

Historic Environment Character Zone

KHINT Kintbury Hinterland

Historic Character

This zone of recent and historic fields, farms and some wooded areas lies in two parts to the southwest and southeast of Kintbury village. Historically, most of the zone was covered by irregularly-shaped fields. These had been created by the start of the 18th century through piecemeal enclosure of Kintbury's open fields. A small area of Parliamentary fields created from open field existed in the west of the zone. A large block of ancient woodland and a small area of common grazing existed on Irish Hill at the eastern end of the zone. Two farms, Hamstead Holt Farm and Kintbury Holt Farm, and a small group of houses at Irish Hill were the only settlement in the zone.

There has been significant change in this zone and the majority of historic enclosures have been reorganised into modern fields more suited to mechanised agriculture. This has been carried out within the existing grain of the landscape and has not adversely affected its character. Woodland cover has remained fairly stable despite some clearance for agriculture at Irish Hill. Small rectilinear tree plantations have been created around Hamstead Holt Farm. Although these do not fit well within the existing grain of the landscape they have had limited impact due to their small extent. Further tree-plantations, new developments and land-use changes could easily tip this balance and compromise the zone if its historic character is not considered.

Historic Environment

HER records are scattered across the zone and are comprised of a few findspots and buried sites and some cropmarks and earthworks recorded during the National Mapping Programme. Until 2006, no commercial archaeological work has been carried out, although there were significant amateur investigations at the sewage works in the 1950s prior to recent developer-funded work at this site.

Evidence for early prehistoric activity is scarce, with a Mesolithic occupation site the only known evidence in the zone. This, however, is significant as one of an important concentration of Mesolithic sites along the Kennet Valley, and the discovery of more features or material of this date is likely. It is probable that this zone was utilised in later prehistory and the NMP recorded cropmarks of field systems to the west of zone which might be later prehistoric or Romano-British in date. Two Early Bronze Age pits containing collared urns were also located at the sewage treatment works.

A possible Romano-British villa site was discovered during development of the sewage works in the 1950s and partially excavated. A bath house with mosaics was recorded, but the core of the complex has not been located. However the 2006-08 archaeological investigations exposed a late Iron Age to early Roman field ditch, which had been replaced by boundary features in the late Roman or post-Roman period. Three ovens or hearths were also excavated, producing a radiocarbon date between the late 4th century AD and the beginning of the 6th century.

Apart from this glimpse of post-Roman occupation, no evidence of early medieval activity has been found in the zone. Later medieval activity is limited (though farms may date to this period) and the only actual material from this period is from Irish Hill (pot and manacle and earthwork field boundaries).

Evidence for post-medieval activity is limited, but includes a possible roadside settlement near the eastern fringe of the Kintbury and the Irish Hill whiting works (powdered calcium carbonate

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for putty) extant from at least the 18th century to the 1930s. There are two listed buildings recorded on the HER, a 17th century cottage and the 18th century Kintbury Holt farmhouse. The farm at Hamstead Holt was recorded in some detail under the RCHME's English Farmsteads Survey.

Historic Environment Potential

The zone has the potential to contain Mesolithic material, but the location and quality of any deposits that may exist is unclear. Later prehistoric and Romano-British features are likely in the area of cropmark field systems west of Kintbury. Further deposits and structures relating to the late Iron Age-Roman possible villa and the landscape that supported it are likely to be present. Away from farmsteads, there has been limited study of the historic building stock and it is possible that further significant structures could be identified.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- Intensive modern agriculture threatens the resource on buried archaeological sites.
- Development pressure from the expansion of Kintbury.
- Archaeological records are sparse and further clarification of the nature and extent of any deposits would be welcome.
- There is a need to ensure that any new tree planting avoids the visually and archaeologically erosive impacts of recent plantations.

Research Potential

- What is the nature and significance of the Mesolithic activity?
- Does the paucity of prehistoric material in the zone represent a true indication of the levels of activity?
- Does the Roman Bath House relate to a villa?
- What is the nature and character of the post Roman activity at the Sewage works?
- What evidence survives for the early, late and post-medieval settlement?
- How significant are the post-medieval structural elements and buildings?
- Does archaeological evidence for the whiting works survive at Irish Hill?