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Historic Environment Action Plan Arreton Valley

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HEAP for Arreton Valley

INTRODUCTION

This HEAP Area has been defined on the basis of geology, topography, land use and settlement patterns which differentiate it from other HEAP areas.

This HEAP identifies essential characteristics of the *Arreton Valley* HEAP Area as its open and exposed landscape with few native trees, its intensive agriculture and horticulture, its historic settlement patterns and buildings, and its valley floor pastures.

The most significant features of this historic landscape, the most important forces for change, and key management issues are considered. Actions particularly relevant to this Area are identified from those listed in the Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions.

ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

Location, Geology and Topography

- Geology is mainly Ferruginous Sands of the Lower Greensand Series with overlying Gravel Terraces in much of the area. Some Plateau Gravel deposits. Thin bands of Sandrock, Carstone, Gault and Upper Greensand along northern edge of area on boundary with *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.
- Alluvium in river valleys.
- Main watercourse is Eastern Yar which enters this HEAP Area at Great Budbridge and flows north east towards Newchurch.
 - Tributary streams flow into Yar.
 - The eastern side of the Yar Valley is crossed by drainage ditches to the south of Horringford.
 - Low-lying land to the east of Moor Farm and south of Bathingbourne has larger drainage canals
- Land is generally below 50m OD with maximum altitude of 62m OD near Arreton Gore Cemetery.
- Topography comprises relatively flat interfluvial areas dissected by the Yar Valley and by the valleys of its tributaries, with steeper slopes on the valley side to the north of the Yar.
- Light, fertile and easily worked soils. Much is Grade 2 Agricultural Land, in contrast with most of the Island's agricultural land which is Grade 3 or 4, except on the *Atherfield Coastal Plain*.

Defining Attributes and Principal HEAP Types

- Rural area with a focus on agriculture.
- Fairly open and exposed landscape with straight, treeless field boundaries and relatively few hedgerows.
- Landscape is broken up to some extent by the valleys of the Eastern Yar and its tributaries, containing small pasture fields and areas of damp rough grazing.
- Intensive arable agriculture and horticulture are the dominant land uses.
- *Medium sized field patterns* (over 6 hectares) account for over 41% of all field patterns, by area, within the *Arreton Valley* and *large field patterns* (over 12 hectares) account for over 24%. This compares with nearly 27% of medium field patterns and nearly 24% of large field patterns for the Island as a whole.
 - The *Arreton Valley* thus has a higher proportion of medium and large fields than the Island as a whole (65% compared with 51%).
 - However, in comparison with the *Atherfield Coastal Plain* and the *Thorley/Wellow Plain*, the *Arreton Valley* has a much lower proportion of large field patterns.

- The predominance of medium-sized fields equates more closely with the *South Wight Sandstone and Gravel Area*.
- Intensive agriculture and horticulture are the dominant land uses, with vegetables and salad crops under polythene and within large glasshouses.
 - Two large former horticultural glasshouses are now retail/tourist attractions, one being a garden centre and the other housing an exotic wildlife collection.
 - Crops under polythene and fleece are very visible in the landscape, particularly when viewed from the Downend to Brading road which runs along the top of the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*.
- Less woodland within the *Arreton Valley* than in any of the other HEAP Areas.
 - Deciduous woodland is entirely confined to river valleys and generally comprises small copses, except for a linear strip of woodland on eastern edge of area near Wackland.
 - Late 20th century coniferous shelterbelts surround horticultural glasshouses.
- Settlement is on the spring line (as at Arreton), immediately above the valley floor (e.g. Redway, Heasley, Horringford) or within the relatively flat interfluvial areas dissected by the valleys of streams flowing into the Yar (e.g. Hale Manor, Moor Farm, Lessland Farm).
 - The two settlements of Arreton and Merstone are mainly linear in form, although there is also a church/manor complex at Arreton.
 - This HEAP Area also has a considerable number of dispersed farmsteads and manor houses.
- The busy A3056 traverses this area from Crouchers Cross in the west to Apse Heath in the east, passing through Arreton Village.
 - Various minor roads run in a north-south direction.
- The Newport-Sandown Cycle Track passes through the area, utilising the former railway track.
- This area is traversed by the long distance 'Bembridge Trail' (at the interface with the East Wight Chalk Ridge), the 'River Yar Trail' and the 'Stenbury Trail'.
 - There are other bridleways and footpaths although these are not as plentiful as in the downland edge areas.
- Tourist facilities at Arreton Manor, Arreton Barns and Amazon World.

Principal Historical Processes

- Flint assemblages and crop marks provide evidence of prehistoric activity.
- No structures indicative of Iron Age or Roman occupation have been identified within this HEAP Area to date.
- Early Anglo-Saxon place-names within this area include Arreton, Bathingbourne and Horringford.
- Arreton was an important Anglo-Saxon estate centre.
 - The early Anglo-Saxon estate of Arreton may have stretched right across the Island from north to south and Arreton Church may have been a *minster church* serving the whole area (Margham 2000, 122).
 - The Arreton estate occupied a smaller area by late Anglo-Saxon times.
 - Additional parishes had been created at Whippingham, Godshill and Niton by the time of Domesday Book and may have been taken out of the territory originally served by Arreton Church.
 - Four 10th century charters describe various grants of land around Bathingbourne that fell within the medieval parishes of Godshill and Newchurch (Margham 2007) and which probably represent a stage in the fragmentation of the Arreton estate.
- A long linear boundary is recorded in the HER traversing the Island north-south from Whippingham to St Lawrence.
 - Its route within this HEAP Area runs along Merstone Lane and several field boundaries and then along the Godshill/Arreton Parish Boundary from Merstone Junction to Little Kennerley (followed by the route of the dismantled railway line).

- The boundary hints at a possible Anglo-Saxon division of land at variance with the suggested model of the Arreton mother parish and requires further research to ascertain the authenticity and age of this linear feature.
- If the boundary does represent an ancient territorial division it could account for the curious proximity of Merstone Lane and East Lane which run parallel to each other and only a short distance apart.
- The Godshill-Shanklin road (A3020) and Bathingbourne Lane appear to be referred to in the Bathingbourne charters. Estate boundaries described in the charters appear to have followed the same course as the present day routes of Watery Lane and Ventnor Road to the west and south of Winford.
 - Other minor roads running north-south within this HEAP Area could be of similar antiquity to Bathingbourne Lane.
 - Margham (2007, 126) has emphasised the former importance of north-south routeways on the Isle of Wight within 'landscapes of colonisation', providing access from the estate centres on the margins of the chalk to extensively used land within the southern vale.
- Parts of the medieval parishes of Arreton, Newchurch and Godshill fell within this HEAP Area.
- Arreton is one of only two Island churches to contain Anglo-Saxon work (the other being Freshwater) and the church is recorded in Domesday Book.
- Manors are recorded in Domesday Book at Arreton, Bathingbourne, Hale, Heasley, Lessland and Merston.
- The village of Arreton includes a church/manor house element originating in Anglo-Saxon times and a separate *interrupted-row* settlement running along the main road to the south east of the church and manor. This may be medieval in origin and is shown on the OS 1793 map.
- Merstone, also shown on the 1793 map, is a straggling linear settlement associated with nearby Merston Manor but without a medieval church.
- There are manor houses at Arreton, Merston, Great Budbridge, Horringford, Heasley, Hale and Redway, and a lost manor house site at Perreton, as well as other farmsteads of medieval origin, suggesting that the Arreton Valley was an important agricultural area in the Middle Ages (but see below for land use).
 - The manor houses and farmsteads are generally situated close to valley-floor pasture and meadow except for the Arreton church/manor complex, which is a spring line settlement situated immediately below the East Wight Chalk Ridge. Meadow land was worth more than arable land in medieval times (Rackham 1986, 337).
 - Arreton Manor belonged to Quarr Abbey in medieval times, as did Heasley Manor, sometimes referred to as a *grange* (Hockey 1970, 47-48).
 - In the late Middle Ages a tithe barn was built at Arreton (Peters 1964). It is now a ruin, its fine roof having been lost in the 1970s, but an early 17th century stone dove house remains (Lloyd and Pevsner 2006, 77).
- A water mill was recorded at Arreton in Domesday Book. Before 1200 a fulling mill was recorded at Quarr Abbey's grange of Heasley.
- The evidence for former *open-field* within this HEAP Area appears to be surprisingly limited considering the fertility and lightness of the soil and the existence of so many medieval manors although the extent of post-medieval reorganisation could have obliterated traces of this.
 - Field names around Arreton Manor, recorded in medieval documents relating to Quarr Abbey land, include West field, East Field and South Field (Hockey 1001, Map 5). These names and other references in the medieval documents indicate that some land close to the church and Arreton Manor house was *open-field* in the Middle Ages although fields around the manor house shown on the OS 1793 map are in the form of small blocks rather than enclosed strips.
 - 1559 Survey of the Isle of Wight mentions 'the common field of Merston'.

- HLC data suggests other possible areas of open field to the south of Arreton, to the north of Merston Manor and in the Bachelors Farm area but these had all been enclosed by the time of the OS 1793 map.
- The area between Heasley Manor House and Arreton Down contained very regular fields by the time of the OS 1793 map.
 - The straight green road now known as 'Shepherd's Lane' led through these regular fields from Heasley to Arreton Down. This road is referred to as 'the road through the moor at Heasley' in a 13th century agreement between Quarr Abbey and Hugh Le Fleming (Hockey 1991, 31).
 - The agreement made between Quarr Abbey and Hugh Le Fleming refers to the use of the road for carting *marl* from below Arreton Down. (Marl was chalk or chalky clay used as a soil improver for cultivated fields).
- In and before the Middle Ages there would probably have been larger areas of un-drained low-lying wetland than survive today.
 - This type of land was known as 'moor' on the Isle of Wight and elsewhere although in northern England 'moors' are generally upland grazing areas.
 - The situation of Moor Farm, within this HEAP Area, is appropriate for its name.
 - The place-name 'Tidearding Mor', mentioned in one of the 10th century Bathingbourne charters, also indicates this land use.
 - Tidelingham was a strip of valley-floor land beside a tributary of the Eastern Yar running northward from the present Moor Farm to a point east of Great Budbridge Manor House (Hockey 1991, 45- 46, Map 4). It was granted to Quarr Abbey in the 12th century and a confirmation of the grant c.1200 states that it was given to the abbey 'for making there a meadow'.
 - Green shading on the OS 1793 map indicates the presence of small meadows, pastures and wetlands on the valley floor adjacent to the River Yar and tributary streams, land uses which still exist in these areas today.
 - Drainage channels on the east bank of the Yar, near Redway, and in the low-lying land to the east of Moor Farm are first shown on 19th century maps.
 - The construction of the Sandown-Newport railway along the Yar Valley must have entailed some changes to the course of the river but no published information on the subject has been identified.
- On the higher inter-fluvial land the fields shown on the 1793 map are generally larger and more regular than those in the *Newchurch Environs and Sandown Bay Area* and this characteristic has persisted to the present day.
 - These fairly large, regular fields suggest post-medieval enclosure from heathland or rough pasture although some of this land is now fertile horticultural land.
 - However, it is also possible that these fields had first been cultivated as open fields in medieval times but subject to enclosure in the 18th century.
- Hale Common, to the south of Hale Manor Farm, had been enclosed by the time of the OS 1793 map and the buildings shown beside the main road may have been former squatters' cottages.
 - 'The Fighting Cocks' Public House seems to occupy land on the former common. (N.B The Chequers Public House, near Rookley, is in a similar marginal position on the edge of Bleak Down Common.)
 - Cock-fighting was the sort of dubious activity that was often undertaken at the margins, on common land. However, in Newchurch the actual cock-fighting may have taken place at nearby Wackland and simply have been commemorated in the name of the public house (see Winter 1984, 196; Phillips 2008).
- Many of the field patterns shown on the OS 1793 map were further amalgamated or reorganised in the 19th and 20th centuries, resulting in considerable boundary loss.
- In the 1870s the Sandown to Newport railway line was constructed, much of the route running through this HEAP Area. A link to Ventnor, via Merstone Junction, was added in the 1890s.

- These railway lines closed in the 1950s. The Newport-Sandown cycle track, mainly on the former railway line, was completed in 2004.
- Large horticultural glasshouses were constructed in the later 20th century.
- Many of the houses in Arreton and Merstone are of 20th century date but the basic pattern shown on the 1793 OS map is still recognisable in the modern settlements, although two recent housing estate developments at Arreton have considerably expanded the size of the village.
- A number of artificial ponds have been constructed within this HEAP Area in recent years for agricultural use, fishing or wildlife.

Archaeology and Built Environment (details in HER)

- No surviving prehistoric earthworks within this HEAP Area.
- A considerable number of *crop marks* are shown on air photographs mainly to the west of Hale Manor and around Arreton Street.
 - These crop marks suggest prehistoric activity but have not been evaluated or subject to field investigation.
- Prehistoric flint scatters have been recorded from various locations including Heasley Farm (Trott 2001).
- A hoard of Bronze Age metal implements was found near Arreton Church in about 1835.
- Two Iron Age coins and one scatter of Iron Age pottery from this Area are recorded in the HER.
- Only stray finds and one surface scatter dating to the Roman period have been recorded.
- A medieval *midden* and a few surface scatters of medieval pottery have been recorded.
- Metal artefacts of various dates have been recorded under the Portable Antiquities Scheme.
- The boundaries of the four Anglo-Saxon century estates described in 10th century charters can still be traced within the modern landscape, consisting largely of watercourses which in some cases also served as medieval parish boundaries (Margham 2007, 145-148).
 - Some sections of the boundary run along existing roads (Bathingbourne Lane, Watery Lane and Ventnor Road) or along existing field boundaries.
- Anglo-Saxon work in Arreton Church includes west doorway and window in chancel whilst remainder of church is mainly 12th and 13th century (Lloyd and Pevsner 2006, 73-74).
- Possible medieval fish-ponds in grounds of Heasley Manor and Great Budbridge Manor.
- Heasley Manor House contains some 15th century work but was largely rebuilt from the 16th century, with 18th century enlargements and alterations, as well as later work.
- Arreton Manor is a typical and well-preserved example of an early to mid 17th century Island stone manor house, retaining contemporary woodwork within.
- Merston Manor, built c.1615, is unusual for an Island house of period in being mainly of brick. Other manor houses within the HEAP Area, including Hale, Great Budbridge and Horringford, are of 17th or 18th century date.
- There are also listed farmhouses of 17th century date at Perreton and Lessland and of 18th century date at Little Budbridge, Broadfields, Redway, Old Princelett and Wackland.
- Stickworth is an 18th century 'Gentry House' now divided between various owners, set within the remains of a small park,

Relationships with other HEAP Areas

- Arreton, the chief settlement in this area, is close to the interface with the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*. Most of the Island's early Anglo-Saxon settlements are close to the chalk downs, and in general its rural nucleated settlements are usually at the interface between different HEAP Areas.
 - The chalk downs were important both in the economy of the large Anglo-Saxon estates (which may have stretched from the Solent to the English Channel and thus included many types of land in their farming territories) and of the smaller holdings that existed in the late Anglo-Saxon and Post-Conquest periods.

- The downs were used for common grazing by the tenants of medieval manors and individual downs were named after the manors to which they belonged e.g. Arreton Down.
- The main A3056 road connects the Arreton Valley with Newport, the *South Wight Sandstone and Gravel* HEAP Area and the *Newchurch Environs and Sandown Bay* HEAP Area. Minor roads and paths connect the Arreton Valley with the *East Wight Chalk Ridge* and the *South Wight Downland Edge*.

Time-Depth

- Elements in the landscape predating the Norman Conquest include some roads and tracks, estate and parish boundaries, the dispersed settlement pattern represented by the manor houses, the association between Arreton Manor and church, and architectural features within the church.
- Medieval elements in the landscape may include the basic settlement patterns at Arreton Street and Merstone.
- Field patterns have been modified very substantially since the time of the OS 1793 map but the basic patterns shown on this map can still be recognised although few links remain with the medieval agricultural landscape outside the valley floor areas.
- Valley floor pastures have been altered less than field patterns since 1793, despite some later drainage of valley floor land, and provide a link with medieval land use patterns.

Contribution of Historic Landscape to Present Landscape Character

- Historic patterns of settlement, buildings, communications and valley floor land use all contribute to landscape character. Modern field patterns, although much altered, are based to a considerable extent on patterns shown on the OS 1793 map.

Values, Perceptions and Associations

- This area is perceived locally as being more important for agriculture than for the environment or for tourism, although there are tourist facilities within the area.
- Arreton's Conservation Area status and the Listed Building designations within the Area reflect the value of its historic buildings.
- Arreton is particularly associated with 'The Dairyman's Daughter', a local cottager who appeared in the early 19th century book of the same name by the Rev. Leigh Richmond, a committed evangelical Christian who wrote morally improving tales.
 - The gravestone of the Dairyman's Daughter, Elizabeth Wallbridge, is in Arreton churchyard.

Research and Documentation

- Historic Environment Record is basic resource for archaeology, built environment and historic landscape character (includes HLC layer).
- 'The Anglo-Saxon Charter Bounds of the Isle of Wight Pt 2' (Margham 2007).
- 'The Charters of Quarr Abbey' (Hockey 1991) covers the holdings of Arreton, Heasley and Tidelingham within this Area.
- Descriptions of most architecturally significant manor houses in Lloyd and Pevsner (2006).
- East Wight Fluvial and Coastal Strategy includes this Area.
<http://www.coastalwight.gov.uk/easternyarstrategy.htm>

Amenity and Education

- The long distance 'Bembridge Tail', 'Stenbury Trail' and 'River Yar Trail' enable walkers to appreciate different parts of this HEAP Area.
 - Various other Rights of Way within this Area, including 'Shepherd's Lane', a bridleway which dates for medieval times (see above).

- The Newport-Sandown Cycleway (National Cycle Network Route 23) enables cyclists and walkers to appreciate the setting of the Arreton Valley away from busy roads. It offers close-up views of historic manor houses and long distance views of the *South Wight Downland* and *South Wight Downland Edge*.
- Tourist facilities include Arreton Manor, Arreton Barns and Amazon World.
- Main educational opportunities are in connection with the area's historic buildings and with the historic use of valley floor land.

Features of Particular Significance within this HEAP Area

- Roads, tracks and boundaries relating to Anglo-Saxon estates.
- Historic settlement pattern, including Arreton church/manor house complex, linear settlements at Arreton and Merstone, and dispersed manor houses.
- Valley floor land.
- Historic buildings.

VULNERABILITY

Rarity and Typicality

- Non-estuarine valley floor land is fairly limited within the Isle of Wight as a whole but is well represented within this HEAP Area.

Coherence

- This HEAP Area has a coherent character overall, but one that owes as much to late 20th century agriculture and horticulture as to historic landscape features of earlier date.
- Coniferous shelter belts, particularly around glasshouses, affect the visual coherence of the historic landscape.

Condition and Fragility

- The component features of the historic landscape within this HEAP Area are, in general, more likely to be affected by positive or negative management inputs than by inherent fragility.

CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Forces for Change

- Climate change may lead to changes in cultivated crops (e.g. growth of biofuels).
- Changing agricultural trends and markets, including diversification.
- Possible pressure for increase in number of large greenhouses.
- Increasing use of plastics and fleece for horticulture.
- Gravel extraction
- Increase in motor traffic.

Management Issues

- Coniferous shelter belts are unrelated to the patterns of the historic landscape and affect its coherence.
- Heavy traffic on A3056 detracts from rural character of Area.
- Highway signs and installations, including those aimed at reducing vehicle speeds through Arreton village, are detracting from rural character of area.
- The 'Arreton Barns' tourist development could be more closely integrated with the historic landscape, for instance by better car parking arrangements, and the conservation of adjacent historic buildings.
 - 'Arreton Barns' lies within the Arreton Conservation Area and therefore the development needs to be considered in relation to the character and appearance of the designated area.

- The digging of modern ponds for agriculture, fishing or other purposes could disturb palaeo-ecological deposits and have an impact on wildlife.

Conservation Designations

- Only a very small part of this Area falls within the AONB. This consists of land at the base of the *East Wight Chalk Ridge*, including part of Shepherd's Lane.
- The site of the medieval monastic *grange* at Heasley Manor is a *Scheduled Monument*.
- The Arreton *Conservation Area* falls within this HEAP Area.
- 42 *Listed Buildings* within the HEAP Area. St George's Church, Arreton is Grade I, Arreton Manor, Heasley Manor and Merston Manor are Grade II*. All others are Grade II. These are mostly manor houses, farms and cottages.
- No historic parks and gardens on the *English Heritage Register*
- No historic parks and gardens of local importance listed in the *UDP*.
- No *SSSIs*.
- There are 10 *SINCs* within this HEAP Area: Perreton Down, Perreton Marsh, Newchurch Marshes (2 Sites), Horryngford Withy Bed, Redway Farm, Moor Farm, Great Budbridge, Arreton Withy Bed and Barton Withy Bed. Most of these *SINCs* occupy valley floor sites.

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

The Isle of Wight HEAP Objectives and Actions are set out in a separate document. These objectives and actions are generic and many of them are relevant to all HEAP Areas. Actions that are most relevant to this HEAP Area are cited below.

Complete Field Patterns HEAP.

A13 Identify field patterns of significance.

A14 Complete Rural Settlement HEAP.

A16 Completion of character appraisals for all existing and potential Conservation Areas, using appropriate HLC and HEAP data.

A19 Investigate funding and potential for 'ground-truthing' of selected AP sites.

A20 Complete Valley Floor HEAP.

A23 Completion of HEAP for Roads, Lanes and Tracks.

A24 Complete field survey of historic Rights of Way.

A26 Complete HEAP for Mineral Extraction.

A28 Complete Boundaries HEAP.

A29 Complete Climate Change HEAP.

A30 Investigate potential for projects to identify archaeological features within cultivated and non-cultivated land for all HEAP Areas.

A32 Facilitate the supply of HEAP and HLC information to land managers, farm advisers, farmers and funding bodies.

A33 Facilitate use of HLC information to assess importance of hedgerows affected by hedgerow removal notices.

A34 Advocate protection of buried archaeological features within cultivated land.

A35 Promote conservation of historic farm buildings.

A39 Promote the retention of significant historic field patterns.

A40 Support traditional grazing and other appropriate management of valley floor land.

A41 Ensure that woodland and forestry management and new tree planting does not damage archaeological features or historic landscape character

A44 Seek effective ways to lessen damage to road banks caused by motor traffic.

A45 Advocate maintenance of historic character of rural roads.

A48 Promote the conservation of historic buildings and their settings where these contribute significantly to the character of HEAP Areas.

A50 Raise awareness of the need to avoid disturbance of wetland peats likely to contain palaeo-environmental material.

- L2** Characterisation study of Isle of Wight farmsteads in relation to HEAP Areas.
- L4** Academic study of rural settlement patterns, including settlement morphology, significance of dispersed settlement and evidence of medieval desertion.
- L6** Encourage further research into valley floor land use throughout the Isle of Wight, to include use of documentary sources, map sources and fieldwork.
- L14** Encourage preparation of booklet on historic lanes and tracks.