



## **Historic Environment Action Plan Isle of Wight Overview**

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

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## Isle of Wight HEAP Overview

### INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview of the Island's historic environment and emphasises the great variety of the historic landscape within the Island. It identifies the Island's essential historic landscape character as a rural area with small towns and rural settlements, having a strong maritime influence leading to the growth of tourism, seaside resorts and maritime industry. It also describes the Island's present social and economic character, including the growth of urban and suburban development from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The effects of insularity and links with the mainland are discussed.

The HEAP Overview emphasises the small scale of the Isle of Wight and of its various landscape components, and concludes that it has less capacity to absorb development than many mainland areas. The most important forces for change are identified, these being climate change, business and housing development, coastal erosion, and agricultural change. The need for a partnership approach to the management of the historic environment and historic landscape with the full involvement of farmers, landowners, and local residents is stated.

This Overview informs the *Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions* which are set out in a separate document. The Overview should be read in conjunction with *An Introduction to the HEAP* and the more detailed documents for individual HEAP Areas and HEAP Types.

### ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

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

- Isle of Wight lies 5-8 km off coast of Southern England, separated by the Solent.
- England's largest island, 382 square kilometres in area.
- 96 km of coast, varying greatly. Solent coast is punctuated by tidal inlets and estuaries, southern coast by *chines*.
- All three main rivers are, or have been, tidal estuaries for part of their length.
- Approximately 36 km long west-east by 22 km wide north-south.
- Characterised by great variety of geology and landscape.
- Central chalk ridge runs west-east across the Island and there is a second block of chalk downland in south-east Wight. Lower-lying clays, limestones and gravels occur to the north of the central chalk ridge with Greensand and Wealden deposits to the south.

#### **Defining Attributes**

- Isle of Wight is a Unitary Local Authority.
- Population of 136,250, most of which is concentrated in centre, north and east of Island (Isle of Wight Council 2006, 2.2).
  - Largest town of Newport has population of 22,957 (2001 Census). It is the Island's principal administrative and retail centre and only large inland settlement.
  - Other main towns of Ryde, Cowes, East Cowes, Sandown and Shanklin are all on the coast.
  - In recent years population appears to have been increasing at an above average rate as a result of inward migration.
- Western and southern parts of the Island are rural in character with small towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads.
- 51% of land is within Isle of Wight AONB  
<http://www.wightaonb.org.uk>
- National Trust owns and looks after 10% of the land  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/isleofwight/](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/isleofwight/).

- For most of 20<sup>th</sup> century Island's economy was based on seaside tourism, manufacturing and farming.
  - Today, financial and business services are of growing importance and the public sector (including Prison Service) is largest employer on Island. Tourism remains significant and the Island is home to niche manufacturing industries.
  - Agriculture accounts for a large percentage of land use but a very small percentage of employment.
- Based on measures such as wages, productivity, educational attainment, GVA per head and unemployment, the Island ranks below the regional average (Isle of Wight Council 2006, 2.8).
  - However, recent economic growth has been above average.

### HEAP Areas and Types

- 15 HEAP Areas have been defined, based on the 'Isle of Wight Historic Landscape Characterisation' (Basford 2008).
  - These 15 Areas represent a remarkable diversity of historic landscape character within the small physical entity of the Island (see *An Introduction to the Isle of Wight HEAP* and documents for individual HEAP Areas).
- 13 HEAP Types have been defined, also based on the 'Isle of Wight Historic Landscape Characterisation' (see *Introduction to the Isle of Wight HEAP* and documents for individual HEAP Types).
  - *Field Patterns* occupy 68% of land area.
  - *Open Land* includes downland and heathland. Unimproved and unenclosed chalk downland accounts for approx.2% of land area but much of Island's chalk downland is improved grassland or cultivated. Heathland is a very minor component of the present Island landscape but was important until post-medieval times.
  - *Coastal Land* includes salt-marsh, mudflats, cliffs and reclaimed land.
  - *Woodland* (including valley-floor woodland) occupies just less than 10% of land area; around the national average but less than that of some mainland counties in South East Region such as Hampshire and Surrey.
  - *Valley Floor Land* is significant but not such an important component of the historic landscape as in Hampshire or Wiltshire. The Island's non-tidal river valleys are short and narrow in comparison with those of neighbouring mainland counties.
  - *Settlement* is very varied, including small villages and dispersed settlement, medieval planned towns, post-medieval towns, 19<sup>th</sup> century seaside resorts and 20<sup>th</sup> century development.
  - Other HEAP Types include *Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes, Industry, Military and Defence, Recreation and Tourism, Communications, Mineral Extraction and Boundaries*.

### Principal Historical Processes

- Isle of Wight was part of mainland for much of geological history with final separation by about 4000 BC (Drummond and McInnes ed. 2001, Chapter 1).
  - Earliest Lower Palaeolithic human occupation may date from 500,000 BC.
  - Earliest inhabitants were hunter-gatherers exploiting resources of land, coast and river. Coastal resources were important throughout prehistoric period.
  - Until c.4000 BC, when cultivation started, much of landscape was covered in woodland, as elsewhere in Britain.
- Earliest *Neolithic* farmers cultivated small areas of cleared woodland on chalk downs and greensand.
  - Much of the chalk remained wooded until succeeding *Bronze Age* when extensive clearance took place on chalk and greensand.
  - About 50% of England's woodland is thought to have been cleared for agriculture by 500 BC (Rackham 1986, 72) but specific figures for the Isle of Wight are not available.

- *Northern Lowlands* Area to the north of the chalk was a mosaic of woodland and clay heath in prehistoric times, probably with low levels of settlement and agriculture.
- Isle of Wight's tribal status and identity in the *Iron Age* is unknown but its capture is specifically recorded in Suetonius's account of the Roman Conquest of Britain. (Graves 1957, 275 – Vespasian 4)
- Basic continuity in both settlement and agriculture between the *Iron Age* and *Roman* period but as elsewhere in southern Britain local elite adopted a Romanised lifestyle and the landscape may have been affected by a more market based economy.
  - Principal settlement zones in Roman times appear to have been close to Chalk, with limited occupation and cultivation in north of Island except on lighter gravel soils and on *Thorley/Wellow Plain*. *Northern Lowlands* Area probably used mainly for extensive grazing and woodland products.
- Earliest Anglo-Saxon settlement dates from late 5<sup>th</sup> to late 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD
  - Isle of Wight was an independent kingdom until conquered by Wessex and converted to Christianity in AD 686.
  - Large Anglo-Saxon estates running from Solent to southern coast can be inferred from evidence for Anglo-Saxon 'mother parishes' and may have determined the boundaries of mother parishes (Margham 2000, 121-123).
  - Early estate centres seem to have been close to Chalk (e.g. Calbourne) with outlying farms supplying woodland and heathland products or used mainly for extensive grazing
  - Subsequent establishment of independent settlements away from the Chalk may reflect break up of large estates in later Anglo-Saxon period (Margham forthcoming)
  - Later Anglo-Saxon estates are recorded in charters dating post dating AD 900 (Margham 2005, 77-106; Margham 2007, 117-152).
  - Over 100 IW manors listed in Domesday Book (Munby ed. 1982).
  - Many Isle of Wight place-names of Old English origin or containing Old English elements are first recorded after the time of Domesday Book.
- Island has been vulnerable to attack since prehistoric times but earliest fortifications at Carisbrooke Castle may be early 11<sup>th</sup> century (Young 2000) although Tomalin (2002) has suggested a later-Roman date.
- After Norman Conquest the Island was ruled by quasi-independent lords for most of period until 1293 AD and many Island manors were under the direct control of these lords.
  - Effect of post-conquest lordship on landholding patterns and general development of landscape is unclear, although Parkhurst was utilised as a hunting forest, and a deer park was established nearby.
- Apart from Parkhurst, which was an unenclosed landscape of wood-pasture and heathland used for manorial grazing as well as hunting, much of the Island's woodland was enclosed and managed as a valuable, limited resource in medieval times. Much was probably coppiced but some wood pasture existed.
  - Woodland had been cleared for agriculture since prehistoric times but this process continued in Anglo-Saxon and medieval times.
  - Medieval *open fields* existed in most parts of the Island but did not dominate the landscape as in the English Midlands and appear to have been relatively scarce in the *Northern Lowlands* HEAP Area.
  - Large areas of open heathland on clay, gravel and greensand soils existed in Middle Ages and were used for extensive grazing.
  - Downland mainly used as manorial common grazing in medieval times.
- Medieval rural settlement was a mixture of small *nucleated villages*, church/manor complexes, small farm clusters and isolated farmsteads.
- Local lords established medieval towns at Newport, Yarmouth, Newtown and Brading.
- French raids affected prosperity in later Middle Ages. In Tudor times new coastal fortifications were erected and Carisbrooke Castle was strengthened.
  - 31 beacons are listed in a document of 1324. These were situated on high ground to give advance warning of French raids (Kökeritz 1940, lxxv-lxxx).

- Documentary sources suggest that depopulation of settlements was a particular problem on the Isle of Wight in the late medieval period but there is only limited archaeological evidence of settlement desertion (Basford 1980, 37-41).
- Enclosure of *open fields* started in the late Middle Ages and was largely complete by the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Some evidence for enclosure of open heathland in Middle Ages but many existing field patterns derive from post-medieval heathland enclosure.
  - Much downland was enclosed in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Few Isle of Wight *open fields* or *commons* were enclosed by Act of Parliament (but Parkhurst Forest was enclosed by Parliament in 1812).
- Small urban trading settlements developed at Cowes and East Cowes from 17<sup>th</sup> century. The twin towns became ship-building centres by 18<sup>th</sup> century and the Island's only industrial towns in 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Other post-medieval towns were developed to attract residents and visitors from mainland.
  - Ryde developed in Regency times
  - Shanklin & Ventnor developed in early 19<sup>th</sup> century; Sandown from 1850s.
  - Smaller resorts and coastal settlements developed throughout 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Marine residences were built by wealthy incomers from late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, culminating in rebuilding of Osborne House from 1845.
- Barracks were established during Napoleonic wars and coastal forts were built from 1850s and 1860s to deter French invasion. In 20<sup>th</sup> century several forts were manned during the two world wars.
- Population nearly quadrupled in 19<sup>th</sup> century from 22,345 in 1801 to 82,777 in 1901, mainly through growth of coastal towns. (Page ed.1912, 448-449).
- In early 20<sup>th</sup> century economy was mainly based on tourism, ship-building and agriculture. All these sectors declined in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Quality of landscape has been recognised by conservation bodies from 1922 when land on Isle of Wight was first acquired by National Trust.
  - Large part of Isle of Wight was designated an AONB in 1963.
- Population growth in later 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century due to in-migration as deaths on the Island have constantly exceeded births  
[http://www.iwight.com/living\\_here/stats/images/ComponentsofChange.pdf](http://www.iwight.com/living_here/stats/images/ComponentsofChange.pdf)
- In-migration in later 20<sup>th</sup> century was largely of retired people.
  - Peripheral development around seaside towns and rural settlements has been driven to some extent by demand for retirement homes.
- Much of Island landscape is still rural in character but economy is now dominated by service industries, public sector employment and tourism.

### **Archaeology and Built Environment (for details see HER)**

- *Palaeolithic* worked flint from stratified gravel deposits and as stray finds.
- *Mesolithic* worked flint from stratified deposits on northern coasts and estuaries and on southern coast, sometimes in association with hearths.
- Prehistoric worked flint dating from *Mesolithic* to *Bronze Age* is found in plough soil, mainly on the Lower Greensand.
- *Palaeo-environmental* submerged and inter-tidal deposits on northern coast and northern inlets. Prehistoric wooden structures in inter-tidal zone.
- Most notable prehistoric earthworks on chalk downs are *Bronze Age* burial mounds (*round barrows*). Other downland earthworks include a *Neolithic long barrow* and *mortuary enclosure*, prehistoric and Roman field systems and a single *Iron Age* hillfort.
  - Some prehistoric earthworks and monuments on the Greensand, including the *Neolithic Long Stone* and *Bronze Age round barrows*, but prehistoric earthworks are rare to the north of the central chalk ridge.
- Air photography provides evidence for buried prehistoric and later sites.

- At least seven Roman villas are known, as well as other Roman buildings.
  - No metalled Roman roads have been recorded but tracks would have linked villas and native settlements.
- Large Anglo-Saxon cemeteries at Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as smaller sites. Recent finds indicate existence of another large cemetery.
  - Little archaeological evidence for early Anglo-Saxon occupation sites but recent finds in the Bowcombe Valley indicate the existence of a Middle Saxon trading settlement (Ulmschneider 2003).
- At least nine of the Island's 31 churches and chapels of medieval origin probably occupy the sites of churches mentioned in Domesday Book but few contain Anglo-Saxon architecture.
  - Some surviving remains of medieval Quarr Abbey.
- Layouts of some rural settlements reflect their medieval origin but there is limited evidence of deliberate planning.
- Medieval gridded street plans survive at Newport, Yarmouth and Newtown.
- Newtown also has excellent evidence for medieval *burgage plots* and for fields in the form of enclosed open-field strips, with remnants of medieval *ridge and furrow*.
  - Limited evidence of medieval *ridge and furrow* elsewhere, mainly within Northern Lowlands HEAP Area.
  - Medieval *strip lynchets* and field enclosure banks have been recorded mainly on downs, e.g. at Chillerton and at Ashley Down.
- First definite evidence for use of Carisbrooke Castle site is a small Pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery located beneath courtyard (Young 2000, 190-191).
  - Oldest defensive use of site may be in early 11<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Existing stone defences from early 12<sup>th</sup> century with many later additions and alterations. Outer artillery circuit added in late Tudor times.
- 14<sup>th</sup> century St Catherine's Lighthouse attests to dangers of Island's south-west coast.
  - A number of shipwreck sites with extant remains are known, earliest being of probable 16<sup>th</sup> century date.
- Only about four high-status medieval secular buildings survive.
  - Good survival of post-medieval vernacular buildings, including stone manor houses and farmhouses, reflecting Island's varied geology.
  - A few grand 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century country houses, including Appuldurcombe, Norris and Osborne. Marine villas of similar period.
  - 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century town houses and civic buildings attest to development of Island towns.
  - Seaside resorts of Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor each have distinctive buildings and features associated with tourism.
- Some evidence for the Island's long association with sea-borne trade and ship building, mainly warehouses, sail-lofts, workers' housing and quasi industrial nature of East Cowes and West Cowes (in particular the Hammerhead Crane).
- Remains of post-medieval salterns at Newtown and elsewhere on Solent coast.
- Remains of water mills throughout Island and of tide mills on northern inlets.
- Yarmouth Castle is a well-preserved example of a Tudor coastal fort but remains of Cowes Castle are now incorporated in Royal Yacht Squadron.
- Remains of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century forts survive around coast in varied states of repair, some being of national significance.
- Remains of Island-wide railway infrastructure date from c.1860 onwards.
  - Much of this infrastructure consists of disused tracks, often now used as rights of way or cycle tracks.
  - Some parts of network remain in operation, including the electric line from Ryde Pier to Shanklin and steam trains operating from Havenstreet.

- 20<sup>th</sup> century communications infrastructure includes Ventnor Down Radar Station and TV masts on the downs at Rowridge and Chillerton.

### Relationship between HEAP Areas and HEAP Types

- HEAP Areas are differentiated by geology, topography, enclosure processes, woodland cover and settlement patterns. Farm holdings and estates frequently included land in more than one Area with different blocks of land having complementary uses e.g. a manor might hold arable land in *Arreton Valley* and common grazing land on *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.
- Most Areas contain a variety of the 13 Broad Types (see above under 'HEAP Areas and Types'. See also *HEAP Glossary*). However, certain Types or Sub-Types are concentrated within individual Areas
- *Field Patterns* are the dominant Broad Type within all Areas but the distribution of Field Pattern Sub-Types is uneven, reflecting different historical patterns of land use within the 15 Areas.
- All the other Broad Types can also be divided into Sub-Types, the distribution of which reflect historic land use e.g. *Ancient Woodland* surviving in *Northern Lowlands*.

### Links with Mainland, Europe and America

- Physical link with mainland until c.4000 BC.
- *Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age* and *Roman* artefacts attest to trade with mainland Britain. The Solent may have been an important anchorage in Roman times (Drummond and McInnes ed. 2001 Chapters 1 and 3).
- Before establishment of good land-based routes, communities in north part of Island may have had more links across the Solent than with rest of Island.
- Roman villas linked to market economy of Roman Britain.
  - Site of Brading Villa, close to former Brading Haven, was convenient for export and import of goods. Newport Villa was close to Medina Estuary. Gurnard Villa, on Solent coast, may have been linked to export of Bembridge Limestone (Isle of Wight County Council 1992, 17 and 27).
- Trade in Bembridge Limestone continued in Anglo-Saxon and medieval periods, with the stone being used particularly in Hampshire and Sussex.
- Earliest settlers of Anglo-Saxon period had links with Kent, New Forest and Meon Valley in Hampshire.
  - Finds indicate trade with mainland in Middle Saxon period.
  - Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions Viking raids from 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Although governed by lords of the Island after Norman Conquest, and later by Captains and Governors, the Isle of Wight was assessed with Hampshire in the Domesday Book and formed a part of that county until 1890 (Isle of Wight County Council 1990).
  - Significant links with Normandy in post-conquest period through lords of Island and religious houses.
  - Trading links between Quarr Abbey and France.
  - Medieval towns of Newport, Yarmouth, Brading and Newtown were ports trading with mainland. Shamlord (near Cowes), Ryde and St Helens were also listed as ports in medieval documents.
- [Sir Richard Worsley](#) of Appuldurcombe and his associates were granted a patent for a plantation in America by the Virginia Company in late 1618 or early 1619 and this was known as 'Isle of Wight County' from 1634.
- In 18<sup>th</sup> century Cowes was engaged in the rice trade with Carolina.
- Ships built on Isle of Wight from 18<sup>th</sup> century included warships for national purposes as well as yachts and small craft for local needs.
- Island was a holiday destination for mainland visitors from late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Dedicated ferry service across Solent (Ryde to Portsmouth) from 1796.
  - Railway services on mainland, linking with ferry services and with Island railways from 1860s, increased accessibility of Isle of Wight.

- Fast cross-Solent passenger services from 1965 (hovercraft, hydrofoil and catamaran) encouraged commuting to and from Island.
- At the present day most residents are not Island-born and this has resulted in the loss of Isle of Wight dialect and a decline in the local accent.

### Time-Depth

- Geological strata and processes ranging in date from 120 million years BC to a few thousand years BC.
- Buried archaeology and surface finds from *Palaeolithic* to present day.
- Archaeological earthworks and monuments from *Neolithic* to present day.
- Roads and tracks usually undatable but many have medieval or earlier origins.
- Village layouts and road patterns are often medieval in origin.
- Medieval town plans at Newport, Yarmouth, Brading and Newtown.
- Post-medieval towns retain much of their historic fabric and character.
- Surviving buildings from medieval period are mainly churches but there is a varied built heritage from 17<sup>th</sup> century and later.
- *Ancient woodland*, (pre 1600) occupies 2.4% of land area.
  - Other woodland (excluding valley floor woodland) occupies about 6.6% of land area and includes 20<sup>th</sup> century forestry (partly on ancient woodland sites), ornamental planting and secondary regeneration.
- Up to 9% of *field patterns* have medieval origins.
  - Approximately 30% have 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century origins
  - Approximately 30% have 19<sup>th</sup> century or 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century origins
  - Approximately 28% have 20<sup>th</sup> century origins,
  - Remainder are of unknown date.
- Little unenclosed heathland survives but many field patterns show evidence of enclosure from heathland, mainly in post-medieval period.
- Unenclosed downland retains much of its medieval character as common grazing land but also reflects earlier land uses going back to *Neolithic*.
- Valley floor land includes pastures and meadows enclosed from medieval common meadow and some grazing marsh.
- Coastal land includes land reclaimed from the sea in post-medieval times and the remains of post-medieval salterns.
- Chalk pits and stone quarries date from medieval period to present day.
- Surviving industrial structures and buildings, some connected with ship-building, date from 18<sup>th</sup> century to present day.
- Parks & gardens (both maintained and converted to other uses) date from 18<sup>th</sup> century to present day and are usually associated with historic country houses.
- Structures, buildings and sites associated with recreation and tourism from 19<sup>th</sup> century to present day.

### Contribution of Historic Landscape to Present Landscape Character

- All visible landscape is historic, including not only landmark monuments and buildings but also settlements, field and road patterns and HEAP types such as *open land* and *woodland*.
- Differing historical patterns of land use and settlement in the various HEAP Areas have created a diverse landscape character on the Island at present day.

### Values, Perceptions and Associations

- The Isle of Wight was known as 'Vectis' in Roman times and this name is still used at the present day, particularly in connection with local businesses.
  - Residents and frequent visitors usually refer to the Isle of Wight simply as 'The Island' and have done so since at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when Jane Austen commented sarcastically on this in *Mansfield Park*.
  - 'The Island' is shown on a map of Thomas Hardy's Wessex published with his novels.



- People born on the Isle of Wight were traditionally known as 'Caulkheads', a name associated with ship building.
- Many mainlanders associate the Isle of Wight with seaside holidays and yachting (especially Cowes Week).
- The Island is particularly associated with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, whose private family residence was at Osborne.
- Since the 1960s the Isle of Wight has been famous as the location of several pop festivals (Hinton 1995).
- Island's image as a holiday destination is mainly positive but there is a perception that coastal resorts need some regeneration and upgrading.
- In recent years the Island has become recognised as a destination for country walking holidays and for study of coastal geology and palaeontology (reflected in the sobriquet of 'Dinosaur Isle').
- The Island is valued for its varied landscape character. Most residents and visitors recognise at some level the geological, ecological and historical influences on landscape character but may not fully appreciate time-depth.
- Chalk downland is the landscape type most widely associated with Isle of Wight and the Needles are an iconic landscape feature.
- The Island was a significant location for the Picturesque Movement in art and architecture from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Many important artists drew and painted the Island landscape in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see McInnes 1993, Appendix).
- Julia Margaret Cameron, the pioneering Victorian portrait photographer, lived at Freshwater.
- Some famous literary figures lived on the Island (e.g. Tennyson) or visited (e.g. Keats, Dickens) in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - The Freshwater and Bonchurch areas were particularly popular with writers and artists.
  - Relatively few literary works appear to have been directly influenced by the Island landscape.
- In the later 20<sup>th</sup> century the Isle of Wight was often perceived, both by residents and visitors, as a world a little out of time; quiet, traditional and safe, with a slower pace of life.
  - Most residents felt a heightened sense of identity as part of the Island community, even if not born locally.
  - The historic environment reinforced this view to some extent. Building development, social change and agricultural change may have had less impact than in parts of the mainland.
  - Maintenance of the built environment in coastal resorts suffered to some extent as declining visitor numbers affected local prosperity.
- Many residents have perceived a change in the new millennium. The Island has become more vibrant (with a calendar of events including a revived Isle of Wight Pop Festival) but also less distinctive, and with a faster pace of life.

### Research and Documentation

- Historic Environment Record is basic resource for archaeology, built environment and HLC [http://www.iwight.com/living\\_here/planning/Archaeology/](http://www.iwight.com/living_here/planning/Archaeology/)
- Archaeological knowledge to 1980 is summarised in 'The Vectis Report' (Basford 1980).
- Isle of Wight HLC completed in 2006. HLC Report for EH and IWC describes HLC Types and Areas in detail and has full bibliography (Basford 2008).
- The 'Royal Survey of the Isle of Wight' (1558-1560) is a key source for local landscape history. A transcription is held by the County Record Office.
- Portable Antiquities Scheme has recorded many archaeological artefacts on the Island since 2003 and these include not only casual finds but also artefacts indicating the presence of previously unknown cemeteries, occupation sites, and trading sites of various periods. [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)

- New evidence from the Portable Antiquities Scheme could substantially alter our understanding of the Island's past but research is required to assess the significance of finds recorded under the scheme.
- The most important research topics should be identified in the forthcoming Isle of Wight County Archaeological Framework.
- The County Archaeological and Historic Environment Service has contributed to the Solent-Thames Research Framework by producing resource assessments for all archaeological periods.  
<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/content/index.jsp?contentid=-1701835648>
- The National Trust has prepared archaeological and historical landscape surveys for its holdings.
- The Isle of Wight Council is preparing Character Appraisals for all the Isle of Wight's Conservation Areas and is publishing these on the Isle of Wight Council's website as they are completed.
  - There are 28 existing Conservation Areas on the Isle of Wight and Conservation Area Appraisals have been completed for 12 Areas.
  - Approximately 30 additional areas have been highlighted as having
  - potential for Conservation Area status[http://www.iwight.com/living\\_here/conservation\\_and\\_design/](http://www.iwight.com/living_here/conservation_and_design/)
- IW AONB Management Plan (2004) has a section on historic environment.  
[http://www.wightaonb.org.uk/management/management\\_plan.asp](http://www.wightaonb.org.uk/management/management_plan.asp)
- Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan is a series of documents produced and published from 2000 to 2005, covering various local habitats and species.  
<http://www.wildonwight.co.uk/resources/publications/haps/index.html>
- Isle of Wight Geodiversity Action Plan is still in draft form (Munt 2005).
- Updated Isle of Wight Shoreline Management Plan is in preparation.  
<http://www.coastalwight.gov.uk/smp/main.htm#2>

### **Amenity and Education**

- Historic landscape throughout the Island is an important amenity for residents and visitors. All HEAP Areas and Types contribute to this amenity.
- AONB land is of particular landscape, amenity and educational value.
- Land held by the National Trust (mostly within the AONB) is of very high landscape, amenity and educational value, although sometimes sensitive to visitor pressures.
- Several important historic properties managed by English Heritage are open to the public (Carisbrooke Castle, Osborne House, Yarmouth Castle, Appuldurcombe House).
- Good rights of way network offers access to historic landscape.
- Archaeology, built environment and historic landscape all offer significant educational opportunities for local schoolchildren, mainland school parties and adult visitors.
- Informal environmental education, including that relating to the historic environment, is increasingly popular as a leisure and holiday activity.
- Educating local people and visitors about the historic environment will help to ensure its conservation and management.

### **Overall Significance**

- The overall significance of the Isle of Wight's historic environment relates to its development within an island context. This has influenced the historic environment in a number of ways:
  - It has tended to limit economic growth, certainly from medieval times, resulting in comparatively small settlements, and in a somewhat slower rate of agricultural and social change relative to the mainland.
  - It has given the Isle of Wight an enhanced military significance, resulting in the construction of significant fortifications, at least from the 11<sup>th</sup> century
  - It has influenced the development of ports, the ship-building industry and the tourism industry.

- The historic landscape of the Isle of Wight is particularly significant for its diversity within a small space.

### **Significant Features**

- 15 HEAP Areas and 13 HEAP Types have been identified as being significant components of the Island's historic landscape.
- Significant visible archaeological features of the Island's archaeology include large numbers of *Bronze Age* round barrows; two well preserved Roman villas at Brading and Newport; the defences of Carisbrooke Castle, Yarmouth Castle and Palmerstonian forts; and the medieval planned towns. Coastal and maritime sites, buried sites and metal-detected finds offer significant potential for improved understanding of the Island's historic environment.
- Most significant features of built environment are the distinctive vernacular rural buildings and the predominantly 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> buildings of the Island's small towns which reflect the varied origins and development of these towns.

### **VULNERABILITY**

#### **Rarity and Typicality**

- The Island can be viewed as a geological microcosm of south east England and its historic landscape character shows patterns typical of southern England.
  - However the varied mix of components within a small area and its insular nature makes the Island's historic character distinctive and special.
  - The Undercliff is an unusual geomorphological feature with only a few mainland parallels. Human settlement within the Undercliff has led to the development of an equally unusual historic landscape.
  - Unenclosed and unimproved chalk grassland is important both as a semi-natural habitat and as a historic landscape type. It is rare in national terms and the Isle of Wight has 10% of the total area surviving within South East England.

#### **Coherence**

- The Isle of Wight landscape is more varied and may have been subjected to a greater number of historical processes than within areas of similar size in the 'Highland Zone' of Britain, including parts of south-west England such as Dartmoor and much of Cornwall.
  - For this reason the Island landscape does not have such a high level of overall coherence as parts of south-west England.
  - However, slower development than in many parts of south-east England may have allowed more of the historic landscape framework to survive.
- Overall coherence of Island's historic landscape is affected to some extent by suburban and ribbon development and by intrusion of urban elements into rural areas.
- Recent leisure-related activity in the countryside has included the creation of some sports-related tracks and structures, and some structures relating to horse-keeping which have detracted from coherence of historic landscape.
- Overall coherence of historic Island towns varies. Some, such as Yarmouth and Ventnor, have not extended greatly beyond their original sites whereas others have been engulfed by recent suburban and ribbon development.
  - Loss of distinctive local buildings and construction of inappropriate new buildings has affected coherence of historic environment in some towns.
- Unsuitable planting of conifers in rural areas has had a significant impact on the coherence of the historic landscape.
- Inappropriate new buildings in the countryside have had an affect on the coherence of the historic landscape in some areas.
- Pace of development is increasing and pressure on land for industry and new housing means that historic landscape may become increasingly fragmented.

## Condition and Fragility

- The small scale of the Isle of Wight and its landscape components means that it has less capacity to absorb development than many mainland areas.
- Different HEAP Types and components are of variable fragility. Some general observations can be made on condition of HEAP Types and components but it is hoped to explore the condition and fragility of individual Types in future HEAP documents for those Types.
  - Field patterns have been affected negatively by boundary removal and lack of boundary management, particularly within some HEAP Areas.
  - There has been a relatively good survival of unenclosed chalk downland compared with other parts of South East England.
  - Forestry planting and lack of coppicing changed the character of many woods in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Forestry Commission and other organisations such as the National Trust, Woodland Trust, Wight Wildlife and Wight Nature now manage certain woodlands in order to enhance historic character and Forestry Commission grant schemes benefit private landowners undertaking sympathetic management.
  - Coastal historic landscape features and buildings are very vulnerable to coastal erosion.
  - Some valley floor grazing marsh has been restored or is being conserved.
  - Some parkland is now in agricultural use or not maintained in ways that sustain its historic character.
  - Distinctive character of some Island towns has been eroded as a result of economic decline, loss of locally significant buildings or inappropriate development.
  - Predominance of Newport as shopping centre from 1980s may have contributed to economic decline in outlying towns, and consequent change in character of town centres.
    - Newport's status as main shopping and business centre has led to traffic congestion on roads leading into town and changed the town's former 'market town' character.
  - The built environment in towns and villages is generally well maintained but individual historic buildings are at risk due to lack of maintenance.
  - Historic farm buildings have suffered from change of use, lack of maintenance and some inappropriate conversions.
  - 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century military sites and industrial structures are often in poor condition.
  - Many archaeological sites were destroyed in 20<sup>th</sup> century (Basford 1980) and sites continue to be affected by ploughing and coastal erosion, whilst earthworks are subject to erosion by human and animal activity.

## **CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

### Forces for Change

- Climate change and associated sea level rise is an important force for change world-wide but may have a particular impact on the Isle of Wight as an island at the southern limit of Britain. Effects may include:
  - Loss of archaeological material, buildings, historic landscape and natural features through increased rates of coastal erosion.
  - Changes in character of semi-natural habitats and in viability of species.
  - Change in character of countryside as new bio-fuel crops are introduced
  - Increased storm events likely to result in changes to environment.
  - Risk of increased flooding in valley floor areas.
  - Concentration of new development in areas at least risk from flooding.
  - Need for alternative energy sources, such as land-based and off-shore wind power, possibly affecting landscape character.

- Relatively rapid population increase, higher levels of economic activity than previously and a requirement to build more houses as set out in the South East Plan will be important drivers of change in the coming years.  
<http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/>
- Development, including associated infrastructure, is likely to have a significant effect on the historic environment around the Island's major towns but will be guided by 'The Island Plan'.  
[http://www.iwight.com/living\\_here/planning/Planning\\_Policy/Island\\_Plan/](http://www.iwight.com/living_here/planning/Planning_Policy/Island_Plan/)
- Decline in village infrastructure such as shops, post offices and affordable housing is changing identity of rural settlements.
- Changing economic forces are affecting agriculture locally with increased importance of horticulture and poultry and a dramatic decline in dairy and cattle. (Isle of Wight Rural Priorities Group 2008, Chapter 5).
  - These forces are likely to have an impact on the historic landscape, for instance the decline in dairying and cattle is affecting the *Northern Lowlands*.
  - In recent years a decline in economic viability of agriculture has tended to discourage the maintenance of historic boundaries and traditional buildings
  - Arable has declined slightly in recent years but it is expected that recent global price rises for grain (as more land is used for biofuel crops) may encourage growth in this sector.
  - Higher prices for wheat may lead to renewed pressure on unploughed marginal land and discourage farmers from taking marginal land out of cultivation.
  - The use of former pasturelands for leisure and amenity purposes (particularly the keeping of horse) is increasing and can have negative impacts on the historic landscape.
- Appropriate agri-environment schemes, especially Higher Level Stewardship, could benefit management of historic environment.
- Woodland planting schemes may reinforce or alter historic landscape character.
- The need to update the Island's tourism 'offer' will generate proposals which could have positive or negative effects on the historic environment.
- Landscape management programmes funded by schemes such as the Heritage Lottery Fund could benefit the historic environment.
- Government's new Heritage Protection Bill will have an impact on the management of the historic environment.

### Management Issues

- 'Island Plan' will be governed by the principle of sustainable development
  - The small scale of the Island landscape imposes constraints on capacity for sustainable development.
  - The place-shaping role of the 'Island Plan' should include a strong consideration of the appropriate scale and character of all development.
- New development should be designed to enhance the historic environment and to reinforce local character, distinctiveness and sense of place.
  - In planning future developments great care should be taken to assess the impact of proposed structures within the landscape, particularly when viewed from elevated positions (e.g. Carisbrooke Castle, Mount Joy).
- Need for overview of landscape issues throughout Island, not just in AONB.
  - This need may partly be met by the new Rural Forum/Partnership which will review, within a rural context, social, economic and environmental issues affecting the whole Island.
  - The proposed HEAP Partnership will also go some way to meet this need (see *HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions*).
- Need for a partnership approach to the conservation of the historic landscape with the full involvement of farmers, landowners, environmental managers and local community groups.

- BAP Partnership performs this role for natural environment and it is hoped that the proposed HEAP Partnership will perform a similar role for the historic environment.

### **Conservation Designations**

- National Landscape Designations
  - AONB covers 51% of Island
  - Tennyson *Heritage Coast* (from south of Totland to west of Ventnor) and Hamstead *Heritage Coast* (from east of Yarmouth to Gurnard Ledge).
- National or Statutory Historic Environment Designations
  - 119 *Scheduled Monuments*.
  - 1,910 *Listed Buildings* (28 Grade I).
  - 28 *Conservation Areas*.
  - 8 Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest on *English Heritage Register*.
- Local Historic Environment Designations
  - 30 buildings or structures on Isle of Wight Council *Local List* (Jan. 2008).
  - 27 Historic *Parks and Gardens of Local Interest* listed in UDP.
- International Natural Environment Designations
  - Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) 22,305Ha
  - Special Protection Areas (SPAs) – 1,736/4.57%
  - *Ramsar Sites* – 1620Ha/4.26%
- National Natural Environment Designations
  - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – 4,220Ha/11.1%
  - *National Nature Reserves* – 286Ha/0.75%
- Local Natural Environment Designations
  - Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) – 4,295Ha/11.3%
  - *Local Nature Reserves* – 79Ha/0.2%

### **FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

The HEAP *Vision, Aims, Objectives and Actions* document covers the whole of the Island and sets out generic objectives and proposed actions relevant to all HEAP Areas and Types. This document will guide the work of the HEAP Steering Group for the next five years. HEAP documents for the individual Areas and Types list the actions especially relevant in particular contexts.