



## **Historic Environment Action Plan Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle**

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

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## HEAP for Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle

### INTRODUCTION

The *Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle* HEAP Area comprises land surrounding the former Brading Haven together with the reclaimed land of the haven itself. It includes the settlement of Brading in the west of the Area, St Helens and Nettlestone in the north, Bembridge in the east and Yaverland in the south.

Part of this Area, including Bembridge and Yaverland, was for much of its history an island in its own right, cut off from the Wight mainland by arms of the sea at high tide and muddy gulfs at low tide, hence its former name of 'Bembridge Isle'. A wide area of sea flowed up between Bembridge and St. Helens, past Brading and Yaverland and then joined up with another branch of sea that entered through a gap between Yaverland and Sandown where the boating lake is today. The area between Yaverland and Sandown became known as the 'Sandown Level' after it had been drained. A further branch struck off west towards Alverstone. These tidal inlets effectively cut Bembridge Isle off from the rest of the Island until the construction of a causeway at Yar Bridge in the Middle Ages. However, Brading Haven remained as a wide tidal inlet at the mouth of the Eastern Yar River, extending as far inland as Brading, until it was drained between 1878 and 1880, leaving the much smaller area of Bembridge Harbour (Martin 2004a).

The *Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle* Area has been defined largely by its relationship to the former haven. Brading lies to the west of the haven but historically had access to sea-borne trade via the haven. All other parts of the Area lie to the east of the two former tidal seaways penetrating inland from Bembridge and Sandown.

Like *Freshwater Isle* at the other end of the Isle of Wight, this HEAP Area is distinct from the *Northern Lowlands* to which both Areas are adjacent. Much of the *Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle* Area lies to the north of the *East Wight Chalk Ridge* but it does not contain any deposits of the heavy, easily waterlogged Hamstead clays that characterise the *Northern Lowlands*. The existence of more easily worked soils in much of the *Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle* Area undoubtedly influenced the development of its historic landscape. However, there are also distinct variations in historic character within this Area and these are identified below.

The most significant features of the historic landscape within this HEAP Area are field patterns, settlement patterns and grazing marsh. This document considers the most important forces for change and management issues affecting this Area. It also identifies actions listed in the *Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions* that are particularly relevant to the Area.

### ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

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

- Area comprises land around the former tidal seaways penetrating inland from Bembridge and Sandown. It includes Brading, St Helens, Priory Bay and Nettlestone, the reclaimed land of the Haven itself, Bembridge, Yaverland and the Sandown Level.
- To north of former Brading Haven the geology comprises Bembridge Marls, capped in many places by superficial gravel deposits.
  - Reclaimed grazing marsh of former Brading Haven is Grade 4 agricultural land on alluvial deposits.
  - The settlement of Brading lies between the downs and the Eastern Yar River, which occupies a gap in the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.
  - In the Bembridge area the geology is mainly Bembridge Marls capped by Marine Gravel in the east. Narrow bands of Reading Beds, London Clay, Bracklesham Group deposits and Osborne and Headon Beds lie immediately to the north of the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.

- To the south of the *East Wight Chalk Ridge* a small area of Ferruginous Sands around Yaverland provide a light, sandy soil.
- There are Wealden deposits on the outskirts of Sandown but these deposits are overlain by Alluvium in the area of the Sandown Level, which occupies an ancient sea channel.
- Main watercourse is Eastern Yar, which flows in an artificial channel through reclaimed land of Brading Haven although the course of the original river channel is still evident.
- Land rises gently from sea level within reclaimed Haven area to about 50m OD north of St Helens and to a similar height below Bembridge Down.
- The Sandown Level is at sea level. To the east of the Level the land rises gently northward from Sandown to Yaverland, then more steeply to boundary with *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.
- Coast defines eastern side of this HEAP Area which includes Foreland, the eastern extremity of the Isle of Wight.
  - Sandy beach at Priory Bay backed by eroding coastal slope from Hoarstone Point to sand dunes of St Helens Duver.
  - Low cliffs and rocky foreshore around Bembridge Ledges including Foreland, leading to Whitecliff Bay north of Culver Down.
  - Eroding sandstone cliffs to south of Culver Down.

### **Defining Attributes and Principal HEAP Types**

- Distinct zones of historic landscape character within this Area. These comprise Brading environs, St Helens and Nettlestone environs, reclaimed land of former Brading Haven, Bembridge environs and Yaverland environs.
  - Attributes of the different zones are considered under 'Principal Historical Processes'.
- Fields to north of St Helens are mainly of small-medium size. Large-irregular fields between River Yar and Bembridge Down with smaller fields to the west of Bembridge. Medium irregular fields in Yaverland Area.
- Reclaimed grazing marsh of former Brading Haven and Sandown Level occupies a large proportion of this HEAP Area.
- The sand dunes of St Helens *Duver* form a partial bar across the mouth of Bembridge Harbour, projecting southward from St Helens Seamark (the tower of the former parish church).
- Limited amount of ancient and secondary woodland around Bembridge, to north of Yaverland and on cliff slope from Hoarstone Point to St Helens.
- Settlements of Anglo-Saxon or medieval origin at Brading, St Helens and Yaverland and some individual farmsteads of early origin
  - Nettlestone has ancient origins as a small manorial settlement but the present village contains mainly 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
  - Bembridge village contains mainly 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
  - Later 20<sup>th</sup> Century development around St Helens, to south of Brading, and to south of Yaverland.
- Gardens and small parks of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century date in Bembridge area and the remains of a larger landscape park at Priory Bay (IWGT records).
- Holiday parks at Priory Bay, Bembridge, Whitecliff Bay and Yaverland.
- Boundaries of the Area are defined by the A3055 and B3329 between Brading and Sandown.
  - Other significant routes are the B3330 from the A3055 to St Helens and Nettlestone, and the B3395 from Brading to Bembridge and St Helens with a spur running through Yaverland to Sandown.
- Long distance coastal path runs through this Area from Nettlestone to Sandown.
  - Bembridge & Yar River Trail runs from Brading to Bembridge.
- Railway from Ryde to Shanklin runs through this Area, with station at Brading.
- Bembridge Airport, opened in 1920, supports general aviation activities and recreational flights but there are no timetabled services.

## Principal Historical Processes

- Brading Haven is likely to have been used in Roman times for transport of goods and materials to and from Brading Roman Villa.
- Area fell within the Anglo-Saxon *mother parish* of Brading, out of which the parishes of St Helens and Yaverland were taken in medieval times (Margham 2000).
- Brading Church is thought to be on an Anglo-Saxon site but earliest surviving work is 12<sup>th</sup> century. Yaverland Church also has 12<sup>th</sup> century work.
- Manors recorded in Domesday Book at Brading, Etharin (St Helens), Nettlestone, Hardley, Orham and Woolverton (Bembridge Area), Sandown, and Yaverland.
- Medieval town of Brading was established at head of Brading Haven, probably by local Lord of Whitefield Manor in late 12<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Haven was navigable as far as quay to east of High Street, allowing trade with mainland.
  - Town did not prosper in late medieval and post-medieval times and remained very small, even after 1864 when a railway link with Ryde, Sandown and Shanklin was established.
- St Helens Priory was established in 12<sup>th</sup> century. St Helens Church was built as part of priory but was used as parish church before its replacement.
  - Medieval settlement of St Helens was established on north side of Brading Haven and by 1793 had the form of a *regular- row plan* with a *green*.
  - 14<sup>th</sup> century taxation records indicate relative importance of St Helens.
  - St Helens is thought to be the point at which the French landed in 1340 but there are no records of extensive destruction (Edwards 1999, 3).
  - It has been suggested that St Helens served as the port for the town of Brading (Page ed. 1912, 189). It is recorded as a port in 14<sup>th</sup> century and 16<sup>th</sup> century documents.
  - From the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries St Helens was favoured for victualling ships, including Naval fleets
- The regular *open-field* system laid out around St Helens in Middle Ages appears to have been subject to *piecemeal enclosure* in post-medieval times, resulting in the small strip fields shown on the OS 1793 map.
  - In contrast, fields to the north of the village, owned by St Helens Priory until the Dissolution, appear to have been enclosed into large closes in Tudor times, possibly occupying the same areas as earlier open fields. The roads and tracks on the land of the Priory (e.g. Attrill's Lane and Eddington Road) may originally have defined the edges of these open fields.
  - New Parish Church was built for St Helens in 1717 (and rebuilt in 1829), isolated in countryside some distance from the medieval church.
  - A landscape park was developed around the late 18<sup>th</sup> century country house of 'The Priory' and there are also traces of early 20<sup>th</sup> century work to the design of the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens (IWGT Records).
- Nettlestone is called 'Nettlestone Green' on the OS maps of 1793 and 1862 and is shown as a tiny hamlet around a small triangular green to the south of the manor house. Small semi-detached houses were built along the main road in early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jones 2000, 80).
- Within Bembridge Isle the pattern seems to have been one of dispersed farmsteads with a hamlet at Bembridge itself (Martin 2004b).
  - 1793 OS map shows an unusually regular pattern of near-parallel roads, (High Street, Steyne Road and Howgate Road) with connecting tracks at right-angles. Farmsteads were situated along these roads at Knowles, Hill Grove, Northwell, Swains, Lane End, Foreland, Howgate and Spain (later Steyne House).
  - The roads and farms are linked with a very regular field pattern of enclosed *strips*. This is clearly the remains of medieval *open-field* but may possibly have originated as a *co-axial field system* of prehistoric or Roman origin.

- Bembridge developed as a small holiday and residential village for the well-to-do from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some houses had substantial gardens or small parks.
- In 1867 the lifeboat station was established and a boat house built at Lane End.
- To the west of Bembridge small enclosed fields with sinuous boundaries are shown on the 1793 OS map. These suggest the former existence of a more irregular type of *open-field* than that around Bembridge itself. There were dispersed farmsteads at Woolverton Farm, Longlands, Bembridge Farm and Hillway with Glover's Farm and Peacock Hill Farm forming the foci of a small hamlet.
- At Yaverland the church and manor lay together below the foot of Yaverland Down. The OS 1793 map shows the small village of Yaverland Street to the south of Yaverland Manor, with enclosed *open-field strips* on either side.
- Until the 14<sup>th</sup> century communication between Bembridge Isle and the rest of the Isle of Wight was dependent either on a ferry across Bembridge Haven or on a causeway across the River Yar between Brading and Sandham (later Sandown) which could only be used at low tide (Martin 2004b).
  - The causeway between Brading and Sandham was at Morton to the south of Brading. It crossed the River Yar just before the river joined the tidal inlet flowing north from Sandham, and then connected with a track leading to Sandham. This causeway is of unknown date although Page (1912, 156) speculated about a possible Roman origin.
  - A Causeway was constructed at Yarbridge in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century by Sir William Russell, Lord of Yaverland Manor, giving access to his manor house from Brading. The causeway could be used at any state of the tide and comprised a raised embankment from the Yaverland side with a bridge to let through the Yar River close to the Brading side.
  - Sir William Russell also reclaimed some of Brading Haven southwards from Yarbridge towards Sandown.
  - The date of reclamation for Sandown Level is unknown but Sandown Fort was built at the mouth of the tidal inlet in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the whole level had been reclaimed by the time of the OS 1793 map.
  - After the construction of Yarbridge in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century the name 'Binbridge' or 'infra pontem' appears in records and the area is referred to as Binbridge Isle (Martin 2004b).
  - However, the place-name Bembridge has *OE* components interpreted as meaning 'inside the bridge' (Kökeritz 1940, 35).
- Some land was reclaimed from Brading Haven by the Oglander and Richards families in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, namely North Marsh to the north east of Brading in 1562 and land to the west of the old sea wall in 1594 (WCA Heritage 2006, 7.32– 7.40)
  - After this sea wall was constructed the medieval quay immediately to the east of Brading High Street could no longer function and a new quay was constructed at the east end of Wall Lane (WCA Heritage 2006, 7.41-7.45).
- A much larger reclamation scheme was undertaken from 1620, using Dutch engineers but the embankment holding back the tide was breeched in 1630 and the haven then reverted to a tidal inlet.
  - The exploitation of the Haven for fishing may have been significant in medieval and post-medieval times and oyster beds are recorded in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Until at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century the river outlet of Brading Haven was on the St. Helen's side. Lord Burghley's map of c. 1590 and Speed's map of 1610 clearly shows the *duver* extending like a narrow spit from the Bembridge side with the outlet next to the original St. Helen's church (Martin 2004a).
  - However by 1793 the sand spit had attached itself to the St Helens side of the channel, as shown on the Ordnance Survey map of this date.
- By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a tide mill was in operation at St Helens, a mill pond having been created by the construction of an embankment from St Helens village to St Helens Duver.

- Final reclamation of Brading Haven took place between 1877 and 1880 when present embankment was constructed across mouth of haven to carry new Brading to St Helens railway line onward to Bembridge.
  - Construction of embankment left much smaller area of Bembridge Harbour as a tidal inlet.
  - The ferry route for foot passengers between St Helens Duver and the western end of Bembridge Point shown on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps continued to be used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Royal Spithead Hotel was built at the harbour in 1882 and a railway station in 1887 (both now demolished). Bembridge grew in importance as a tourist village and St. Helens as a port.
  - In 1923 the Southern Railway made improvements to the branch line and. St. Helens Quay became the main port on the Island for goods and freight.
  - Branch railway line closed in 1953 and quay gradually closed to commercial shipping. Harbour was sold to Bembridge Harbour Improvements Company in July 1963 and now operates as a leisure facility with a marina and houseboats.
- Defence was important within the whole of this HEAP Area.
  - There were French landings in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and in 1545, when the Mary Rose foundered whilst attacking the French in the Solent (Martin 2001b).
  - Sandown Castle was built near the shore in 1546 but was undermined by coastal erosion and replaced by a second fort from 1632 (Jones 1968).
  - *Palmerston Forts* were built along coast at Sandown (Granite Fort), Yaverland and Redcliff in 1860s. Nodes Point Battery was built in 1890s.
  - Offshore fortifications in the Spithead Channel were also built at Spitbank, Horse Sand, No Man's Land and St Helens.
  - Inland, a battery was constructed at Steynewood between 1889 and 1893.
  - Various defensive structures were erected in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.
- Bembridge Limestone forms outcrops on the coast from St Helens to Whitecliff Bay and beach quarries were worked in medieval and post medieval times.
- Coastguard stations were built in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century at Seagrove Bay, Bembridge Point, Bembridge Foreland and Sandown.
- The Royal Isle of Wight Golf Club established a golf club of unusually early date (for England) at St Helens Duver in 1882.
- St Helens Common, a small area to the east of the village, was donated to the National Trust in the 1920s.
  - St Helens Duver was donated to the National Trust by the Royal Isle of Wight Golf Club in 1961.
  - Bembridge Windmill was acquired by the National Trust in 1957.
- Bembridge School (a private boarding school) was founded in 1919 by J H Whitehouse, an admirer of John Ruskin. The school closed in the 1990s.
- Bembridge Airport was opened in 1920 on land owned by Bembridge Farm. In 1934 airline services commenced and terminal facilities were built but in WW2 Bembridge Airport closed.
  - Airfield reopened in 1946 but airline services did not resume although general aviation activities continued.
  - In 1960s Britten Norman started manufacturing Islanders (and later Trislanders) at the airport and Islanders are still in production today.
  - Eventually a concrete runway (the only one on the Island) was laid.  
<http://daveg4otu.tripod.com/iowweb/bem.html#>
- Mass tourism became important in later 20<sup>th</sup> century with development of holiday parks and camp sites at Whitecliff Bay, Nodes Point and Yaverland, the latter two on the site of 19<sup>th</sup> century forts.
- Residential development in the recent past has had a varied impact on the historic landscape.
  - At Nettlestone there has been large-scale later 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development between the main road and the Priory estate.

- At St Helens later 20<sup>th</sup> century development has been concentrated mainly to the south of the green, with some infilling to the north of the green. In both cases this has encroached on the enclosed strips of the medieval field system.
- Bembridge has expanded gradually from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day within the pre-existing road pattern, with houses being built on land that was formerly part of the medieval field system. Today, it is a large village with a population of about 5,000. Some boundaries relating to the enclosed strip fields survive and some undeveloped plots around the edge of the settlement remain as fields.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century development at Brading is relatively compact and is concentrated in two main areas at the north end of the town.
- At Yaverland a scatter of buildings in wooded ground to the south of the church and manor is on the site of 'Yaverland Street' (shown on the OS 1793 map) Further to the south a later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing estate sits in a rather isolated position within the rural landscape, occupying the western half of Yaverland's medieval *open-field* system (the eastern half having been obliterated by the 19<sup>th</sup> century Yaverland Fort).
- Sandown Zoo was established within Granite Fort in the 1950s.
- A golf course within the historic North Marsh at Brading received planning permission in 1990s and work commenced at that time but appears unlikely to be completed.
- Brading Marshes were acquired by the RSPB between 2001 and 2006.

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

- Lower Palaeolithic axes and worked flint from stratified gravel deposits of Priory Bay dating from c.475,000 BC. Palaeolithic material has also been found elsewhere in this HEAP Area.
- Mesolithic and Neolithic worked flint and pottery sherds of Neolithic and Bronze Age date were collected from the cliff face near the site of the 19<sup>th</sup> century battery at Redcliff throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- An early Roman cliff-top salt-working site was excavated at Redcliff in 1978 (Tomalin 1989).
- At Yaverland, to the north of the B3395 and Yaverland Church, a low chalk hill-top was investigated briefly by Timeteam and local archaeologists in 2001. It was found to be defended by a substantial ditch, thought to be of Iron Age date, with signs of Roman industrial activity nearby.
  - The site is close to the south-east edge of Brading Haven. (Brading Roman Villa is about 1 mile away and occupies a site used from the late Iron Age.)
  - The top of Bembridge Down is higher than this site and offers a better defensive position but control of the haven may have been important.
- Earthworks, ditches and stone foundations relating to the medieval manorial settlement of Wolverton lie within ancient secondary woodland at Centurion's Copse (the name being a corruption of St Urian's Copse).
- Stone and earth structure of former Brading Quay, of post-medieval date.
- Reclamation stone and earth embankments of 16<sup>th</sup> century date within former Brading Haven, notably the old sea wall that runs from the east end of Wall Lane to the southern side of the Yar channel.
- Embankment associated with tide mill at St Helens.
- Only surviving structure associated with medieval St Helens Priory is the church tower, now used as a seamark.
- Surviving medieval churches at Brading and Yaverland.
- 16<sup>th</sup> century house at Brading (now part of Wax Museum) is most impressive timber-framed building surviving on Island (Brinton 1987, 37).
  - The Old Town Hall at Brading was rebuilt in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on earlier foundations.
  - Stocks, bull-baiting ring and an animal pound also survive at Brading.
  - Buildings within Brading are mainly of brick, including both those in the town centre and the attractive houses of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date on The Mall.
- 17<sup>th</sup> century manor houses at Yaverland, Nettlestone and St Helens (Eddington Manor).

- Country houses of The Priory (now a hotel) and Steyne House.
- Bembridge has large 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses and grounds as well as smaller houses and cottages and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Holy Trinity church.
- St Helens has cottages and small houses of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century date around The Green, mainly of brick with some stone.
  - Larger Victorian and Edwardian houses to the east of the Green, including 'Castle House' from 1830 and later, which has a significant garden.
  - St Helens Duver has a few detached villas of late Victorian date and old railway carriages serving as beach huts.
- A number of vernacular farmsteads and cottages survive to the south of Bembridge Airport.
- Bembridge Windmill, to the west of the village, is of 18<sup>th</sup> century date.
- Slight visible remains of the 17<sup>th</sup> century fort at Sandown within Sandham Grounds.
  - Substantial remains of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Sandown Granite Fort (now zoo).
  - Fragmentary remains of 19<sup>th</sup> century Yaverland Fort (within holiday park).
  - 19<sup>th</sup> century Redcliff Battery is almost completely destroyed by coastal erosion.
  - Nodes Point Battery lies within a holiday centre. The gun emplacements are masked by holiday chalets but an enclosing wall survives.
  - Late 19<sup>th</sup> century Steynewood Battery survives intact.
  - Various 2<sup>nd</sup> World War defensive structures have survived, including the remains of pillboxes (at Sandown, St Helens Church, Yarbridge and Bembridge Foreland) and military trenches at Yaverland and Redcliff.
- Railway line of 1864 running through Brading.
  - Brading Railway Station is Listed Grade II as the only complete railway station complex surviving on the Isle of Wight.
- Embankment of former railway line from Brading to St Helens and Bembridge, (1877-1880) is physical evidence for final reclamation of Brading Haven.
- Coastguard houses survive at Seagrove Bay, Bembridge Point, Bembridge Foreland and Sandown, although altered in some cases.
- Bembridge School, built from 1919 in the Arts and Crafts Style, is no longer in use as a school. The school chapel is a Grade II Listed Building.
- 'Dinosaur Isle', a geology museum and dinosaur exhibition, is a post-modern structure built in 2000-2001 on the former Sandown Level between Sandham Grounds and Granite Fort (Sandown Zoo).

#### **Relationships with other HEAP Areas**

- Close relationship with part of *East Wight Chalk Ridge* where manors and farms at Brading, Bembridge and Yaverland all held open grazing land.
- Brading Roman Villa (described in the *Newchurch Environs and Sandown Bay* HEAP document) had access to the coast via Brading Haven within this Area.
- Medieval Parish of Brading held land within this HEAP Area and also within the HEAP Areas of *Newchurch Environs and Sandown Bay*, *East Wight Chalk Ridge* and *Northern Lowlands*. St Helens Parish lay partly within this HEAP Area and partly within *Northern Lowlands*. Yaverland Parish lay entirely within this HEAP Area.

#### **Time-Depth**

- Sub-surface archaeological evidence includes worked flint of Lower Palaeolithic to Bronze Age Date, Iron Age defensive ditches and Roman material.
- At Bembridge Isle surviving traces of field system with associated roads and tracks may possibly be of prehistoric or Roman origin.
- Simple linear plan of Brading Town Centre is medieval in origin.
- Regular row plan with green at St Helens is of medieval origin.
- Remains of post-medieval enclosed *open-field* strips at St Helens derive from the village's medieval open-field system.



- Medieval earthworks in Centurion's Copse are associated with Wolverton Manorial Settlement.
- Historic buildings include medieval churches of Brading and Yaverland, and remains of medieval church tower at St Helens.
  - Early secular buildings include a 16<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed building at Brading and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Yaverland Manor
  - Vernacular buildings include stone-built farmsteads and cottages of 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century date.
  - Other significant buildings include 18<sup>th</sup> Century Parish Church of St Helens, late 18<sup>th</sup> century country house of 'The Priory' and 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century brick buildings which are concentrated in Brading, St Helens and Bembridge.
- Some surviving small parks and gardens of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.
- Extent of former Brading Haven is clearly recognisable on the ground and provides a link with the landscape of this Area prior to the reclamation of the Haven.
  - Earthworks of 16<sup>th</sup> century date are associated with reclamation of haven.
  - The embankment of the former railway line from St Helens and Bembridge, dating from 1877-1880, is associated with the final reclamation of the haven.
- Railway line of 1864 from Ryde to Shanklin runs through this HEAP Area with a railway station at Brading.

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

- Key historical influences on present day landscape character include settlement patterns, road patterns and field patterns of medieval origin, the reclamation of Brading Haven, the development of Bembridge as a small holiday and residential village in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the built environment of historic settlements.

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

- In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Priory Bay and Bembridge were noted, not so much as popular tourist destinations, but for the holiday homes of wealthy *overners*.
  - Bembridge is known as a yachting centre, home to Brading Haven Yacht club and Bembridge Sailing Club, with a marina at Bembridge Harbour.
  - Bembridge Windmill and Bembridge Coastguard Station are landmarks associated with the village.
  - Bembridge Airport is particularly associated with the manufacture of the Islander and Trislander planes.
  - Bembridge's rock ledges and rock pools provide a distinctive character to its foreshore.
  - Today the beaches of Priory Bay, Bembridge, and Whitecliff Bay are well known to holiday makers and also valued by Island residents.
- St Helens is associated with the infamous Sophie Dawes, 19<sup>th</sup> century mistress of the Duc de Bourbon and daughter of local smuggler Dickie Dawes.
  - At an earlier date St Helens was famous for its fresh spring water, which was taken on board by mariners preparing for a long voyage.
  - 'Holystones', used for scrubbing the decks of ships, were pieces of natural rock collected from the ledges around St Helens and thought to be so-named because they came from the site of St Helens Church.
- The picturesque historic town of Brading is very popular as a tourist attraction.
  - The Oglander family is associated with the town (although their estate of Nunwell has been included in the *Northern Lowlands Area*.) Several Oglander family tombs can be seen in the church.
  - At the foot of Brading Down stands 'Little Jane's Cottage', the home of Jane Squibb who died of consumption here aged 15 and was immortalized for her piety in 'Annals of the Poor' by the Rev Leigh Richmond, Curate of Brading from 1797 to 1805.
- Much of this Area is of great ecological value, including Whitecliff Bay and Bembridge Ledges, Brading Marshes, St Helens Duver and St Helens Ledges.

- St Helens is valued by residents and local people for its historic character.
- Long-distance coastal path and other rights of way are valued by tourists and residents.

### **Research and Documentation**

- Historic Environment Record is basic resource for archaeology, built environment and historic landscape character (includes HLC layer).
- Extensive Urban Survey of Isle of Wight's Historic Towns includes reports on Brading and St Helens (Edwards 1999e and Edwards 1999f).
- For reclamation of Brading Haven see Martin (2004a and 2004b) at [www.iwhistory.org.uk](http://www.iwhistory.org.uk) and 'The Old Sea Wall, Brading, Isle of Wight' (WCA Heritage 2006).
  - Further research is required into reclamation of Sandown Level.
- Isle of Wight Gardens Trust Register (unpublished) contains descriptions of 'The Priory', 'Steyne House', 'Bembridge House' and other properties in this HEAP Area.
- Conservation Area Appraisals have been published by the Isle of Wight Council for Brading, St Helens and St Helens Duver. East Yar Fluvial and Coastal Strategy (in preparation) includes this Area. <http://www.coastalwight.gov.uk/easternyarstrategy.htm>
- An RSPB Management Plan has been prepared for the Brading Marshes Reserve.
- Brading Town Council is creating a Town Plan covering local planning, natural environment and archaeology.

### **Amenity and Education**

- Access to seaside beaches,
- Access to coastal path and other rights of way.
- Cycle route on former railway embankment from Brading to St Helens and Bembridge.
- Access to RSPB reserve at Brading marshes.
- Dinosaur Isle, run by the Isle of Wight Council's Museum Service, is a purpose-built dinosaur museum and visitor attraction. <http://www.dinosaurisle.com/>
- Commercial attractions include Bembridge Maritime and Shipwreck Centre and Brading Wax Works.
- Brading Town Council Action Plan sets out proposals for projects to enhance and interpret the natural and historic environment.
  - Brading station has been recently refurbished as a heritage centre by the Brading Trust and Brading Town Council
- Brading Station provides the only access to the AONB via rail.

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

- Stratified Palaeolithic material at Priory Bay.
- Defensive ditches at Yaverland may be significant for a better understanding of the Island's Iron Age history.
- Earthworks of the manorial settlement of Wolverton, in Centurion's Copse, are significant because there are relatively few archaeological remains relating to medieval settlement on the Isle of Wight.
- Historic field patterns, especially those in eastern part of Bembridge Isle.
- Historic settlement plans of medieval origin at Brading and St Helens.
- Bembridge is a good example of a small seaside resort developing from an existing hamlet in early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Reclamations embankments around Brading Haven and marshes reclaimed from the former haven.
- Sandown Level, reclaimed at an unknown date and requiring further study.

## **VULNERABILITY**

### **Rarity and Typicality**

- Stratified Palaeolithic material has been found at only a few sites on the Isle of Wight, one of which is Priory Bay.
- *Co-axial* pattern of fields and tracks within Bembridge Isle is unknown elsewhere on Isle of Wight and may possibly be of prehistoric or Roman origin, as with similar patterns in East Anglia (Rippon 1991, Williamson 1998), although the Bembridge Isle example is of much smaller size.
- Settlement morphology of St Helens comprising a regular-row settlement with a green and associated regular field system is almost unique on the Isle of Wight (although common in other parts of the country).
  - A similar planned settlement may possibly have been laid out at Freshwater Green in the Middle Ages (Margham 1992) but the evidence is not conclusive (see *Freshwater Isle* HEAP document).
- Bembridge Haven represents the only reclamation scheme of this size on the Isle of Wight although other smaller examples of land reclamation occur in the *Northern Lowlands* (e.g. at Newtown).

### **Coherence**

- Outline of former Brading Haven can be clearly traced.
- Historic field patterns have retained their coherence between St Helens and Nettlestone, and at the western end of Bembridge Isle.
- Outline of former open-field system south of Yaverland corresponds in part with the outline of a late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing estate but this estate is not well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Victorian and Edwardian development has affected the earlier historic landscape in the Bembridge area but has added another layer of historic interest.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century residential and tourist developments have left only fragmentary remains of the co-axial field system within Bembridge Isle.
- Later 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development has surrounded (but not obliterated) earlier settlement patterns at Brading, St Helens and Bembridge and has affected the coherence of the historic landscape at Nettlestone and Yaverland.
- In a few places holiday parks are quite dominant in the landscape but generally fit within the boundaries of older features.

### **Condition and Fragility**

- Constantly eroding cliffs causes loss of archaeological material, particularly at Priory Bay and Redcliff.
- The condition of the medieval manorial earthworks in Centurion's Copse needs to be assessed.
- Fragmentary surviving remains of field patterns at St Helens and Bembridge are vulnerable to loss of boundaries.
- Brading Town Council plans to repair the old sea wall.

## CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

### Forces for Change

- Sea level rise associated with climate change will affect coast and reclaimed grazing marshes.
- Development pressures within rural settlements may be fairly limited as forthcoming Island Plan is likely to identify land allocations for large-scale economic or housing development mainly in Medina Valley and Ryde Areas.
  - Nevertheless, there may be pressure for development in the grounds of historic properties.
- Changes in pattern of tourism may have an impact on historic landscape.
  - There may be proposals for change of use relating to holiday parks and camp sites.
  - Proposals for new tourist facilities and attractions at Sandown Bay may be put forward in an 'Area Action Plan' linked to the Island Plan.
  - Proposals for upgrading Bembridge Airport may be discussed in *The Island Plan*.
- Changes in agriculture may have an impact on the historic landscape.

### Management Issues.

- Historic landscape character should guide the location and design of future change in the landscape, including housing development, economic development, tourism development and roads. The HEAP, the Isle of Wight *HLC*, and the *character appraisals* completed for Brading, St Helens and St Helens Duver can be used to guide change but there is a need for a *character appraisal* relating to Bembridge.
- The landscape components listed below exemplify particularly significant aspects of historic landscape character within *Brading Haven and Bembridge Isle* and have particular management needs.
  - Brading has a *regular-row plan* comprising house plots laid out on either side of the High Street, surrounded by later development. The original plan relates to Brading's early development as a small medieval planned town. Future development should respect surviving elements of the medieval town plan as well the historic built environment.
  - St Helens is significant as a *green village*, associated with regular *open-fields*. The village plan survives although later development has encroached upon the former *open-field* strips to the north and south of the village. Future developments should respect components of the village plan and associated former field boundaries as well as the historic built environment.
  - Bembridge dates largely from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, consisting only of a tiny hamlet and isolated farms before that date. However, its layout is based upon an earlier but regular pattern of roads and enclosed *open-field* strips which does not occur elsewhere on the Isle of Wight. Future development should respect the historic road pattern and surviving historic boundaries as well as the historic built environment.
  - Bembridge Village is a significant example of a small coastal resort of early 19<sup>th</sup> century and requires a Character Appraisal.
  - Brading Marshes and Sandown Level are significant examples of reclaimed land. Reclamation earthworks require conservation and management and the archaeological evidence of reclamation requires further study (see Martin 2004a and WCA Heritage 2006).
  - Sustaining grazing marsh on former Brading Haven and Sandown Level in the face of sea level rise is a major management issue. Managed retreat will be necessary in this area eventually. However, because of the designated nature conservation sites, the current approach is to 'hold the line' for at least 50 years, thereby maintaining freshwater grazing marsh.
  - RSPB currently manage Brading Marsh and intend to remove invasive trees and scrub within the marsh, on the old reclamation embankments and at Brading Quay and to carry out a programme of restoration and interpretation.

- Proposals for Sandown Bay linked to *Island Plan* or other strategic plans should avoid development on Sandown Level which would detract from the historic character and ecology of the area and might be unsustainable.
- There is a landscape issue related to the use of the uncompleted Brading Golf course for landfill.
- Management issues relating to the archaeology of this Area are as follows:
  - Need for monitoring and adequate recording of Palaeolithic material eroding from cliffs at Priory Bay.
  - Earthworks relating to the manorial settlement of Wolverton, in Centurion's Copse should be reassessed and considered for statutory protection by means of scheduling. Any management of the copse that might involve the disturbance of buried deposits should be undertaken only after archaeological advice.

### **Conservation Designations**

- A relatively small part of this Area is within the *AONB*, comprising the Foreland area of Bembridge and land to the north and south of the chalk ridge, including Yaverland Manor.
- There are no *Scheduled Monuments* within this Area.
- There are *Conservation Areas* at Brading, St Helens and St Helens Duver.
- There are sixty *Listed Buildings* within this Area.
  - Three of these are Grade I (Yaverland Manor and the parish churches of Brading and Yaverland).
  - Grade II buildings include the Old Town Hall, stocks, whipping post, pound and bull ring at Brading; The Castle, Eddington Manor and the remains of the old church at St Helens; The Priory at Seaview; Bembridge Lodge, Bembridge Windmill and Steyne House; and various farmhouses and cottages within the Area.
- The Priory, The Castle and Steyne House are listed as Historic Parks and Gardens of Local Interest by the Isle of Wight Council in the *UDP*.
- Brading Marshes and the coastline from Foreland to Horestone Point lie within the Solent and Southampton Water *RAMSAR* and *SPA* sites.
- The coastline from Yaverland to Bembridge Point falls within the South Wight Maritime *SAC* and a part of Brading Marshes lies within the Solent and Isle of Wight lagoons *SAC*.
- The *SSSIs* of Whitecliff Bay and Bembridge Ledges, Bembridge School and Cliffs and part of Bembridge Down lie within this Area.
- There are *SINCs* at Priory Woods, Steyne Wood, Breeches Copse, Centurion's Copse, Marshcombe Copse, Nodes Point Mead, Brading Marsh North, Morton Marsh and Sandown Levels.

### **FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

The *Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions* are generic and applicable to the whole Island. However, some actions are particularly relevant to the management issues identified for this Area and these are listed below.

- A10.** Completion of Coastal HEAP, drawing on existing Coastal audit and HLC; identifying management objectives and actions, proposals for adequate recording of eroding coastal archaeology and funding sources.
- A11.** Seek funding for long term coastal archaeology recording project in response to coastal erosion.
- A12.** Complete field patterns HEAP.
- A13.** Identify field patterns of significance.
- A14.** Complete Rural Settlement HEAP
- A16.** Completion of character appraisals for existing and potential Conservation Areas, using appropriate HLC and HEAP data.
- A17.** Investigate and record condition of archaeological earthworks.
- A20.** Complete Valley Floor HEAP.

- A22.** Complete HEAP for Parkland/Designed Landscapes.
- A23.** Complete HEAP for Roads, Lanes, Tracks and Rail Lines.
- A27.** Complete HEAP for Military and Defence HEAP Type.
- A28.** Complete Boundaries HEAP.
- A29.** Complete Climate Change HEAP.
- A32.** Facilitate supply of HEAP and HLC information to land managers, farm advisers, farmers and funding bodies.
- A34.** Advocate protection of buried archaeological sites within cultivated land.
- A35.** Promote conservation of historic farm buildings.
- A39.** Promote the retention of significant historic field patterns.
- A40.** Support traditional grazing and other appropriate management of valley floor Land through provision of historic environment information and land management advice
- A50.** Raise awareness of need to avoid disturbance of wetland peats.
- A51.** Support the conservation of historic parks, gardens, cemeteries and public open spaces, including appropriate restoration schemes which follow an agreed Conservation and Management Plan.
- A55.** Encourage inclusion of HEAP information in community based strategies or initiatives.
- L3.** Study of Island seaside resorts in terms of historic processes and historic character.
- L11.** Encourage, support and help identify funding for enhancement projects identified in Area HEAPs.
- L13.** Investigate compilation of a Tourism and Recreation Type HEAP covering holiday centres, camp sites, golf courses and allotments.