

VSWP Valleys South-Western Parklands

Historic Character

This is a mixed zone composed of ancient and other old woodlands, recent fields and parkland areas. Historically, much of the zone was covered by the parkland of Wallingtons. This parkland also utilised blocks of ancient and old woodland lying between the house and Inkpen. East of Wallingtons was a large swathe of coppiced ancient woodland and a minor parkland around Titcombe Manor. The parklands were unlike those to the north in *KVSWP* as they were much more wooded. The western part of the zone was covered by irregularly-shaped fields around Balsdon Farm.

There has been significant change to the zone. Wallingtons House has been the home of a religious community since the mid 20th century and its parkland is much altered. The wooded areas of the parkland are the only parts that survive and other areas now used for recreation or as grazing fields. Balsdon Farm has been converted to a stud farm. New buildings have been constructed around the farm and the majority of its historic fields have been rearranged into paddocks. Most of the other historic fields have been reorganised into holdings more suited to modern, mechanised farming.

Historic Environment

There are very few HER records in this zone and almost no archaeological work has been carried out here. No definite prehistoric or Romano-British material or features have been recorded in this zone despite activity of these dates being present in surrounding zones. A cropmarked field system which may be later prehistoric or Romano-British in date has been mapped at the northern edge of the area near Wallingtons.

Balsdon and Titcombe were mentioned as two of the seven manors of Kintbury in Domesday but it is unclear whether these early medieval settlements were on the site of the present farm or manor. There is a late medieval moat and well at Balsdon Farm, but the medieval farm buildings had become ruinous and were replaced in the early 19th century. The estate of Wallingtons is documented in the 12th century but it is believed that most of the house post-dates a fire in 1784, and was heavily altered in the late 19th century. There are several earthworks and fishponds within the woods at Titcombe and Wallingtons which are thought to be late medieval in date.

Post-medieval records are scarce and the zone has only a small stock of historic buildings. Titcombe Manor (called Titcomb Cottage in the 19th century) is the only listed building within the zone. Balsdon Farm and Folly Lodge are all at least early 19th century in date but little is known of these buildings. Little is known of the development of Wallingtons and its park. Early maps show most parkland lying to the north of the house and it is unclear when it was extended into this zone.

Historic Environment Potential

It is hard to assess the potential of this zone as so little is known about it. Much of the zone has been covered by woodland and parkland and both are land-uses that can mask any archaeological features present. It is possible that prehistoric and Romano-British features may be present, but it is hard to estimate the nature and quality of any deposits on present evidence. Deposits relating to the early development of settlement are likely to survive at Balsdon Farm and Titcombe Manor. Features relating to medieval wood management, such as woodbanks, may survive within the areas of ancient woodland. 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.
- More detail is needed on the historic building stock to ensure appropriate policies are put in place to conserve this resource.
- Development pressure.
- Management of woodlands, conservation of surviving ancient woodlands and replacement of plantations with more mixed tree coverage.

Research Priorities

- What was the nature of land use in the prehistoric and Romano-British periods? Does the paucity of evidence represent a true picture of the level of activity here?
- What are the origins of the settlements in the zone? Does evidence for early medieval settlement activity survive?
- What are the origins of the moated site at Balsdon? Why was this located away from any other settlement activity?
- What are the origins of the farmsteads in the zone?
- Do the historic buildings in the zone contain any information about post-medieval and modern changes to land use and agricultural systems?