

Historic Environment Character Zone

WINK West of Inkpen

Historic Character

This zone comprises a mix of fields, woodlands and some farms. Historically, the zone was characterised by small irregularly-shaped fields and blocks of ancient woodland. Many of the fields may be assarts and created through medieval clearance of woodland. Small farms were the only settlement present and were scattered throughout this zone. The shape of the fields and woods in the zone gave a very irregular grain to the landscape.

There has been significant alteration to this zone as a result of agricultural changes and increase in tree-cover. The adoption of mechanised farming has led to the reorganisation of the majority of fields in order to create larger, more regular holdings. About a quarter of the historic fields in this zone have been left largely unaltered and the largest area of these is in the south-east of the zone near Inkpen. The majority of historic farms and smallholdings in the zone have become disused and have been demolished. Only two of the four farm sites recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of the zone are now inhabited. A big increase in tree-cover has occurred despite some clearance of historic woodlands. Several plantations have been created on areas of former fields. These have utilised former field boundaries as the edges and internal divisions of the plantations, and therefore fit relatively well into the grain of the landscape. However, overall these changes have created a much more regularly-shaped, more wooded and sparsely settled landscape, and fragmented the historic character of this zone.

Historic Environment

HER records are very sparse and are present only at the northern and southern edges of the zone. The zone was covered by the National Mapping Programme, but little other archaeological work has been carried out. Low levels of prehistoric activity have been documented in this zone. This includes an earthwork bowl barrow, Scheduled Monument 19026, which lies in a field under arable cultivation at the southern edge of the zone. The barrow lies in an area of cropmarked field systems of probable later prehistoric or Romano-British date. However, no Romano-British material has been recorded from this zone. Evidence of activity for this period has been located to the south-west, but it is unclear the extent to which this zone may have been used. A further Scheduled Monument, known as Wansdyke, forms part of the southern 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. However, no other early medieval evidence has been recovered from this zone. An earthwork moat, thought to be the site of a 13th century manor, lies within an area of recent woodland plantation at the northern edge of the zone. Post-medieval evidence is scarce and confined to the farmsteads, and finds of 17th and 18th century gold coins during the demolition of Sadler's Farm. Little is known about the surviving historic building stock of the zone and no records were made of the historic farm buildings that were demolished.

Historic Environment Potential

The potential of this zone is very hard to assess as so few records exist. Sub-surface deposits of prehistoric date are likely in the area of the cropmarked field systems and around the barrow. Prehistoric material may also be present in other parts of the zone but this is hard to assess on the basis of present evidence. Romano-British material has not been documented but deposits of this date may exist in this zone, again, it is not possible to be more specific on the basis of present evidence. Little is known about the development of the farm settlements in this zone. Deposits and/or structural remains relating to early settlement are likely to survive at the historic farm sites. Any such deposits will be important in understanding the development of settlement

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in this zone. There has been no study of the historic building stock, and it is possible that significant structures could be identified in the zone.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- This is one of the better preserved historic landscapes in the district and there is a need to ensure this is understood and communicated.
- 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?
- Can the earthwork known as Wansdyke be better dated and understood?
- What is the date of the field system recorded in the southern part of the zone? Is this indicative of broader 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?