

## *Historic Environment Character Zone*

### **IF Inkpen Fields**

#### **Historic Character**

This is a zone of large arable fields with some small wooded areas lying at the foot of the downs scarp, extending a short distance into Wiltshire. This was part of an open field system in the medieval period, but had been enclosed into large, regularly-shaped fields by the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Several field barns were located within the fields. The only settlement in the zone was Lower Spray, a small farm on the Wiltshire border. No other land-uses were present within this zone. The regularity of the fields and lack of woodland gave a very rectilinear, ordered grain and open feel to the landscape.

Over the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century around two-thirds of the fields have been altered due to changes in agriculture. Most have had boundaries removed to create even larger fields. Several tree plantations have been created bringing a wooded element to the landscape that was previously absent. Some historic farm buildings at Lower Spray and all of the field barns have been demolished. Despite these changes, the historic character of the zone has not yet been substantially altered.

#### **Historic Environment**

HER records are very scarce in this zone and the only recorded archaeological work that has been carried out is aerial photograph analysis and transcription by the National Mapping Programme. The evidence is dominated by cropmarks of linear features and enclosures which are thought to be of later prehistoric and Romano-British date. A Romano-British settlement or villa is also believed to lie in this zone as building material of this date has been discovered during deep ploughing and a stone building, thought to be Roman, is referred to in an Anglo-Saxon charter. A further Scheduled Monument, known as Wansdyke, forms the part of the eastern boundary of this zone; it is ascribed to the early medieval period and has been associated with further stretches of a military linear earthwork of the same name in Wiltshire and Somerset. Buildings are mapped at Lower Spray from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century onwards but little else is known about when the farm was established. During the Second World War a replica of an important French gun battery was built in the east of the zone for training purposes. There are no above ground remains of this but it is possible that cropmarks in the area indicate that elements of it survive below-ground.

#### **Historic Environment Potential**

Based on cropmark evidence and finds of building material it is likely that remains of later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement and agriculture are present within the zone. Deep-ploughing has demonstrated that material of this date survives but at the same time the process is truncating such deposits. The nature and quality of any deposits is therefore hard to estimate on present evidence. The majority of historic buildings have been demolished and little is known about the remaining structures at Lower Spray. It is possible that these buildings could be of historic or architectural interest.

## *Historic Environment Character Zone*

### **Historic Environment Action Plan**

#### Conservation Issues

- Continued arable cultivation is a threat to the archaeological resource.
- There is an ongoing need to understand in more detail the nature and extent of the archaeological resource.
- 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

- Is the high potential for later prehistoric and Romano-British deposits across the zone real or perceived?
- Can the location, character and extent of the Roman Building be established?
- Can the earthwork known as Wansdyke be better dated and understood?
- What are the date and functions of historic buildings in the zone?
- What are the origins and nature of Lower Spray Farm?
- Does archaeological evidence for the military preparations for D-Day survive?