

Historic Environment Character Zone

WVDW Winterbourne Valley and Downs West

Historic Character

This is an arable zone, with some woods, on the high-downs of the Lambourn-Winterbourne watershed. It contains the historic settlements of Chaddleworth, Fawley and South Fawley. Historically, the north and south parts of the zone were covered by a mix of open field and common downland grazing with small blocks of ancient woodland. Most open field and some downland was enclosed into regular and irregularly-shaped fields by the 18th century, although areas at Chaddleworth were enclosed by Act of Parliament in the early 19th century. In the centre of the zone, the landscape was different and was comprised of irregularly-shaped fields and blocks of woodland with numerous farms. It is likely that this was an area of medieval and later assartment. Areas of downland and open field at the northern edge of the zone remained unenclosed into the 20th Century. The settlement pattern was also different to adjacent areas and consisted of hamlets and farms. There were only two parks in the zone, at Woolley Park and Chaddleworth House.

There has been major change since the mid-20th century due to intensification of cultivation and a shift to mechanised farming. The remaining open fields and most of the downland were enclosed into fields, and most historic fields have been altered. Much field alteration was by boundary removal and, in some places, stubs of these boundaries remain. The racing industry has had an impact on this zone, a large area of paddocks has been created at Fawley and most downland areas not enclosed into fields have become gallops. One patch of downland grassland, at Woolley Down, now exists. Blocks of ancient woodland south of Chaddleworth were cleared to create fields in the 20th century. Farnborough Copse, Tinker's Corner and parts of most other ancient woods have been cleared of native tree cover and replanted with other species. These have a different tree-cover. Lack the biodiversity of ancient woodlands and clearance is likely to have damaged historic wood features. Only small growth in new tree-cover has occurred, mostly in the east of the zone. Some plantations fit with the established grain of the landscape, whilst others, particularly those at Woolley Park Farm, jar with the landscape. Settlement growth has been minor and is concentrated on Chaddleworth. Most new housing is composed of small developments between its historic settlement nuclei.

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HER records exist across the zone but are unevenly distributed, with the majority in the north and a sparser distribution in the south. Records are dominated by cropmarks and many were discovered through the National Mapping Programme. The zone was also covered by the Berkshire Downs Survey and some excavation and fieldwalking has been carried out by local archaeological groups. Few developer-funded projects have occurred, largely reflecting limited development activity in this zone. Three scheduled ancient monuments exist in the zone, a bowl barrow in Field Copse, a group of three barrows near Greenways Cottage and Whatcombe deserted medieval village.

Activity prior to the Bronze Age is very poorly documented and limited to finds of flintwork near Leckhampstead, a Mesolithic tool from Fawley and fragments of a Neolithic saddle quern from Farnborough Down. Bronze Age activity is dominated by definite and probable round barrows. The barrows are all located on the upper slopes of dry valleys incised into the watershed and include the scheduled bowl barrow and barrow group. Iron Age activity is quite widespread in the northern part of the zone and includes cropmarks of nine banjo enclosures. An enclosed settlement, formed by three banjo enclosures, exists at Wellhill Road. None of the enclosures

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have been excavated so their precise dating is unclear. Extensive cropmarks of later prehistoric/Romano-British field systems exist across the northern part of the zone.

Romano-British activity is evidenced by the cropmarked field systems, but other material is uncommon with only two small groups of records at South Fawley and southeast of Chaddleworth. Pottery was recovered from fieldwalking near South Fawley and a cropmark of a ditched enclosure with possible Roman building(s?) exist west of the village and immediately south of the scheduled barrow group. Four Roman inhumation burials with grave goods were found north of the village in the 19th century and may be part of a larger cemetery. A rectangular cropmark exists southeast of Chaddleworth and fieldwalking on site has produced Roman coins and pottery.

Evidence of early medieval activity is quite scarce. A settlement was recorded at Chaddleworth in 960 and also mentioned in Domesday. Settlement existed at one of the Fawleys by the 11th century as Fawley was recorded in Domesday. This is thought to refer to Fawley and not South Fawley, but the earliest record of each place in its own right is from the 13th century. Nothing is known of the nature or extent of each settlement during the early medieval period as no deposits of this period have yet been found. The only other record of this period is a secondary inhumation at the scheduled barrow group. A man and a young girl had been buried together in the northernmost barrow. The man had been decapitated and his head was found resting against the arms of the girl.

Three late medieval buildings exist in the zone, St. Andrew's, Chaddleworth, and 16th century farmhouses at Warren Farm and Crane's Farm. St. Andrew's has been heavily restored but retains 11th and 13th century elements. The medieval church at Fawley was demolished in the 1860s and replaced by a Victorian Gothic church. South Fawley had developed into a settlement in its own right by the 13th century but it is unclear when it was established. Three deserted medieval villages, Whatcombe, Henley and Woolley are recorded. Henley had contracted to a farm by the start of the 19th century and no visible traces of settlement have been recorded at the site. Whatcombe was also only a farm by this date. Earthworks of medieval settlement survive and are scheduled. The farm is now a stud and it is unclear what affect recent development at the site has had on buried features. Woolley contained a chapel, possibly established in the early medieval period, and cropmarks of the village have been recorded. An earthwork of unknown function in nearby woodland has been ascribed a medieval date and may be related to the village.

Post-medieval records are mainly of buildings. There are 47 listed buildings in the zone, mostly 18th century farm buildings, although a large number of 17th century timber-framed cottages are listed. Two 16th century farmhouses, the churches and some tombs, three milestones and the country houses at Woolley Park and Chaddleworth are also listed. The only other record is of probable chalk extraction at Chaddleworth. Chaddleworth is designated as a Conservation Area.

Historic Environment Potential

Deposits of Bronze Age to Romano-British date are likely to exist across northern part of the zone. Evidence is less clear in the southern extent, but similar deposits may be encountered. The preservation of deposits could be varied, as ploughing since the medieval period has possibly truncated the archaeological layers. Deposits relating to early occupation may survive within historic settlement nuclei and any such deposits could be crucial to understanding the development of settlement in this zone. A high number of deserted medieval village sites exist in

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the zone and any deposits will be valuable as desertion is a poorly understood phenomenon in the district. The historic building stock is fairly well-studied, but it is possible that further significant buildings or structural elements may be identified.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- The open aspect of this zone is part of its historic character; will this be maintained with changing agricultural practices?
- Intensive modern agriculture threatens the resource on buried archaeological sites, of particular reference in this respect are the late Prehistoric banjo enclosures in this zone.
- Settlements are traditionally small and scattered. Development pressure may lead to settlement expansion that erodes this character.
- There are a small number of earthwork archaeological monuments that require careful management to ensure their preservation.
- A Conservation Area appraisal and management plan for Chaddleworth is overdue.
- More detail is needed on the historic building stock to ensure appropriate policies are put in place to conserve this resource. Of particular relevance is the small number of listed buildings which does not appear to be an accurate reflection of the significance of the building stock in these hamlets.
- Ancient woodland has not been well managed in recent years and this poses a threat to its survival.
- There is a need to ensure that any new tree planting avoids the visually and archaeologically erosive impacts of recent plantations. Where possible opportunities to soften the impact of recent plantations should be encouraged.

Research Priorities

- What was the nature of land use in the earlier Prehistoric period?
- Do the locations of the Bronze Age burial mounds tell us anything about the use of the landscape in this period?
- What is the nature of the Iron Age occupation at Wellhill Road?
- What is the date, function and character of the 'banjo' enclosures? What do they tell us about the landscape in the Iron Age?
- Where are the Romano-British settlements and how do they relate to the extensive field systems?
- Where were the early medieval (Saxon) settlements? What were their origins and how do they relate to the later medieval settlement pattern?
- Why were settlements deserted in this zone? What information do these deserted settlements contain for understanding how medieval population utilised the landscape?
- Do the surviving settlements represent surviving medieval foci?
- Do the historic buildings in the zone contain any information about post-medieval and modern changes to land use and agricultural systems?