	Northcourt (2), Old Vicarage (2 abandoned), Stone Place Farm (2 covered), Stone Place Cottage (1 abandoned), Elm Cottage (1 abandoned), Camp Field (1 abandoned), Fine Lane back of gardens (1 abandoned), Green near New Barn Lane (1 covered with non operational pump), Longhill (1 abandoned)
Yafford	Shirley's Farm (1), The Meadows (1)

Issues

Issues are where the water source is an emission from an agricultural drain, or where a stream re-emerges from underground. The following table identifies those found during this study:

Settlement	Location (No. of sites)
Atherfield	Dungewood Withybed (1), East of Atherfield Green Farm (1), North of Atherfield Farm (1)
Billingham	Billingham area (2), West of Berry Copse (1), East of Little Billingham Farm (1), South of Billingham Manor (1)
Kingston	Kingston Copse (1), North of Kingston Manor (1), North of Emmett Hill House (1), South of Kingston Farm (2), North of Kingston Manor (1), East of Warren Hill (2)
Shorwell	Westcourt Farm (1), Recreation Ground (3), Smallmoor (1)
Yafford	North of Yafford Farm (1), South of the Meadows (1), Shepherds Chine (1), South of Yafford at Chine Lane (1)

Drains

Drains and ditches are water channels, either natural or artificial, which drain waterlogged ground into the nearest water body or stream. The following table identifies those found during this study:

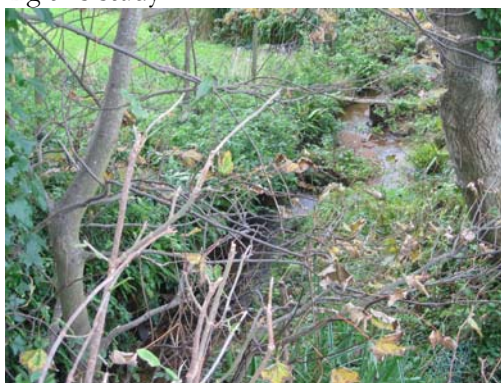


Ditch near Kingston

Settlement	Location (No. of sites)
Atherfield	Atherfield Farm (1), Little Atherfield Farm (3)
Kingston	North of Kingston Copse (1), South of Warren Hill (2), East of Warren Hill (1)
Shorwell	Between Westcourt Farm, Troopers and the back of Fine Lane (7), Back of Stone Place Farm (1), Sewage Works (1)
Yafford	West of the Meadows (1), Leycroft Rew into reservoir (1), Compton Fields (1)

Mills

Mills make use of the power of water, diverting a channel of the stream over or under a water wheel and then re-uniting it with the main stream. Mill dams were sometimes created upstream to provide continuity of water for the Mill, as at Yafford Mill. The following table identifies those found during this study:



Mill Race at Poplyngs Mill

Settlement	Location
Shorwell	Poplyngs Mill (demolished). A nearby cottage bears this name, although it was previously called 'Poplars Cottage' ⁴
Yafford	Yafford Mill

⁴ 1901 Census

Sluices

Sluices are provided to control water flow and maintain water levels on streams. The following table identifies those found during this study:

Settlement	Location (No. of sites)
Atherfield	Shepherd's Chine
Kingston	Below Kingston Manor Farm
Shorwell	Back of the Crown Inn, Troopers
Yafford	Yafford Mill (2)

Withybeds

Withybeds occur in wet areas around streams and ponds. They tend to contain Alder and Willow species where it is wet and Hazel where the ground conditions are drier. Trees were coppiced on a seven year rotation, Willows being used for basket making including Lobster and Crab pots, Alder for firewood and Hazel for fencing. The following table identifies those found during this study:



Withybeds
a) Troopers



b) Westcourt

Settlement	Withybed	Copse
Billingham		Beckfield Cross
Kingston	Home Place	Kingston
Shorwell	Cooper, Cranmoor, Dungewood, Grove, Haslett, Smallmoor, Troopers, behind the School	
Yafford	Samber Hill	Butts

Collects

Collects are where the source of water is a bog or marsh. The following table identifies those found during this study:

Settlement	Location (No. of sites)
Shorwell	Dungewood Withybed (1), north of Westcourt Farm (1), around Troopers (2), around the reservoir near to the sewage works (1)
Yafford	Samber Hill Withybed (1)

Sinks

Sinks occur where streams suddenly disappear underground. The following table identifies those found during this study:

Settlement	Location (No. of sites)
Billingham	Berry Shute (1)
Shorwell	Recreation Ground (2)
Yafford	Shirley's Farm area (1)

Ponds

Ponds are fed by springs and natural drainage and were used to provide drinking water for livestock. Dew ponds are found at the top of hills and downs and are created by lining a dug out area with a clay base (also known as puddling) so as to retain water. The following table identifies those found during this study:



Ponds
a) Long Pond Yafford



b) Dew pond on Renham Down

Settlement	Ponds	Dew Ponds
Atherfield	Little Atherfield	
Kingston	Corve Farm area, Kingston, Kingston Copse	
Shorwell	Dungewood, Westcourt (2)	West of Shorwell, Fore Down, Renham Down, Gore (above Stone Place Farm)
Yafford	Long Pond, Samber Hill, Shirley's Pond, Yafford Pond	

Reservoirs

Reservoirs within the Parish are all privately owned, and have been created to collect and store water in response to the requirements for the intensive agricultural cultivation of farmland. The following table identifies those found during this study:



Reservoir near Atherfield

Settlement	Location
Atherfield	Above Shepherd's Chine, Atherfield Farm, Atherfield Green Farm, Little Atherfield
Billingham	North of Billingham Manor (covered disused)
Kingston	Kingston (near to Corve Farm)
Shorwell	Haslett's, Westcourt (near sewage works)
Yafford	Leycroft Rew, New Wolverton Farm

Moats

Moats were historically created as a form of protection and defence around significant houses. The Moat at Wolverton Manor Shorwell surrounded a former manor house and is drainage fed.



Moat at Wolverton

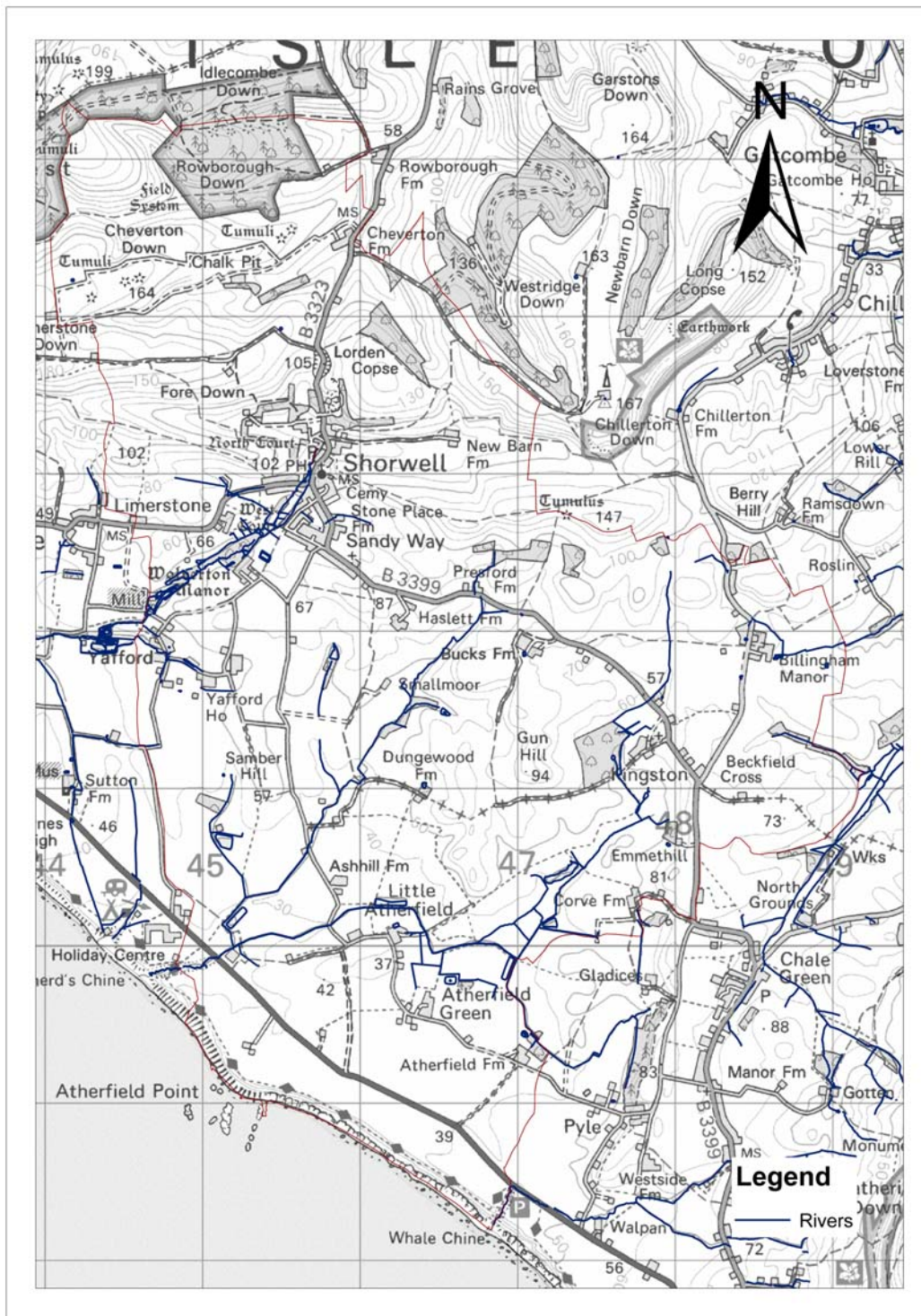
Chines

Chines are steep-sided valleys incised into the cliffs along the seashore, where streams flow through the land to the sea. There are two within the Parish that demarcate its boundaries at Shepherd's Chine and Whale Chine.



Whale Chine

Map 4 – Main Watercourses in Shorwell Parish



3.2.1 Wildlife & Nature Conservation

The tapestry of landscapes and the variety of land use within the Parish of Shorwell have created a range of habitats for wildlife.

The most valuable habitats within the parish are the maritime cliffs and their associated habitats, calcareous (chalk) grassland, woodland and farmland. The value of these areas is reflected in the extent of nature conservation designations within the parish.

The whole coastline of the Parish of Shorwell falls within the Tennyson Heritage Coast and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), both of which are national recognitions of the special character and importance of the area. In addition the cliffs, shore and offshore maritime environment is part of the South Wight Special Conservation Area (SAC), a European designation recognising the significance of this beautiful coastline. Inland, many of the copses and small woodlands are local recognised as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) because of their wildlife; they are particularly important for their woodland flora and in some cases as a habitat for the Red Squirrel. All of the Ancient Woodlands (areas having been continuously wooded for at least 400 years) within the parish are also SINC. There are also areas designated as SINC for their grassland communities, particularly calcareous grassland (chalk grassland) and its species-rich flora - including Early Gentian, Quaking Grass, Yellow-Wort, and Horseshoe Vetch and rare and common butterflies - including Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue, and Grizzled Skipper. Yet other areas have been designated SINC for their relic heathland, largely on Greensand; while Wolverton Marsh constitutes a SINC owing to its species-rich marshy grassland with many flowering plants – including Southern Marsh Orchid, Ragged Robin, and Marsh Cinquefoil -and has been known to be the haunt of Reed and Sedge Warblers.

The farmland within the parish is also important for wildlife. Hedgerows act as important connecting corridors for blocks of woodland and as a refuge from open intensively-farmed arable land for many bird species. They are an important habitat for small mammals such as the Dormouse, Red Squirrel and for Bat species, and their edges can be an important habitat for other flowering plants which attract invertebrates. Headlands, field edges, and ditches are also important habitats for species acting as a refuge from the more barren cultivated land. However, cultivation of arable areas can also allow rare arable plants to flourish, providing habitats for invertebrate species which in turn are the food source for farmland birds given space free from herbicide spray and field crops. Unimproved grassland and improved pasture are also an important part of the farming mosaic and provide habitats for over-wintering birds such as the Lapwing, as well as mammals such as the Brown Hare.



View of fields close to Smallmoor

Compiled by members of the Environmental Working Group: A list of wildlife species known and seen in the parish

Birds

Habitat	Arrive Spring, leave Autumn	Arrive Autumn, leave Spring	All year
Downland <i>North of Shorwell village to the Parish boundary</i>	Swift, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Skylark, Whitethroat, Yellowhammer, Cuckoo	Fieldfare, Meadow Pipit, Brambling	Rook, Crow, Jackdaw, Raven, Buzzard, Jay, Magpie, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, Lapwing
Heath <i>North-east of the Parish</i>	Nightjar, Linnet	Fieldfare	Rook, Crow, Jackdaw, Raven, Jay, Magpie, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon
Wetlands <i>Shorwell village, the Moor, Westcourt, Yafford</i>	Reed Bunting, Reed Warbler, Whitethroat, Cuckoo, Chiffchaff, Blackcap	Fieldfare, Pochard & Tufted Duck, Egret, Redpoll	Grey Heron, Mallard, Coot, Moorhen, Canada Goose, Pied Wagtail, Water Rail
Dry Valleys <i>Village, New Barn, Northcourt and Downclose</i>	Swift, Swallow, House Martin, Chiffchaff, Cuckoo, Spotted Flycatcher	Fieldfare, Redwing	Blackbird, Song & Mistle Thrush, Rook, Crow, Magpie, Raven, Jackdaw, Jay, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine falcon, Lapwing, Hedge and Field Sparrow, Great & Blue Tit, Finch (Gold, Green, Chaff & Bull), Green & Great Spotted Woodpecker, Pigeon, Collared Dove, Robin, Wren, Pied Wagtail.
Copses & Woodlands	Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Cuckoo	Fieldfare, Redwing	Tree-creeper, Green & Great Spotted Woodpecker, Long-eared Owl
Flatlands <i>Kingston, Atherfield,</i>	Skylark (Samber Hill), Lapwing, Meadow Pipit,	Fieldfare, Short-eared owl,	Blackbird, Thrush, Rook,

<i>Yafford (part)</i>	Gulls (Blackheaded, Common, Herring, Mediterranean)	Lapwing, Pochard and Tufted Ducks	Crow, Magpie, Raven, Jackdaw, Jay, Buzzard, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon, Owl (Barn & Little), Sparrow (Hedge & House), Tit (Great & Blue), Finch (Gold, Green, Chaff & Bull), Green & Great Spotted Woodpecker, Pigeon, Collared Dove, Robin, Wren, Pied Wagtail, Grey Partridge
Chines <i>Whale and Shepherd's</i>		Stonechat, Redwing	Blackbird, Hedge Sparrow, Robin, Jackdaw
Coastal Area			Feral Pigeon, Jackdaw, Peregrine Falcon (possibly)

Other birds sighted passing through the parish:

Flying north in the Spring – Wheatear, Redstart, Ring Ouzel.

Flying south in the Autumn – Wheatear, Redstart, Ring Ouzel.



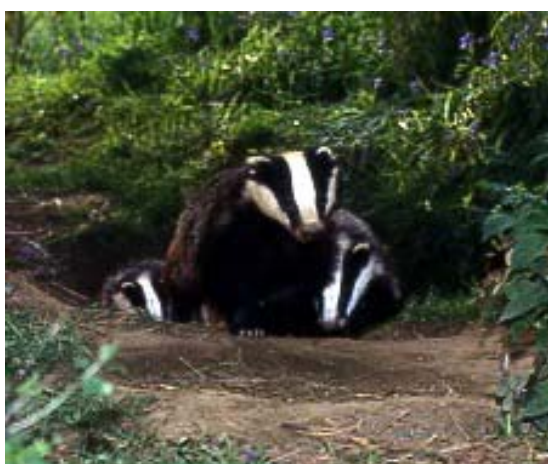
Little Owl



Sparrowhawk female

Mammals and Reptiles

Habitat	Species
Downland <i>North of Shorwell village to the Parish boundary</i>	Badger, Fox, Stoat, Weasel, Hare, Rabbit, Adder
Heath <i>North-east of the Parish</i>	Badger, Fox, Stoat, Weasel, Red Squirrel, Adder
Wetlands <i>Shorwell village, the Moor, Westcourt, Yafford</i>	Badger, Fox, Grass Snake
Dry Valleys <i>Village, New Barn, Northcourt and Downclose</i>	Badger, Fox, Stoat, Weasel, Dormouse, Adder
Copses & Woodlands	Badger, Fox, Stoat, Weasel
Flatlands <i>Kingston, Atherfield, Yafford (part)</i>	Badger, Fox, Stoat, Weasel, Hare
Chines <i>Whale and Shepherd's</i>	Rabbit
Coastal Area	Badger, Fox



Badger & cubs



Adder



Red Squirrel



Brown Hare

Wild Flowers & Butterflies

Habitat	Species
Downland <i>North of Shorwell village to the Parish boundary</i>	Cowslip, Foxglove, Rosebay Willowherb, Orchid (Bee & Pyramid) Brimstone, Common Blue, Speckled White, Marbled White, & Clouded Yellow Butterfly
Heath <i>North-east of the Parish</i>	Cowslip, Foxglove, Rosebay Willowherb, Orchid (Bee & Pyramid) Brimstone, Common Blue, Speckled White, & Clouded Yellow Butterfly
Dry Valleys <i>Village, New Barn, Northcourt and Downclose</i>	Painted Lady, Peacock, Red Admiral, & Clouded Yellow Butterfly
Wetlands <i>Shorwell village, the Moor, Westcourt, Yafford</i>	Wild Daffodil, Primrose, Marsh Marigold, Common Spotted Orchid
Hedge and Bank	Primrose, Oxlip, Celandine
Flatlands <i>Kingston, Atherfield, Yafford (part)</i>	Painted Lady, Red Admiral, & Clouded Yellow Butterfly
Copses & Woodlands	Primrose, Bluebell & Ramson
Coastal Area	Thrift Glanville Fritillary, Marbled White, & Clouded Yellow Butterfly

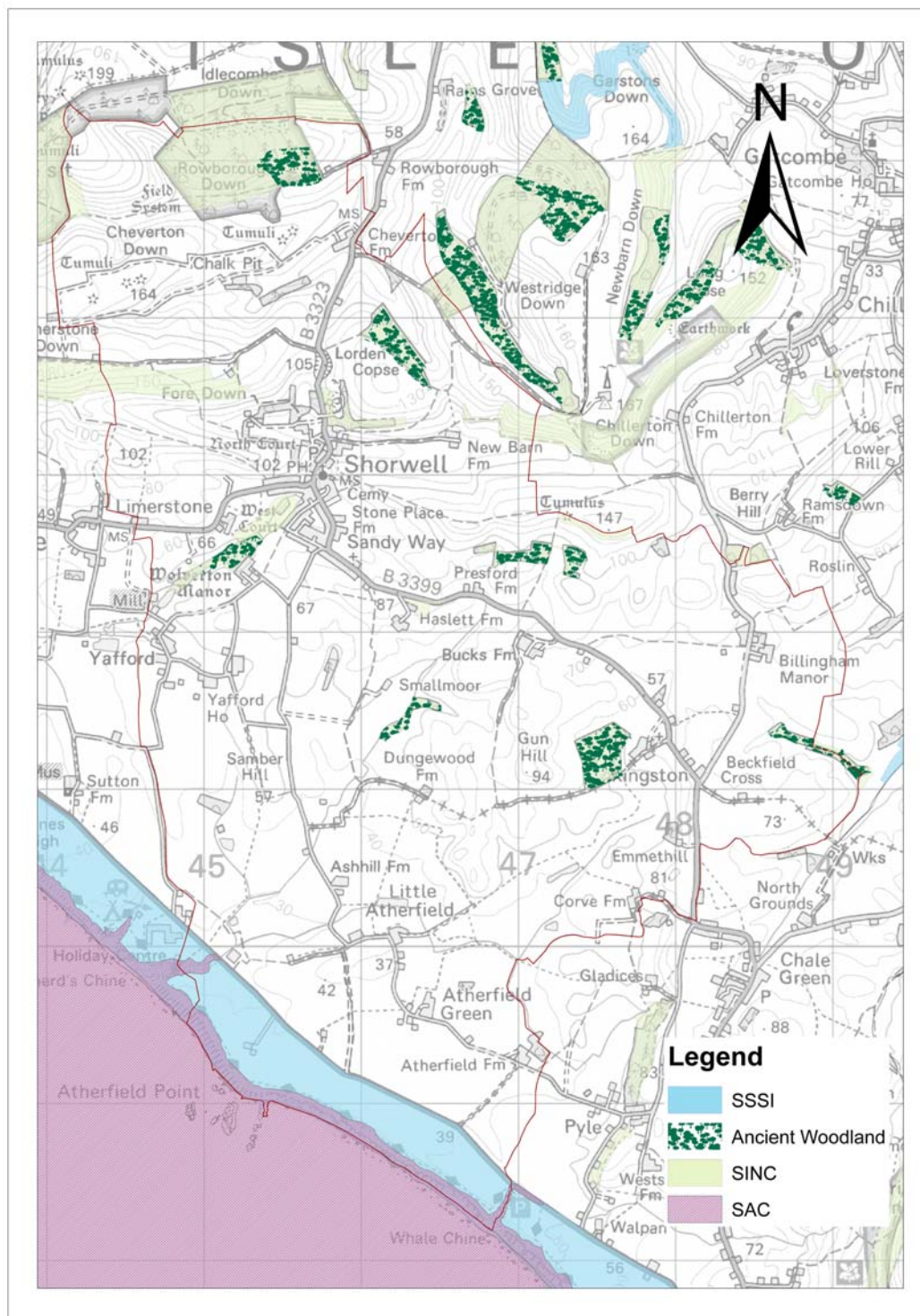


Common Blue



Glanville Fritillary

Map 5 - Nature Conservation & Ancient Woodland in Shorwell



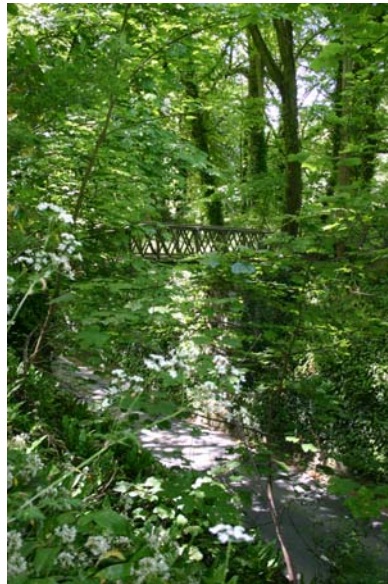
3.3 - The Historic Environment of Shorwell Parish

3.3.1 – Settlement & Buildings

Shorwell is a spring-line village which lies beneath the central chalk downland ridge which traversing the centre of the Island from east to west. This location provided water, fuel, food and shelter to early settlers and is mirrored by other spring-line villages which occur to the west of Shorwell (Limerstone, Brighstone, Hulverstone, Mottistone and Brook). The parish runs from north to south providing downland for grazing, with rolling hills leading to lower flatter land for arable crops and winter protection for stock as well as access to the coast for fishing.

The settlement pattern of the main village is broadly linear, with historic buildings flanking the main road through the village and the tracks which accessed to the historic Manor houses of Northcourt, Westcourt and Wolverton. As late as 1881, Shorwell retained its historic village settlement pattern with the properties at Sandy Way being shown as a separate hamlet⁵. In 1900 the village consisted of the Church of St Peter, a Methodist Chapel, three Manor houses, some twenty dwellings, two pubs (The Crown and Five Bells), two smithies, a post office, shop and school. The majority of the development in Shorwell village took place after 1945 although some infill development did occur between 1900 and 1945. The post-war expansion of the village included the opening up of Russell Road and the development of houses to the west of Farriers Way. Council-owned houses were built in Fine Lane (formerly known as School Lane), and on the east side of Russell Road. Private development, predominantly of bungalow design, took place along the west side of Russell Road and Farriers Way. Further infill development occurred in Sandy Way. The result of this development has been a change in character from linear to nucleated settlement for the village of Shorwell. Development in the 1980s consisted of a number of cul-de-sac constructions such as Northcourt Close, Paddock Close, Westcourt and Starks Close. A new housing association development south of New Barn Lane has now resulted in approximately 200 dwellings in the village.

Outlying hamlets are more dispersed with development being close to farmsteads. Kingston Manor with its church and associated lands was originally parished in its own right and latterly was taken into the Parish of Shorwell. Yafford is the largest of the outlying communities with much 19th and 20th Century development.



Footbridge over Shorwell Shute

⁵ 1881 Census

Historic Buildings: A Brief Summary

The statutory record of Listed Buildings in Shorwell, held in the Isle of Wight Council's Planning Unit, amounts to just under sixty buildings. These are all Grade II listed, with two exceptions: St Peter's Church and Wolverton Manor, which are both Grade I. In addition, the County Archaeological Centre holds records of 145 buildings in the parish shown on the Tithe Maps of c.1840, which include many of these officially listed buildings but many more which are not listed but are, nevertheless, also of great historic interest.

Thus, Wolverton Manor has two farm buildings, three cottages, a granary, a barn and a cart shed, some of which are Grade II listed, in addition to the Grade I listed manor house itself. The manor is late 16th century, built by Sir John Dingley and completed in the reign of James I, with 18th century alterations. Its cellar has a probable smuggler's hide which has been plastered over. Wolverton was one of the original Domesday Manors, and replaced an earlier moated dwelling to the north.

A similar pattern is repeated for each of the large manor and farmhouses in the parish: a Grade II listing for the main house and perhaps one or two subsidiary buildings, whilst the remainder get a mention in the tithe maps. Thus Westcourt, part of which is said to date from c.1500, is Grade II, and has in addition a barn, cowshed, cart shed and dairy.

Northcourt, begun by Sir John Leigh in 1615 and completed in 1629 by his son Barnaby Leigh, has a former brewhouse and bakehouse attached, together with Grade II listed stables, garden wall and bath house. The house remained with the Leigh family until 1795 when it passed to Richard Bull MP. He and his daughter Elizabeth both 'had an enthusiasm for landscape gardening' and during their time at Northcourt they built a mausoleum, conservatory, dairy, an alpine bridge across the Shute (replaced/rebuilt in the 1970s), a Temple of the Sun (at Mount Ararat, shown on the 1862 map and the location of which can still be seen today as a mound of earth), and a rustic summer house (at The Dell) complete with bone floor. In the 19th century Northcourt came into the possession of General Sir James Willoughby Gordon who fought under Wellington in the Peninsular Wars. Algernon Swinburne was a cousin of Mary Gordon and wrote much of his epic poem "Atalanta in Calydon" in the library. It is said that he recited the following lines as he and Mary were riding their horses back to Shorwell from Newport in February 1864:

*When the bounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain,
Fills the shadows or windy places,
With lisp of leaves and the ripple of rain.*

Swinburne: Atalanta in Calydon (1865)

Sir Edwin Lutyens was responsible for alterations and additions to Northcourt in 1905.

The following houses and farms are all Grade II listed, with accompanying buildings of historic interest: Kingston Manor, Billingham Manor, Atherfield Farmhouse and Stone Place Farm, all dating to the 17th century; and Cheverton Farmhouse and Little Billingham Farmhouse, both dated to the 18th century.

Kingston Manor stands on the site of an earlier, 13th century building, and is one of the original Domesday Manors of the Isle of Wight forfeited by Roger de Breteuil to the king after his rebellion in 1085, and later held by the de Kingstons and Meuxs. The library has an elaborate carved overmantel of c.1685, with a central panel of the Meux coat of arms and carvings of warlike accoutrements including surrounds, spears and drums similar to the overmantel at Merston Manor. The redundant Church of St James at Kingston is 13th century in origin, and was originally the private chapel of the de Kingston family of Kingston Manor.

Despite its name, Billingham Manor was, by contrast, never a manor house. The west front dates to 1631 but the house was largely remodelled c.1729, when it passed to Edward Worsley, son of Sir Edward Worsley of Gatcombe House.

Atherfield Farmhouse, though probably 17th century in origin, stands on the site of an original Domesday Manor. Stone Place, officially listed as 17th century, may well be older. Now a house, but formerly a farmhouse and cart shed, it was built of Isle of Wight stone rubble by the Puckford family, and there are several extant wills for this Shorwell family dating to the 16th century. In addition to these, several other farms and farm buildings which are not formally listed have great historic interest, including- Atherfield Green, Little Atherfield, Home Farm Atherfield, Newbarn, Haslett, Yafford, Dungewood, West Billingham, Kingston, Bucks and Presford farms.

Other listed buildings include the Crown Inn, dating from the late 18th or early 19th centuries, with early 19th century matchboarded panelling; Yafford Mill, including its 18th century mill house; and Poplyngs Mill, dated 1864 and built in the Northcourt estate style. There are approximately another 23 houses and cottages round the parish, some dating to the early 17th century, which have received Grade II listing, whilst many more appear in the Historic Buildings Record already mentioned.

Finally, special mention must be made of the Village Pound in Walkers Lane, built in the early 19th century with stone walls to a height of about five feet, and restored in 1951.



Northcourt Manor

The Church of St Peter



Church of St Peter Shorwell

An earlier chapel was built in 1100 on this site and used by family and tenants of the Manor of Northcourt. The chapel was itself owned by Laycock Abbey in Wiltshire, which paid a yearly pension of twenty shillings to the Benedictine priory of Carisbrooke, in whose parish the chapel stood. There exists an agreement dated 1205 from the Carisbrooke Chartulary between Walter de Insula (later Walter de Lisle) and the Prior of Carisbrooke, from which it is evident that two priests ministered at Shorwell (as at Shalfleet), a rector appointed by de Insula and a vicar appointed by the Abbey.

The Church was rebuilt in the early English style in approximately 1200, presumably by Walter de Insula. In 1265 Amicia, Countess of Devon and widow of Earl Baldwin de Redvers, granted the nearby Manor to the nunnery of Laycock in Wiltshire in, whose possession it remained until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536. Shorwell attained full parochial status from Carisbrooke in the mid 14th century. St Peter's Church was completely remodelled in 1440 when the tower was added. The north chapel of St Peter's dates from the 12th century, otherwise the church is mainly 15th century with later additions. It is particularly noted for its c.1440 wall painting of scenes from the life of St Christopher, with a central figure of the saint wading through the water amongst ships and fishes, and carrying the Christ Child on his shoulder. It also possesses three fine monuments to the Leigh family of Northcourt, while the south aisle chapel has a piscina with a square drum, and an early Dutch Renaissance carved panel of the Flagellation of Christ.

Shorwell Church was amongst those fortified with cannon by Henry VIII, the gun being housed in the vestry. The interior of the church is somewhat sombre with much dark wood. It appears to have three naves, and a magnificently carved roof beam in the chancel.

The de Lisles had a close connection with the Church until the Manor of Northcourt passed to Sir John Leigh, who built the stone spire and weathercock dated 1617 some two years after he had rebuilt Northcourt.

The Methodist Chapel

In **1860** Henry Stark Morris bought Presford Farm and paid at his own expense £200 for a chapel to be built on a plot of land on Sandy Way. The stain glass windows and attractive christening vessel are thought to both be from this time. A caretaker's cottage was built at the same time as the chapel, and its first occupant was his son Henry Morgan Morris. He was charged with caring for the chapel and offering hospitality to visiting preachers. He was also known for leading the hymn singing with the aid of his flute.

In **1867** a group of Newport businessmen bought the Chapel from Mr Morris for £100 and made it the legal property of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. On Henry senior's death, the piece of land adjoining the chapel was bought from his estate and the Schoolroom was built at a cost of £10. The chapel was enlarged in **1880**.

Singing in the chapel was lead by a harmonium and then an American organ, until **1893** when a new organ was purchased at a cost of £25. This was then replaced eight years later by the present organ, which originally came from the private chapel of the Simeon family of Swainstone via Arreton. The cost for this was £20 with a further 10/ for the re-gilding of the pipes.

During the First World War the troops stationed in the field to the rear of the Chapel were invited to use the Schoolroom as a rest and recreation centre. In **1951** the deeds of the cottage were given to the chapel trustees on condition that a £5 per annum payment was made to the Methodist Missionary Society. **1960** saw the centenary celebrations. In **1988** inmates of HM Prison Albany replaced the chapel windows, with the stain glass windows being retained. In **1995** the interior of the chapel was decorated with the old pews being replaced by comfortable chairs and a carpet laid. **2004** saw further modernisation works with the re-decoration of the Schoolroom.

Throughout its history, four local families have been prominent in the chapel: The Morris, Russell, Downer & Hollis families have all given support both financially and spiritually.



Methodist Chapel, Sandy Way, Shorwell

3.3.2 – Place Names

There are approximately 35 place-names in the Shorwell area to which we can assign readily identifiable meanings: all have been extracted from Kokeritz's classic 1940 study of Isle of Wight place-names⁶, now updated by A D Mills' more user-friendly volume⁷.

Many, but by no means all, have clear Saxon derivations, and seven are listed in the Domesday Book of 1086 (though not always in forms we would immediately recognise today): Shorwell, Atherfield, Cheverton, Dungewood, Kingston, Wolverton and Yafford.

A large number of names strongly reflect the settlement's geographical location within the landscape, together with its associated wildlife. Thus, Shorwell means quite simply 'the spring or stream by the steep slope', and Billingham 'the homestead or enclosure near to the ridge or hill'; while Cheverton refers to 'the hill or down infested with chafers or beetles', Emmethill 'the hill infested with ants', Haslett 'the valley frequented by hares', and Fore Down 'the down frequented by pigs'. Corve (farm and hill) refers to a 'cutting, gap or pass', while Sheard (copse and barrow) is likewise a 'gap, pass or cleft'. Lorden (copse) is apparently a contraction of 'Leurkedone', 'the down frequented by larks', Renham Down refers to 'the down frequented by roe-deer', while Rancombe was the valley frequented by the same animals.

Many place-names by contrast describe local family or tribal groupings. So Atherfield refers to 'the open land of the family or followers of a man called Eadhere or Aethelhere'; Dungewood 'the enclosed farmstead of Dunna's family or followers'; and Wolverton 'the farmstead or estate belonging to a man called Wulfweard'. Others take the name of the place from which an individual has moved: Compton Fields near Atherfield was so named from a family of the same name who moved there from Compton near Freshwater in the 13th century; while Cranmoor's Withybed was probably associated with John Cranemour, mentioned in Shorwell in 1400 and most likely originating from Cranmore near Shalfleet.

It is interesting to note that Northcourt was first recorded by that name only in 1608; previously it had been referred to as 'Northeshorewelle', that is, 'the north manor of Shorwell', as distinct from Westcourt which, surprisingly, was originally 'South Shorwelle' or 'the south manor of Shorwell'. The word "court" is used in both cases in the sense of 'manor house'.

Yafford's name has had a particularly interesting development to arrive at its present form, beginning with 'Heceford' in the Domesday Book, 'Egeford' in 1235, 'Ebbeforde' in 1247, and 'Yagheford' in 1408. The name means either 'the ford provided with a hatch or grating', or 'the ford by the dam-weir or sluice'.

Finally, some names pose conundrums to which there are no immediately obvious solutions. Presford (farm) appears to derive from the 'ford of the priests' - but *which* priests, crossing to where, and why? Bucks Farm, recorded in the 18th century, no doubt derives from a family called Buck, but the only reference found so far for the Kingston area is to John Bukke, rector of Kingston in the 14th century.

⁶ Kokeritz, H. *The Place-Names of the Isle of Wight* Nomina Germanica 6 (Uppsala, 1940).

⁷ Mills, A. D. *The Place-Names of the Isle of Wight* (Paul Watkins, 1996).

3.3.3 – Field Names

Many people may not today realise that fields once possessed - and in many cases still do possess - their own names. Before the advent of the 20th century, when people travelled less and were closely tied to their own locality, and many more worked on the land than today, they tended to know their home territory exceedingly well: every field would have been known intimately and almost all given a name. Local farm workers needed to know which field to be sent to for that day's work - this was doubly important in past centuries, when much of the population either could not read or did not have access to maps.

The Shorwell Tithe Map of 1844 possesses no less than 787 field-names for the whole of the parish, not including Kingston, which then had its own separate parish. These records were created when church tithes were changed from tithes in kind (corn, milk, wool, lamb and so on) to money rents paid for land, and for this purpose every field in every parish on the Island was numbered and recorded, together with its owner's/tenant's name, the name of the field, its use and area. These names can be grouped under several categories, ranging from the mundane to the highly curious - Marjorie Middleton's excellent classification of Isle of Wight field-names⁸ will be used for the purposes of this assessment. Some vary over time and may well change in relationship to ownership or farming practice, with smaller fields subsumed into larger ones. One interesting change is a field in the Yafford area listed simply as *Plantation* on the tithe map, and now known locally as *Fallick's Field*.

Among the commonest names in Shorwell are **descriptive and situational** ones, often with qualifiers added, such as *Great Middle Coombe* and *Bottom Coombe*, as well as *Upper Bottom* and *Middle Bottom Coombe*. *Slades* denotes a valley, *Slinks* a wet, deep and often gloomy area, *Butts* a small enclosed field and including *by the Potato Butt*; while *Hills*, *Swathes*, *Furze*, *Mead*, *Osier* and *Withy* are all fairly self-explanatory; and *Gore*, somewhat three-sided in shape, was what remained after the *Furlongs*, a huge field near New Barn Farm, had been laid out. In the Island, fields considered distant were often given far-away geographical names, such as *Mount Ararat* and *America* in Shorwell.

Many fields were named by **acreage**, such as *Six*, *Seven* and *Nine Acres*, whilst yet others were given a qualifier: *Hither*, *Middle* and *Further Six Acres*. There were often discrepancies between the measurements claimed: in Kingston three fields named the *South*, *East* and *West Forty Acres* only covered 35 acres in all! And interestingly, a field marked on the tithe map as *Three Acres* was recorded as "not titheable". Others were identified by their comparative **sizes**, such as *Great* and *Little park* - obviously related to manorial use, *Great Broads*, *Longlands* and *Long shards* (the latter again possibly relating to a manorial boundary).

Shape was an obvious means of identifying a field. *Square Butt* is self-explanatory; whilst a field called *Harp and Lute* in the Yafford area was definitely shaped like a harp, but so far there seems to be no explanation for the lute.

A number of fields were called by the **personal names** of former owners or tenants, and these may have continued in use over a long period. Shorwell examples include: *Dennis Combe*, *Pope's Land*, *Burts Butt*, *Frys Butt*, *Bartletts Butts*, *Clarke's Butt*, *Willetts*, *Russells Coppice*, and *Nobles Crook*. *Ladylands* and its counterparts *Little* and *Great*, were most likely connected with one of the owners of Northcourt.

⁸ Middleton, Marjorie G. 'Isle of Wight field names 1835-1848', *Isle of Wight Natural History & Archaeological Society Proceedings* 8: 23-36 (1986).

The profits or rents of various fields were often given over for the upkeep of **clergy**: *Church Acre* in Shorwell is most likely glebe land farmed by the rector or vicar for his own subsistence; and *Proxy* was a field which provided the incumbent with money to pay for the accommodation of a visiting bishop, instead of entertaining him at the rectory!

It was quite common to name a field for its good or bad **qualities**, such as *Coutbey*, denoting swampy ground which produced disease in sheep, while *Hell Ground* and *Weary Bottom* both tell their own stories. Some were designated by **colour**, which would not appear to be a very secure means of identification; these include *Green Ground*, *Little Brown's Down* and *Browns Meadow* (assuming the latter two not to be personal names). And a few names described fields best used at a particular season, as in *Summers*.

The kind of **soil** was another means of identifying a particular field. *Grittons* refers to a gritty area on sand or gravel; while *Clay Acres*, *Claylands*, *Chalks*, *Upper* and *Lower New Marl*, *Sandstone*, *Sandyway Butt* and *Sandbank* are all fairly self-explanatory.

A large number of names described the **use** to which the land was put, including: *Brick Kiln Butt*, *Blacksmiths*, *Mill Mead*, *Pump Ground*, *Weathercock*, *Hunt Moor* and *Shoot Ground*. *Malthouse Field*, obviously, adjoined the malthouse (opposite the Crown); *Little Beacons* likewise denoted the old beacon site at Atherfield. Some fields were named conveniently by **tracks and lanes** which passed alongside or across them, such as *Drove Lane* and *Kingsway* - an ancient highway still clearly marked by a hedge running from Shorwell to Kingston - which is further divided into *Big* and *Little Kingsway*.

Some fields took their names from **animals**, both wild and domesticated. Examples include: *Colthouse*, *Coney Close* (denoting rabbits) *Ducks*, *Pig Piece*, *Hogs*, *Upper* and *Lower Heron*, *Fatting Park* and *New Horse Field*. Comparatively few fields were named after insects, but *Emmets Hill Ground* (ant hill) in Kingston is one such. It is also surprising, given the amount of fishing which took place round the Island, how few references there are to fish, but *Fishes Close* in Atherfield is one rare example.

Trees and shrubs were a fairly easy method of identifying fields such as *Cherry Ground*, *Beech Fields*, *Thornfield*, *Broom Hill Coppice* and *Broombank Field*. Some fields were apparently so infested with **weeds** that they were named after them: *Hemlock Field* and *Little Hemlock*, *Thistle Close*, *Fern Close* and *Bramble Close*. Yet others were known by the **crops** grown in them, which would imply a lack of rotation: *Bean Ground*, *Barley Close*, *Potatoe(sic) Butt*, and *Little Corn Close*.

Local legend attaches to the name of *Troopers* the story of two of Cromwell's soldiers who were "lost in hasty flight" in the withybed, the implication being that they sunk in the bog up to their necks and lost their lives. Even today, despite now being a copse, the area is still extremely boggy and potentially dangerous.

All field-names would have originally been given for a good reason and had definite meanings, even though some of them have become **lost** in the mists of time. In Shorwell these include the intriguing *Pitch Pot*, *Good Robins* and not least *Great* and *Little Killy Cow*, which is further subdivided into *Lower Little Killy Cow* and *Upper Little Killy Cow*!

3.3.4 – Archaeology

What we currently know about Shorwell's archaeology presents only a partial picture of what happened in the past. With no systematic archaeological survey work having been done in the parish, there are likely to be many sites of archaeological importance which have yet to be discovered. Consequently, there is much potential for community involvement in archaeological survey and research work in the future.

Shorwell Parish has, nevertheless, yielded to date an interesting range of archaeological sites and finds, not all of them immediately obvious. All are listed in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) held at the County Archaeological Centre, and a very small number - mainly barrows - have also been scheduled as ancient monuments by the Department of National Heritage. Historic buildings are also included in the SMR, but these are dealt with under a separate heading for purposes of this assessment.

By far the oldest archaeological find to date was made in the early 1960s, right in the heart of the village, in a garden in Farriers Way. A truly amazing discovery of nearly 1,200 waste flakes and over 400 worked flint tools dating to the late Mesolithic period - roughly 4-5,000 years B.C. - indicate that our hunter-gatherer forebears used this spot as a temporary camp as they passed along the valley floor looking for water and animals to hunt.

Moving forward to the Bronze Age, most notable is the round barrow cemetery on Cheverton Down, dating no later than 1500 B.C., comprising at least seven bowl barrows (and maybe others now lost), all placed at strategic points in the landscape, and a constant reminder to Bronze Age people of the power of their buried ancestors. Two additional barrows to be found along Gore ridge are rare examples on the Island of barrows constructed on greensand, as opposed to chalk downland. We know that one of them - Sheards Barrow - contained a Bronze Age woman aged 30 to 40, and was most likely used in the Saxon period as a secondary burial (and even possibly as a boundary marker).

Iron Age and Roman antiquities in the parish have been rare, but finds have emerged in recent years from the disappearing cliff at Atherfield, including romano-British pottery and the last remnants of quite dense settlement in the area during this period.

Little evidence of Saxon burials (other than Sheard's Barrow) has survived in Shorwell, but by the Domesday period (1086) established Saxon settlements are recorded for Shorwell, Kingston, Atherfield, Cheverton, Dungewood, Wolverton, Yafford and, possibly, Billingham. Of these, Yafford, Billingham and Kingston are later referred to in the archaeological record as "deserted settlements," indicating simply that they were formerly much bigger than now, as is of course the *totally* deserted settlement of Rancombe in the more modern period. A system of beacons was in operation across the Island by the mediaeval period to warn against foreign invaders, and Shorwell had three known sites: at Atherfield Point, Lorden Down and Emmethill.

Of particular note on the northern slope of Cheverton Down is an earthwork enclosure and field system - rare for the Island - which could belong to the mediaeval period or even earlier. Such field systems were constructed as stock pens or as protected areas for crop growing, and were sometimes subdivided to provide temporary accommodation for stock, farmers or herdsmen. There is also some evidence for the classic mediaeval open field system - where everyone had their own strip - in the Atherfield area.

For the post-mediaeval period, the SMR lists an interesting range of sites and monuments, including: Yafford Water Mill; a hollow way at Corve Farm Lane; an icehouse - or possibly bath house - at Northcourt; a brickworks site at Atherfield; an early 19th century milestone on the main road; an early 19th century pound at Westcourt; and, not least, the garden and landscape park at Northcourt, which developed round the manor house built by Sir John Leigh from 1615, and which constitutes the only English Heritage registered park in the village.

To end on a sadder note, the most modern entries in the SMR for Shorwell are, regrettably, of three aircraft crash sites, two involving US warplanes which crashed in the Kingston/Billingham area in 1942 and 1944 respectively, and the other an RAF aircraft which came down in Gallibury Fields in November 1947, with loss of life.



Thatched cottages at the bottom of Shorwell Shute

3.3.5 – Historic Landscape & Land Use

The Isle of Wight Council's Archaeological and Historic Environment Service are, at the time of writing this report, in the final stages of the completion of an Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) for the whole of the Isle of Wight, undertaken by Vicky Basford. The current draft of this shows thirteen broad HLC areas across the Island within the parish of Shorwell falling into the following two categories–

Central Wight Chalk and Greensand Hills

Occurring in an area from the north of the parish southwards to the base of the Greensand Hills.

Much of the chalk downland in the parish was historically grazed and often associated with commons owned by individual manors. Originally, this chalk downland would have been forested and it is thought that clearance occurred in the Neolithic and Bronze Age period. Despite the occurrence of species-rich chalk grassland there is evidence of cultivation of downland in the form of ancient field systems and strip lynchets (Gallibury Fields). More recently, significant areas of chalk downland have been cultivated for arable crops or through the addition of fertilizers and herbicides 'improved' for grazing.

The Greensand Hills in the parish have a distinct flora due to their more acidic soils. Historically the area was important for rough grazing similar to the chalk downs but would have been a heathland environment. In the nineteenth century the Lower Greensand area around Presford was enclosed and improved, and in the twentieth century many other parts of the Greensand Hills within the parish were enclosed for grazing.

Settlement in the area is largely dispersed with some concentrations within the bottom of chalk valleys. There is evidence of quarrying activity in these areas both historically and also today, with disused quarries often creating important wildlife areas. On high ground burial mounds and other important archaeological features are evident in the landscape. Local vernacular buildings often use chalk and ferruginous sandstone (locally known as 'found stone') within their construction.

South Wight Arable Zone

Occurring in an area from the base of the Greensand Hills south to the cliffs along the Tennyson Heritage Coast.

Early Ordnance Survey drawings (1793) of the area around Atherfield Farm and Kingston show large fields, probably a result of either the enclosure of former common land used for rough grazing, or of former open fields enclosed at a relatively late date. West of Atherfield, smaller interlocking fields are shown on early drawings and these may have been enclosed from open field strips or furlongs between the medieval period and late seventeenth century.

Settlement in this area is dispersed with many individual farmsteads across the parish. Historically woodland may have been more of a feature around Kingston, where only Kingston Copse now remains.

In the later part of the twentieth century fields were enlarged in this area through the removal of hedgerows, due to the increasing mechanisation of farming.

3.3.6 – Cultural Heritage

The Dame School in Park Lane

In Park Lane, on the outskirts of the village towards Atherfield, is a one-storied building which once was a Dame School until Lady Mary Gordon of Northcourt had the village school built in 18611. The stone and wood for the school came from the Northcourt estate, and local labour was employed. Lady Mary took a great personal interest in the running of the school, and engaged her butler and his wife as the first teachers. Much emphasis was placed on gardening and needlework. A lady who attended the school in the 1880s wrote, “we used to make babies’ dresses, socks, gloves and mittens, besides flannel petticoats which Lady Mary gave to the wives of workers on the estate. She came to inspect the garments before they left the school. When she entered the room, we all had to stand up and curtsy”.

The Village Water Supply

In 1903, Shorwell’s future water-supply became the subject of much discussion, following extensive repairs to the Parish Pump which was on the green opposite the entrance to Northcourt. It had been hoped that the water could be taken from the well at Northcourt, but finally it was decided to get it from the Chillerton reservoir. This took no less than twelve years to accomplish!⁹



Parish pump (no longer operational)

⁹ Both of the above items **extracted from:** *Isle of Wight Village Book* I.W.F.W.I. (1974).

A Mummers' Play at Kingston

When Hubert Garle was in residence at Kingston Rectory in 1898, he recalls watching a traditional mummers' play and wrote about it in his book *A Driving Tour of the Isle of Wight* (1905). This is a rare account of an old custom, and full of humour:

"The company was generally composed of eight or nine, raised from surrounding farms, with a few fishermen. Their costumes were, to say the least, somewhat grotesque: one, representing a Turk, wore a paper suit of many colours; others were dressed in garments of stronger material, and wisely so too, as they had to stand a good deal of knocking about; 'King George' carried a sword, a weapon evidently obtained from some wreck on the neighbouring shore; a soldier sported a red coat which, judging from its cut, had done more duty in the chase than on the battlefield; Father Christmas, with his wife, a doctor, Great Head, with one or two beggars, completed the cast'.

Garle also states that 'old men have told me it was unsafe for one man to plough alone, owing to the danger of being taken off by the press gang'.¹⁰

St Simon of Atherfield

Some intriguing mediaeval references inform us of St Simon of Atherfield, neatly described as "a martyr to his wife." Simon was, apparently, murdered by his wife Amicia (or Avicia) on 21 March 1211, and she was sentenced to burn for the crime, probably in early summer the following year.

We are told that many miracles subsequently took place at his tomb, though its exact location remains unknown. No mention of St Simon is to be found in any known calendar or martyrology, and no official recognition was granted to his status as saint; it is more than likely that Bishop Peter of Winchester - lord of the manor of Calbourne which possessed outlying rights at Atherfield - suppressed the cult fairly quickly, having first appropriated the "seven pounds, twelve shillings and a penny" left in offerings at Simon's tomb.

Of Simon himself, the sources tell us nothing of his family, implying that his background was humbler than that of his wife. All we know is that he bore the toponym "de Atherfield," and hence that he was a local man. To be widely regarded as a martyrdom, Simon's death must have taken place in dramatic circumstances; and the method of execution employed against Amicia, burning at the stake, was regarded as a particularly horrific one, even in the eyes of her contemporaries. By murdering her husband, she had in legal terms committed an act of treason, according to the prevailing ethos of the time. Amicia's violent temper may have been an inherited trait: in 1255 we find two of her kinsmen accused of the murder of a man named Peter of Whippingham.

Within six months of his death, Simon's tomb had attracted offerings of more than £7: this is a substantial figure which compares favourably with other shrines of the period, particularly given Atherfield's remoteness - a fact which in turn helped the cult to be suppressed with a minimum of fuss.

Simon's cult, though intriguing, is not unique, and fits a pattern of victims of violence being subsequently turned into popular "local saints." The martyr would be portrayed as a person of spotless innocence, brutally and unfairly done to death; and more often than not, the cult would be frowned upon or suppressed as soon as it came to the attention of the church authorities.^{11 12}

¹⁰ **Extracted from:** Brian Hinton *Discovering Island Writers: Exploring the Literary Tradition of the Isle of Wight* Island Books (2001).

¹¹ Vincent, Nicholas 'Simon of Atherfield (d.1211): A Martyr to his Wife', *Analecta Bollandiana* 113 (1995) pp.349-61.

¹² Webb, Diana *Pilgrimage in Medieval England* Hambledon & London (2000) p.157.

No hint of St Simon's murder survives in Island folklore or legends - though it has to be said that his posthumous fame seems to be undergoing something of a renaissance in modern-day Shorwell!

Robert of Hareslade

In the 13th century, Robert Carpenter of Hareslade - "the valley frequented by hares" i.e. the modern Haslett in Shorwell - kept a manuscript handbook which has survived and is now in the possession of Cambridge University, where it is of considerable interest to mediaeval scholars. The document was essentially a register for his own personal use of items of administrative and judicial interest, with a calendar of events of wider interest, mingled with local detail and the births and deaths of his family.

Robert would seem to have been a freeholder and occasionally in the service of the de Insula family of Westcourt - then South Shorwell - administering their lands, particularly under William de Insula. It appears that the family was still using the name of Carpenter in 1256, and that about that time they adopted the more dignified form 'de Hareslade.'

His father (who died 30 January 1253) was also Robert, as was his first-born son, born on New Year's Day 1258. The Robert Carpenter with whom we are concerned died in 1280.

It has been shown that Robert served under John de Wyvill of Whitefield in Brading. Robert was a juror for the West Medine in Southampton in 1256, just as his father had been before him; and he was consequently very alert to local judicial decisions. The volume gives proof of considerable industry on the part of a man who took his responsibilities very seriously.

He sets out two specimen accounts, one for Shorwell 1257-8, but what promises to be a great insight into the administration of Westcourt turns out to be only a valuable apprenticeship in mediaeval accountancy - unreliable as a guide to the manorial accounts of Westcourt itself. However, there are some useful hints for husbandry, such as: 'Bullocks and heifers are of age at three years and have two side-teeth,' or 'Cheese-making begins on April 16 and ends at Michaelmas, both days included'.

Robert's chronicle of events includes the martyrdom of St Simon at Atherfield in 1211; the battle of Lewes on 8 May 1264; the dedication of the chapel of Shorwell on 2 June; and the Battle of Evesham on 3 August 1265. The dedication of the church of Shorwell seems therefore to lie between 1264 and 1265 - this could mean a dedication after a reconstruction, for there are references to the church in the cartulary of Carisbrooke as early as the 12th century.¹³

¹³ Hockey, S.F. *Insula Vecta: the Isle of Wight in the Middle Ages* Phillimore (1982) pp.219-22.

A Mediaeval Inquest at Shorwell

‘At Shorwell in 1385 John Coupere kept a tavern, where on the Sunday after St Thomas (21 December) Walter Ware dealt John Clerke a five-inch wound in the chest with [a knife called a] ‘twytyll.’ The inquest was held at Shorwell on the Monday. Walter Ware had feloniously killed John Clerke and had fled. The knife was appraised at two pence.’¹⁴



Wolverton Manor

¹⁴ Hockey S.F.*ibid*

3.4 Access

The pathways and tracks of the Parish of Shorwell were used by its community for the movement of livestock, as access to the downs and the seashore, and as routes to the major historic houses, pubs and the church. Originally managed and maintained by the Parish, responsibility passed firstly to the Local Highway Commissioners in the nineteenth century and in the 1890s to the newly formed Local Highway Authority.

3.4.1 Highways

The Military Road runs parallel to the coastline. It was built in the 1860s and given a metalled surface in the 1930s, and is the only A-class road within the parish. There are two B-class roads: B3323 runs from Shorwell to Carisbrooke, and the B3399 runs through Shorwell village from Chessell to Chale. The road from Beckfield Cross through Billingham to Chillerton, although an important route, is a minor road, as are the routes which run from the village of Shorwell through Atherfield and Yafford eventually, reconnecting with the Military Road.

3.4.2 Rights of Way

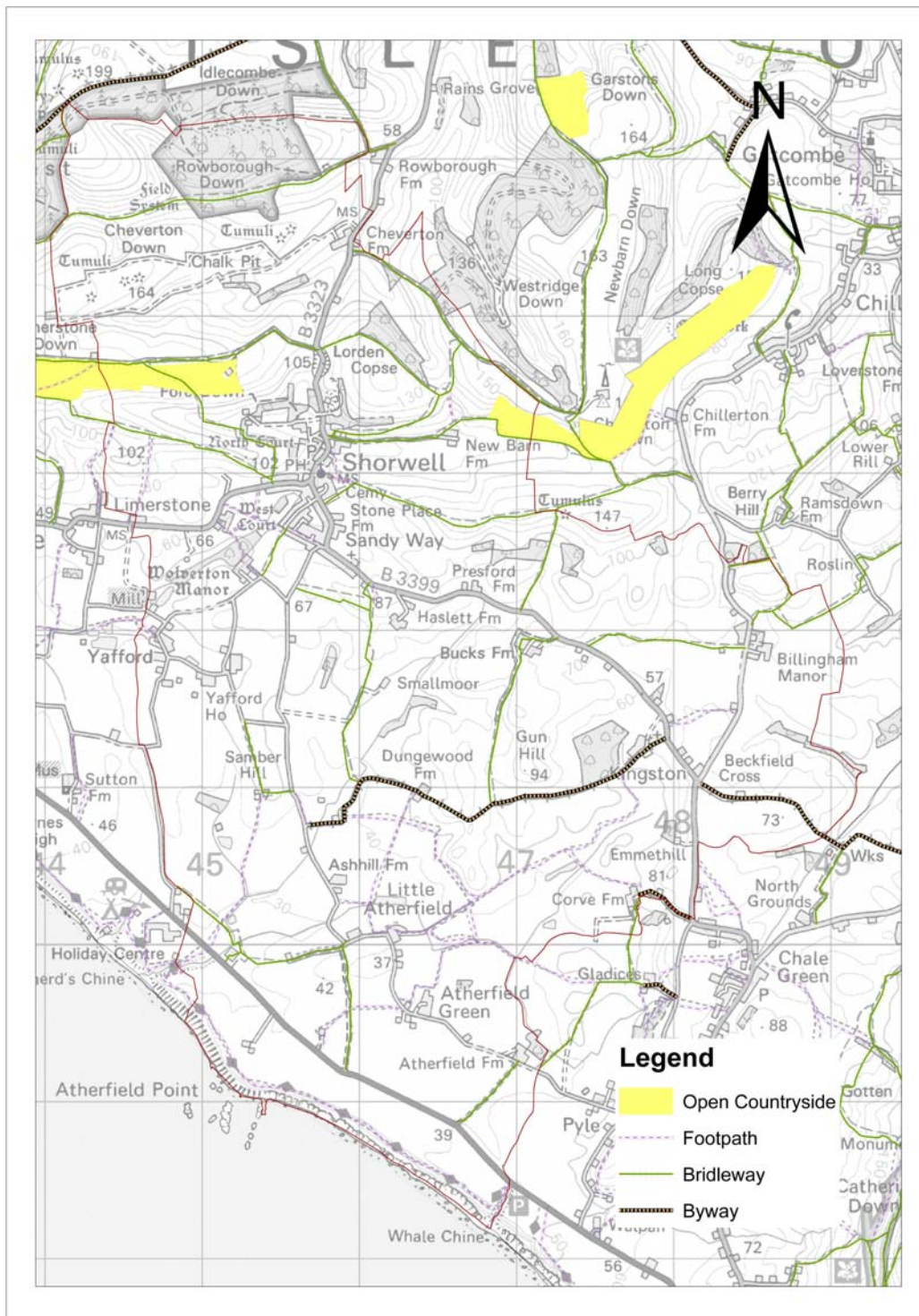
A statutory duty was placed on all Local Authorities to maintain and protect the public right of use of public paths in 1949 and in the early 1950s the first Isle of Wight Definitive Map was published, listing all public footpaths, bridleways and roads used as public paths (old highways mostly unsurfaced). Local Highway Authorities were then charged with the review of roads used as public paths and their reclassification to byways open to all traffic or their downgrading to bridleway status, dependent upon the evidence. This review took place on the Isle of Wight in the 1990s.

There are many routes through the parish which continue to provide access to all parts of its landscape and are today largely used for farm access and recreational purposes. These include the Worsley Trail which traverses the parish from east to west (from Northcourt Down through to Fore Down), and the Shepherd's Trail running north-east to south-west from Billingham to Shepherd's Chine. As access to the seashore, the two Chines within the parish both have recorded public access within them.

3.4.3 Open Space

The recreation ground and the greens, close to the village pump and opposite the church, are the formal open spaces within the parish. Recent access to open countryside legislation has led to two areas within the parish now being made available for public open access: (Fore Down in part & Northcourt Down in part).

Map 6 Access within Shorwell Parish.



4. Parish Landscape Character Assessment

Taking into account the information collated above during the study of the Parish of Shorwell by the Environmental Working Group, and the results of the field survey of the landscape of the parish when viewed from key vantage points (shown below), areas of landscapes with common characteristics can be described. This has resulted in five Landscape Character Types being defined, each with subdivisions or Landscape Character Areas displaying more subtle local variations. Although there is often a gradual change from one area to the next, there are clear geographical areas of the Parish that have a common 'Sense of Place'.



View from Gore looking south-west towards Shorwell village, Yafford and the coast

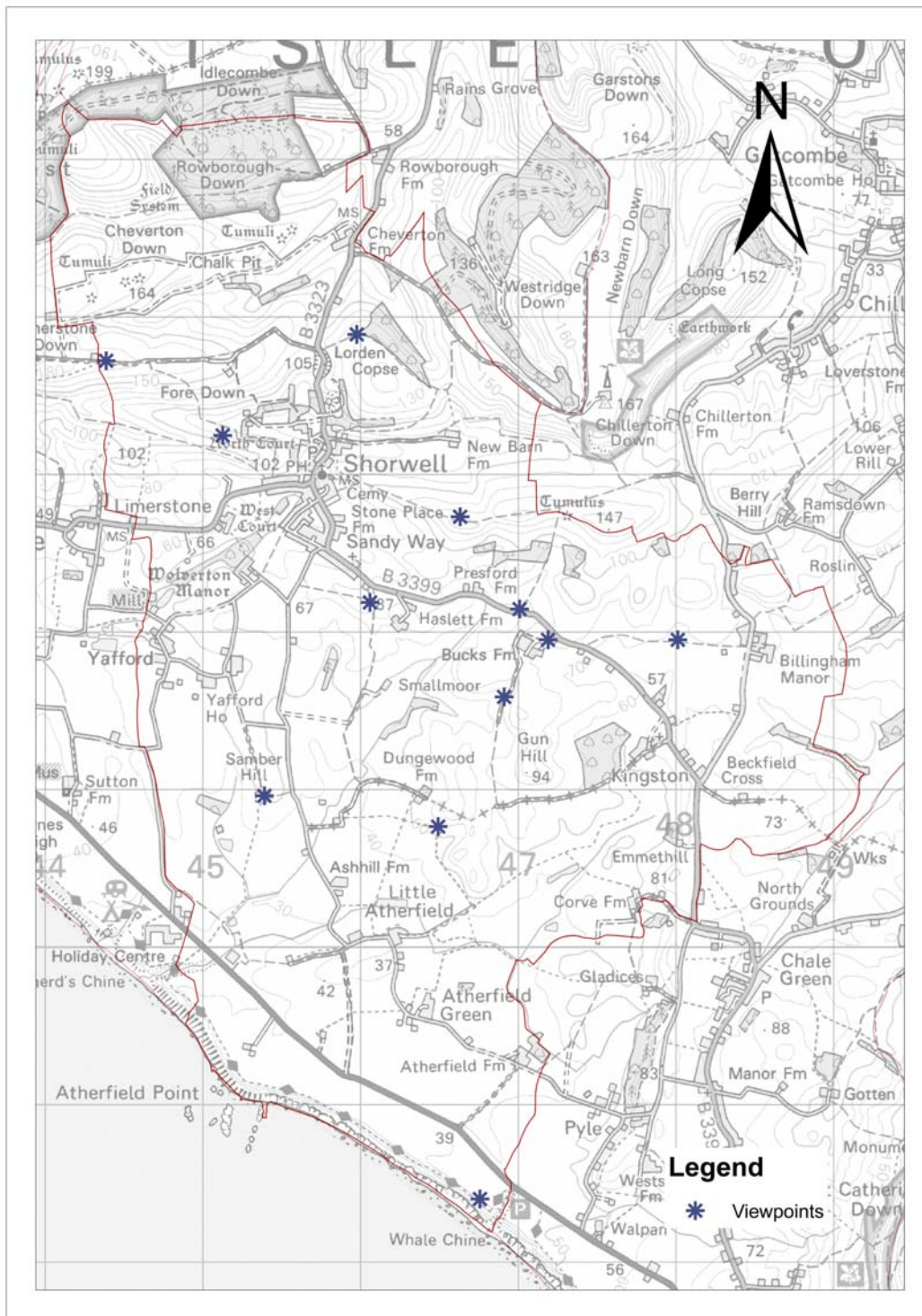


View from Gore looking south towards Atherfield and the coast

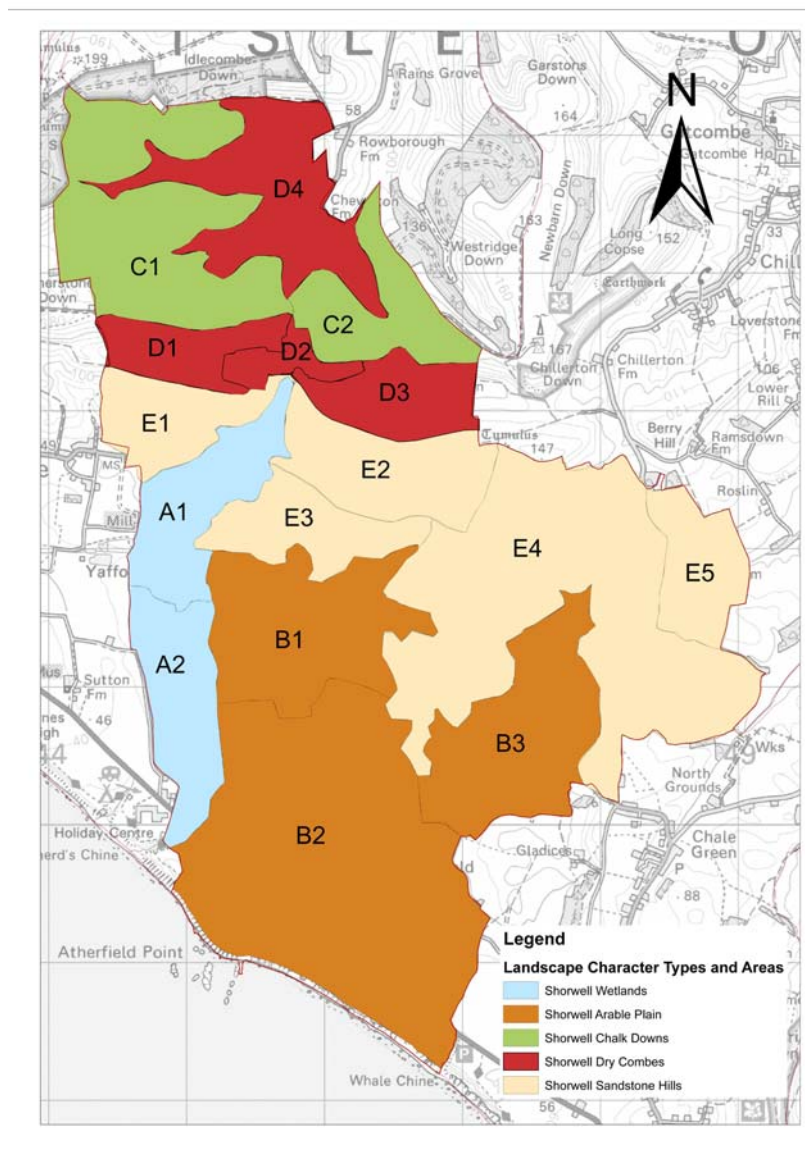


View from Gore looking south-east towards Kingston and Warren Hill with Chale and Gore Cliff in the distance

Map 7 -Viewpoints used in the Landscape Character Assessment



Map 8 - Shorwell Parish Landscape Character Types & Areas



A	Shorwell Wetlands	B	Shorwell Arable Plain	C	Shorwell Chalk Downs
A1	West Shorwell Meadows	B1	Samber & Smallmoor Farmland	C1	Cheverton Chalk Downs
A2	Yafford Wetlands	B2	Atherfield Coastal Plain	C2	Lorden & Northcourt Chalk Downs
		B3	Kingston Fields		
D	Shorwell Dry Combes	E	Shorwell Sandstone Hills		
D1	Downclose Combe	E1	West Shorwell Hills	E5	East Billingham Hills
D2	Shorwell Dell	E2	Gore & Presford Hills		
D3	New Barn Combe	E3	Haslett & Corve Hills		
D4	Cheverton Combe	E4	Bucks & Beckfield Hills		

4.1 A - Shorwell Wetlands

Low-lying areas running south-west of the village of Shorwell past Westcourt and Wolverton and then southwards towards Shepherd's Chine. This Landscape Character Type also includes the hamlet of Yafford with its ponds and Mill. The character of this area is greatly influenced by watercourses with many of the withybeds, ditches, drains, ponds, springs and sinks of the parish occurring in this area.

Key characteristics

Wetland meadows

Predominantly grassland and pasture with some arable cultivation on better drained areas

Wet woodlands

Withybeds and drainage channels

This LCT can be further divided into two Landscape Character Areas reflecting their subtle differences.

A1 – West Shorwell Meadows

This area includes the course of the Shorwell Stream through the village, the water meadows from the village to Westcourt, Wolverton and part of Yafford. It is heavily influenced by the presence of the Shorwell Stream and includes wet pasture, withybeds and ponds.

A2 – Yafford Wetlands

In an area of transition between the productive arable Lower Greensand soils and the more waterlogged Wealden clays this Landscape Character Area differs from A1. The landscape is more open and exposed with fewer hedgerows other than those associated with the surfaced lanes and settlement. Ditches and field drains run southwards towards Shepherd's Chine, and more recently reservoirs have been constructed to store water for irrigation. Some woodland occurs in low-lying areas.

Forces for change –

Diffuse pollution

Over-abstraction of water

Continuation of grazing

Management Aims –

Protect and conserve the important wetland flora of these areas by ensuring that nutrient levels are controlled and that diffuse pollution from surrounding arable land is minimised. Seek to ensure the continuation of grazing of marshlands to maintain species richness. Proposals for additional open reservoirs for the storage of winter rainfall should be designed to be sympathetic to the surrounding landscape with edges softened through sinuous design and appropriate native planting. Remaining hedgerows should be well managed and proposals for new hedges should be based on historic evidence and restore historic features.



The Moor near Westcourt



Pond at Yafford

4.2 B- Shorwell Arable Plain

This Landscape Character Type occurs south of the rolling sandstone hills and is a gently rolling landscape becoming flatter towards the coast. This area has the most productive soils within the parish and is generally cultivated for arable crops. Small fields become larger further south, away from the hills and towards the coast. There are few hedges or woodlands (with the notable exception of Kingston) in this area, with the only natural vegetation being around field drainage systems and ditches. Such trees that are present in this landscape are associated with providing shelter from prevailing south-westerly winds for dispersed settlements and isolated farmsteads.

Key characteristics

Open fields in cultivation

'Dark Skies'

Few hedgerows or trees with those in evidence bent by the strong winds

Shelter belt planting around houses and farmsteads

Isolated farms often with associated storage barns

This LCT can be further divided into three Landscape Character Areas reflecting their subtle differences.

B1 – Samber & Smallmoor Farmland

An undulating farmed area with a number of small fields mostly in arable cultivation. Hedgerows are still in evidence demarcating the edges of the field parcels, particularly to the north of the area. Larger fields to the west of this area are in intensive cultivation.

B2 – Atherfield Coastal Plain

This is an open and exposed landscape with large fields which are predominantly arable in cultivation. Few hedgerows or trees; those present have had their growth suppressed and affected by the south-westerly winds in the area. This is an area of dispersed settlement, with a number of individual farmsteads, and on occasion cottages occurring alongside the lane which provides access through this landscape. Settlement is often accompanied by shelter belt planting. Watercourses, ditches and drains are a feature of the landscape, often providing a haven for wildlife within an intensively farmed landscape.

B3 - Kingston Fields

This is an area of predominately arable cultivation with pasture and grassland areas small in size and associated with watercourses. Woodland features strongly in this area with Kingston Copse predominant, and will increase its contribution to the character as a result of recent woodland planting schemes on arable land. Smaller, more irregular-shaped, fields, as a result of natural water courses and ditches which traverse the area.

Forces for change –

Intensive farming operations leading to soil erosion and diffuse pollution

Light pollution

Decrease in the number of small farms with land being leased to large arable holdings

Marginal land being left out of cultivation

Past hedgerow removal and some evidence of hedgerow neglect

Management Aims-

Support the continuation of active farming in the area with a mix of arable and pasture areas.

Seek to secure agri-environmental schemes in the area through the new Environmental

Stewardship Entry and Higher Level Schemes sympathetic to the landscape and increase the mosaic of habitats available to wildlife, particularly for arable plant species and farmland birds. Seek to ensure that remaining hedgerows and any marginal land is managed and maintained. Proposals for new hedgerows should be based on historic evidence and restoration of historic features. Any new woodland planting in this area must be carefully considered and proposals should take account of the landform and surrounding landscape. Aim to control and reduce the impact of light pollution to conserve 'Dark Skies'



Atherfield



Field peas near Little Atherfield

4.3 C- Shorwell Chalk Downs

This Landscape Character Type occurs to the north of the parish on the Island's central chalk downland ridge. It provides open and extensive views to the south-west coastline across the majority of the parish and northwards to the Bowcombe Valley and Carisbrooke beyond. With open and exposed characteristics there are few hedgerows or hedgerow trees in this landscape. Woodland occurs on steep slopes where cultivation has been difficult; other steep slopes are grazed as pasture, which has a high nature conservation value because of its chalk grassland species. Some arable cultivation occurs on more level areas on the tops of the downs.

Key characteristics

Open and exposed landscape

Few hedgerows or hedgerow trees

Limited windswept scrubby vegetation on higher downland

Traditional grazing and some extensive arable cultivation

Broadleaved woodlands on lower slopes

This LCT can be further divided into two Landscape Character Areas reflecting their subtle differences.

C1 - Cheverton Chalk Downs

To the west of Cheverton Shute and extending to the north-western point of the parish boundary this area has a number of land uses. Woodland occurs at Rowborough which is of nature conservation value; grazing occurs on steep chalk grassland slopes and on Fore Down. Extensive quarrying provides an important local source of chalk and gravel deposits and continues to change the landscape of the area around Cheverton. The well advertised Worsley Trail path passes through this area.

C2 – Lorden & Northcourt Chalk Downs

To the east of Cheverton Shute a second area of chalk downland has a different character to C1 listed above. It is predominantly arable in cultivation with some shoot cover close to neighbouring woodland areas (see D2). Lorden Copse is partly included in this area and is an important woodland for its wildlife. Further east, arable cultivation ceases and chalk grassland pasture is in evidence around Northcourt Down. A very open and exposed landscape with extensive views to the surrounding area, there are few hedgerows or hedgerow trees in this landscape.

Forces for change –

Arable cultivation or improvement for pasture of chalk grassland

Quarrying activities

Isolated farm buildings

Management Aims –

Protect remaining species rich chalk grassland and SINC areas. Restore some areas to chalk grassland by the lowering of fertilizer input and/or arable reversion. Carefully consider proposals for any extension to existing quarrying activities, with particular regard given to the impact on the landscape and post-extraction restoration works. Encourage active management of copses and woodlands for wildlife and seek to establish a market for woodland products to assist in their economic viability. Increase the habitats available to farmland birds by the use of Environmental Stewardship options.



View of Northcourt and Chillerton Downs from Gore



View from Lorden to Cheverton Farm and Bowcombe Valley.

4.4 D- Shorwell Dry Combes

This Landscape Character Type runs on a west to east line across the parish. A distinct dry valley occurring between the Chalk Downs to the north and Sandstone Hills to the south, this landscape has a secretive and enclosed character.

Key characteristics

Enclosed and sheltered valley (combe) environment

Mixed land use and vegetation cover including woodland, pasture and arable

This LCT can be further divided into three Landscape Character Areas reflecting their subtle differences.

D1 – Downclose Combe

A dramatic open dry valley between Ladylands and Fore Down west of Northcourt Manor, this is a grassland area with some improved pasture in the valley bottom and unimproved grassland on the valley slopes.

D2 – Shorwell Dell

A continuation of this valley to the east which includes most of the grounds of Northcourt Manor, The Dell, Shorwell Shute and the woodland at Mount Ararat. At the edge of this area the 'Shor Well' is sited in the grounds of Northcourt Manor. This area is characterised by its woodland cover, the architectural features of Northcourt Manor, and the iconic thatched stone cottages close to Shorwell Shute; the abandoned Chalk Pit to the east of Shorwell Shute also lies within it. The atmosphere of this area is much more enclosed and secretive in character.

D3 – New Barn Combe

The area to the east of D2 is similar to D1 in its open dry valley characteristics. It differs however in its arable cultivation with large fields to the south of New Barn Farm, also in respect of the fact that it remains open at its eastern edge as the landform continues into the Chillerton valley outside Shorwell parish. There are few hedgerows or trees in this area other than on its southern boundary with E2.

D4 – Cheverton Combe

To the north of the parish this landscape character area is the southern-most part of a large valley running through to Bowcombe and Carisbrooke. The area includes a number of smaller combes which run on an east-west access into C1, and one which runs south-east into C2. This main combe running from Cheverton Shute to Cheverton Farm is open in its aspect and has a mix of pasture and arable use. Woodland occurs on steep slopes (such as Rowborough and Lorden) and the valley bottoms (such as Fern Bottom) are largely laid to pasture. Due to the chalk downland ridge there is a sense of this area being disjointed from the rest of the parish, which predominantly lies south of the central chalk downs and is more influenced by the coast and the latter's impact upon weather systems (coastal fog tends to stop at Shorwell Shute).

Forces for change –

(The landscape areas within this landscape type are particularly diverse with individual strong characteristics).

Change from chalk grassland to improved pasture, arable or secondary woodland

Northern aspect of Cheverton Combe provides for a different micro-climate

Woodland development on steep slopes and also close to the village of Shorwell

Possible pressure from horse paddocks (low intensity)

Management Aims –

Seek to retain the strong character of each of these LCAs. Resist hedgerow planting or subdivision of fields into smaller parcels, which would undermine the sweeping nature of the combes. Encourage suitable Environmental Stewardship options based upon the features of the landscape as well as for biodiversity gain. Secure the continuation of permissive access in the Dell and through Northcourt to Fore Down and Downclose. Control the spread of Ransoms (Wild Garlic). Seek to actively manage woodland areas for nature conservation. Protect and conserve areas of unimproved grassland.



Downclose



New Barn Farm

4.5 E- Shorwell Sandstone Hills

This Landscape Character Type occurs on the Upper Greensand and Lower Greensand geological series and ranges in height from 134 to 65 metres above sea level. A distinct sandstone ridge runs on an east-west axis through the parish with promontories jutting southwards in the area of Bucks Farm and Beckfield Cross. Generally supporting pasture but with some arable on the more gentle slopes, this landscape is often associated with areas of gorse scrub and bracken due to its more acidic ground conditions. Access in this area via historic trackways (now often public rights of way) has resulted in the formation of hollow ways which gradually erode through the sandstone and sink into the surrounding landscape. There is a gradual change between this Landscape Character Type and that of Shorwell Arable Plains (B), with B1 and B3 showing transitional characteristics.

Key Characteristics

Distinctive secondary ridge south of Chalk Downs

‘Dark Skies’

Gorse and Bracken occurring in un-grazed/uncultivated areas

Some arable cultivation on more gentle slopes but predominantly pasture

Copses on steep slopes and in some valley bottoms

Relict heathland

This LCT can be further divided into five Landscape Character Areas reflecting their subtle differences.

E1- West Shorwell Hills

West of Westcourt and north of the main Shorwell to Limerstone Road, these sandstone hills are separated from the others by the Shorwell Stream and its resulting wetland environments (A1). A mix of arable cultivation on the more gentle slopes and pasture to the north (closer to D1), these rolling hills continue on beyond the parish boundary westwards.

E2 – Gore & Presford Hills

Gore is a very distinctive feature in the Shorwell landscape. It can be clearly seen as a narrow ridgeline rising out of the village of Shorwell and travelling eastwards towards Chillerton. A hedge with wind-swept vegetation and areas of gorse and bracken occur along this ridgeline and can be seen from long-distance views. The ridge falls away to the south, with some evidence of exposed Upper Greensand shown Stone Place. Small regular shaped fields occur with hedgerows in evidence. Smaller fields are pasture with larger fields to the west on more gentle slopes in arable cultivation. The historic enclosed track of ‘Kingsway’ occurs within this area, running from Stone Place towards the fields at Presford.

E3 – Haslett & Corve Hills

Similar to E2 this area has a number of small fields with a mix of pasture and arable use. Both Sandy Way and Corve Hill cut through the sandstone with exposed rock seen by the roadside. Quarrying works for sand extraction are in operation at Haslett. There are a number of good hedgerows with maturing trees close to the village settlement. Coastal views are a feature as in E2.

E4 – Bucks and Beckfield Hills

Larger predominantly arable fields with some small areas of scrub and or rough pasture, this area has a more open and exposed character than others within the Shorwell Sandstone Hills Landscape Character Type. To the east of this area the hills plateau, provide an expansive, fairly level, landscape that has been intensively cultivated. Some hedges are present, usually associated with field drainage ditches or other watercourses. Copses and woodlands occur in valley bottom or other wet areas.

E5 – East Billingham Hills

From the through Billingham across to the eastern parish boundary, this landscape is characterised by a number of small pasture fields. There are good hedgerows and some hedgerow trees, and ground conditions are wetter with many deep field ditches, with withybeds and associated vegetation. To the south of the area closer to Beckfield Cross more arable cultivation is in evidence with larger fields and fewer hedgerows.

Forces for change –

Enclosure of former open areas

Light pollution

Improvement to grassland and/or arable use with resulting loss of heathland

Quarrying activities

Soil erosion and run-off issues

Woodland planting schemes

Storm-damaged trees

Management Aims –

Seek to conserve and where possible expand remaining heathland habitats. Ensure that proposals for new woodland planting are carefully considered to ensure that historic features are protected and landscape impact minimised. Encourage entry into Environmental Stewardship for areas prone to soil erosion. Remove scrub invasion on archaeological monuments and encourage the continuation of grazing of areas to reduce scrub re-growth. Manage and maintain watercourses and ditches for their nature conservation interest. Seek to reduce diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off. Manage and maintain existing hedgerows and ensure that proposals for new planting are based on historic evidence and respect historic features. Aim to control and reduce the impact of light pollution to conserve ‘Dark Skies’



Gore