

Archaeology on your Farm: Gaining from History

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is world famous for the range and quality of its archaeological remains. Looking after archaeology brings benefits for farmers and land managers, while enriching the landscape for everyone.

Although thousands of archaeological sites lie on farmland within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, many are now difficult to see on the surface. Many land managers are already protecting archaeological sites through Environmental Stewardship and other schemes but may not always know everything about what lies buried beneath the soil on their land. Greater awareness of archaeology rewards farmers as well as conserving a precious resource for the future.

This leaflet will help you find out what has already been found on your land, and help you benefit from any new discoveries. It contains contact details for people who can advise you about archaeology, and may assist with Environmental Stewardship and other management schemes. It informs you about your rights over archaeological objects found on your land, and lets you know what to do if you think you may have discovered something new.

Most advice about archaeology is offered free of charge. Many offices have dedicated staff whose job it is to speak to the public about archaeology. There is also a range of online resources that allow you to explore archaeology on your farm for yourself.

Top: Bokerley Dyke, Roman bank and ditch, March 2009. © Damerham Archaeology Project.



For most of human history archaeology provides the only record of our past. Archaeology can bring important benefits to farmers through Environmental Stewardship, as well as benefiting the region as a whole by increasing tourism and enhancing the qualities of our lives. The work of land managers is vital in conserving archaeological remains - ensuring knowledge about the past can be handed on to our children.

Protected Sites

Some archaeological sites are legally protected. These sites are called Scheduled Ancient Monuments. If you have a Scheduled Ancient Monument on your land you may well know about it already. However, only a small fraction of archaeological sites are scheduled. If you have a Scheduled Ancient Monument on your land you should have drawn up a management agreement for the site with English Heritage. Further advice on looking after these monuments is available from English Heritage. Contact details for your regional English Heritage Office are on the back page of this leaflet.



Above: The filled-in ditches of one end of the Neolithic monument known as the Dorset Cursus, visible in ploughed soil. A Neolithic long barrow survives as an earthwork, having been removed from cultivation. NMR 4285/02 16th February 1989 © Crown copyright.NMR.



Simon Meaden,
Myncen Farm,
has made important archaeological discoveries on his land, even

hosting an episode of Time Team on his farm.

"If you're in it for the long term you want to know what the history is. Finding out about the archaeology on my land has made me move more towards management strategies based on conservation and it has definitely helped my case for Higher Level Environmental Stewardship... Understanding the past makes you appreciate the history of where you farm".

Unprotected Sites

Most archaeological sites are not scheduled. There may be many sites or objects on your land that have been discovered over the years without your knowledge. Records will exist of these sites, perhaps in books or archaeological journals or on databases. The easiest way for you to find out what sites are known to exist on your farm is to contact your county archaeological service or the National Monuments Record. Their contact details are on the back page of this leaflet along with the websites for online databases which can tell you about sites and finds previously recorded in your area.

Unprotected archaeological sites may be harmed by agricultural activities. Ploughing can be particularly damaging, as the remains of archaeological features are seldom far beneath the surface. Agriculture, especially ploughing has been the single biggest cause of destruction to archaeological remains since 1945. Knowing where sites are means that you can take steps to reduce the chances of archaeological knowledge being lost.

Archaeology of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs

The most familiar archaeological sites on Cranborne Chase are the highly visible prehistoric earthworks – the hillforts, settlements, field systems and burial mounds. These belong mainly to the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages – between around 4000 BC and the arrival of the Romans some 2000 years ago. Many more similar sites – we have no idea how many – have disappeared from view over subsequent centuries, but traces will often survive beneath the ground and within the soil.



Above: Archaeological survey work at Damerham, Hampshire, August 2010. © Damerham Archaeology Project

With this wealth of prehistoric monuments, it is easy to overlook the fact that a much broader range of sites and time periods is present on the Chase. For instance, the Romans certainly left their mark on the landscape, while going back in time, flint tools dating back tens and even hundreds of thousands of years have been found.

Objects and debris from all periods may continue to survive in the soil even when all physical trace of a site has been destroyed. These ploughsoil scatters can still tell us a lot about the lives of the people who used to live in the area.

Equally of interest, but sometimes overlooked, are the abundant remains of more recent times – the villages, farms, fields and water meadows of the medieval and post-medieval periods through to the surviving traces of military activity during the First and Second World Wars. These aspects of Cranborne Chase's history are only just beginning to be explored.

What to do if you find an archaeological site

New archaeological sites are discovered all the time. Sometimes it is archaeologists who find them, but often it is the farmer who is the first to notice something. In recent years some remarkable archaeological finds have been made within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Farmers have played an important role in these discoveries. Clues to buried sites include humps and bumps on the surface, changes of colour in the soil, clusters of archaeological finds or unusual crop growth patterns.



Above: The circles on this photograph are Neolithic hengeshes and Bronze Age burial mounds. Around the church is a well-preserved henge which is not being ploughed. Around it, other hengeshes and the burial mounds have been ploughed flat over the years. *NMR 15326/06 13th July 1995 © Crown copyright.NMR.*

Many sites are found during building work or farm maintenance. When the earth is dug into remains may be revealed as unusual soil patterns, building debris, artefacts or other materials.

If you think that you have found a previously unknown archaeological site on your land, the best thing to do is to contact your county archaeological service for advice. Contact details for your county archaeological service are on the back page of this leaflet.

Your rights to objects found on your land

Archaeological materials are legally the property of the landowner. If you find objects you think might be of archaeological interest, you can contact your local Finds Liaison Officer who will let you know what it is. The Finds Liaison Officer will also make a record of when and where it was found. This information is very valuable to archaeologists trying to understand how people lived in the past. The Finds Liaison Officer will not keep the object without your consent.



Above: Archaeological survey work at Damerham, Hampshire, August 2010. © Damerham Archaeology Project



Martin Green,
Down Farm, benefits from archaeology as part of Higher Level Environmental Stewardship.

He has used his interest in archaeology to make Down Farm into an important educational centre.

“The most visually interesting area of the farm archaeologically – Wyke Down - now has public access. A trail in this area incorporates burial mounds, henges, site of a Neolithic building, and parts of the Dorset Cursus and Ackling Dyke Roman road. The farm is particularly well suited to provide an educational service with its rich archaeological and environmental resources.”

Photo copyright © Salisbury Newspapers Ltd

If you find gold and silver objects, groups of coins over 300 years old, or prehistoric objects made of base-metal (e.g. bronze) the Treasure Act says that you should report these finds within 14 days from the date that you realise they might be treasure. If your finds qualify as treasure a museum will have the option to buy these objects from you. You can expect to receive the full market value for them, payable to you as the landowner.

Many landowners are approached by metal-detectorists wanting to look for objects on their land. If you are approached in this way you should be aware that, even if the detectorist finds the object, it belongs to you by law. Responsible metal-detectorists will usually draw up an agreement with the landowner offering to share the rewards.

Some county councils within the AONB have Codes of Conduct for metal-detectorists. It is a good idea to find out whether detectorists on your land have signed up to these codes. Remember - no one has the right to take any archaeological object from your land without your permission.

Where to go for Advice about Archaeology :

To find out about archaeology on your land:

Dorset: Dorset Historic Environment Record,
Environmental Services,
Dorset County Council, County Hall,
Colliton Park, Dorchester,
Dorset DT1 1XJ
Tel: 01305 224277
Email: c.j.pinder@dorsetcc.gov.uk
Web: www.dorsetforyou.com

Somerset: Somerset Historic Environment Record,
Somerset County Council,
Taunton Castle, Taunton,
Somerset, TA1 4AA
Tel: 01823 255089
Email: heritage@somerset.gov.uk
Web:
www.somerset.gov.uk/archives/hes/index.htm

The National Monuments Record:

Enquiry & Research Services
National Monuments Record
Kemble Drive
Swindon, SN2 2GZ
Tel: 01793 414600
Email: nmrinfo@english-heritage.org.uk
Web: www.english-heritage.org.uk/nmr

Hampshire: Hampshire Archaeology and Historic Building Record,
Landscape Planning and Heritage Group,
Environment Department, Capital House,
48 – 52 Andover Road, Winchester,
Hampshire, SO23 7BH
Tel: 01962 832338
Email: environmental@hants.gov.uk
Web: www3.hants.gov.uk/landscape-and-heritage/historic-environment.htm

Wiltshire: Wiltshire and Swindon Sites and Monuments Record,
The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre,
Cocklebury Road,
Chippenham. SN15 3QN
Tel: 01249 705503
Email: archaeology@wiltshire.gov.uk
Web: <http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/smr>

English Heritage:

English Heritage South-East Office
Eastgate Court
195-208 High Street
Guildford GU1 3EH
Tel: 01843 252000
Email: southeast@english-heritage.org.uk

Where to go for Advice about Archaeology

To find out about objects discovered on your land:

Dorset: Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen
Historic Environment Team, Dorset County
Council County Hall Colliton Park, Dorchester
Dorset DT1 1XJ
T: 01305 228254
E: c.h.trevarthen@dorsetcc.gov.uk

Hampshire: Robert Webley
Winchester City Council, City Offices Cole-
brook Street Winchester Hampshire SO23 9LJ
Tel: +44 (0) 1962 848558
Email: RWebley@winchester.gov.uk

Somerset: Anna Booth
Somerset Record Office, Obridge Road, Taun-
ton, Somerset TA2 7PU
T: +44 (0)1823 362855
E: albooth@somerset.gov.uk

Wiltshire: Katie Hinds, Salisbury & South
Wiltshire Museum, The King's House, 65 The
Close Salisbury Wiltshire SP1 2EN
T: 01722 332151
F: 01722 325611
E: katiehinds@salisburymuseum.org.uk



Above: The lighter coloured circles in this field are part of a group of prehistoric monuments near Damerham. There is little trace of these on the ground, and their existence was unknown until 2001. *NMR 21271/05 21st July 2001 © English Heritage.NMR.*

Online Resources:

Portable Antiquities Scheme: database of archaeological objects found in the UK:
www.finds.org.uk

MAGIC: database of Scheduled Ancient Monuments: www.magic.gov.uk

Pastscape: the online database of the National Monuments Record:
www.pastscape.org.uk

HELM: information about the preservation and protection of the historic environment:
www.helm.org.uk

