

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

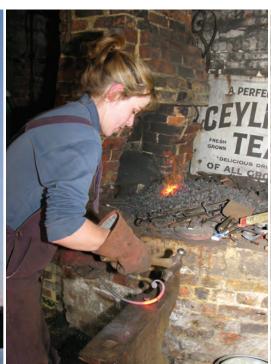


Historic Environment Action Plans

Theme 10: Routeways in the Landscape











This document forms part of a suite of documents which together comprise the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Historic Environment Action Plans.

The HEAPs provide a summary of the key characteristics of the historic environment of the AONB at a landscape scale, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of this special landscape and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance these special characteristics. These summaries are divided into two groups:

- 1. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by area
- 2. Summaries of the historic environment of the AONB by theme

These core documents are accompanied by documents which provide background information, supplementary information and detail on the methodologies used to create these documents.

A series of icons help you navigate this suite of documents:



Background - Provides an introduction to the AONB Historic Environment Action Plans and provides background information on the history and archaeology of the landscape (B1 to B10)



Area - Summarises key characteristics of discrete geographical areas within the AONB, they then set out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each area and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics (A1 to A12)



Theme - Summarises key characteristics of historic environment themes, each document then sets out the significance, condition and forces for change affecting the historic fabric and character of each theme and identify proactive actions to conserve and enhance its characteristics **(T1 to T14)**



Supplementary - A series of documents which explore supplementary issues of relevance to the Historic Environment Action Plans (S1 to S2)



Method - Introduces the methodology behind the production of the Historic Environment Action Plans (M1 to M3)



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Introducing the Theme Statements

Fourteen distinct Historic Landscape Themes have been identified in the AONB. These were chosen by the HEAP Steering group as representing the topics which best encapsulate the historic character of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB.

The theme descriptions aim to provide an overview of each theme which encapsulates the main features of the Historic Environment present and include both the archaeological and historical, the very old and the more recent.

The process through which the Historic Landscape Character themes were identified, and mapped, and the sources of information used to create these descriptions is documented in the methodological statement 'Creating and Describing Historic Character Themes'.

Introduction to Theme 10: Routeways in the Landscape

"a traveller is highly indebted to your lordship for adding to his pleasure and advantage, in receiving the Roman method of placing a numbered stone at every mile, and the living index of a tree to make it more observable"

William Stukeley 1723

The aims of this document are not to provide a potted history of the travel in the AONB but instead to provide an overview of the key historic characteristics of the network of routeways in the AONB and to focus on evidence of physical surviving remains in today's landscape. From linear Roman roads, high airy Ridgeway's, sunken hollow ways, and green lane routeways all are intrinsic parts of what makes this living landscape special.



Tisbury Station 1961Reproduced with the permission of the Tisbury Local History Society

Summary of Key Characteristics

- Complex system of roads, paths and bridleways, especially dense though the Vale of Wardour, Cranborne Chase and chalk valley bottoms but open and widely spread in other areas.
- Number of routes across formerly open downland and former common land condensed into one legal Right of Way.
- Large numbers of green lanes, sunken lanes, and abraded routes.
- Historic fords and clapper bridges marking historic crossing points survive in chalk valley bottoms but are often now secondary routes.
- Key east-west ancient track ways and routeways following the higher Chalk ridges in use at least from the Medieval period. These possibly have Pre Roman origins. Highly visible and often contentious features of the landscape existing as byways and bridleways for much of their length.
- Legacy of access routes striking directly up the slopes onto downland areas from lower ground.
- The Roman Road between Badbury Rings and Old Sarum, known as the Ackling Dyke, is a highly legible feature in the landscape and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument along much of its length. Badbury Rings is also an important landscape feature not just as an Iron Age Hill Fort but as a major Roman Road junction.
- Modern network of main roads established by the Turnpike Trusts AD 1700-1800. Legacy still present in the landscape through network of Toll Houses, milestones and mileposts, though often not visible.
- Two 19th century railways still key features and communication routes through the AONB.
- Importance of lost railway branch lines relating to 20th century military activity under appreciated.
- Relatively small impact of 20th century road improvements with the exception of the A303 and junction with A36.

Linkages to other Historic Landscape Character Statements

This statement forms one of 14 AONB wide Historic Landscape Character Theme descriptions. These are accompanied by a series of 12 Historic Landscape Character Area descriptions which cover the whole of the AONB. These documents together build up a picture of the key characteristics of the Historic Environment of the AONB at a landscape scale. These statements combined inform the Historic Environment Action Plans created for the AONB landscape.

Other Themes of particular relevance to this theme are:



Theme 1: Ancient Boundaries and Land Ownership

All the Historic Landscape Character Areas are of relevance to this theme.



to





History and Context

When we use the term 'routeways', what we are actually describing are the routes that we use to move through the landscape. We choose to use the quickest route, the most economical in terms of resources or energy or the most picturesque. We choose to travel large distances between places and regions to access economic markets, to explore, and to visit acquaintances. As the relative importance of places and markets shift, so does the relative importance of different routes. We also use routeways to access our local surroundings. We use them to navigate the cities, towns and villages in which we live; the fields and woodlands surrounding those settlements; and to access resources such as food, fuel and raw materials. Sometimes we use routes for health to take exercise, clear our minds and to get some fresh air. We also use routeways for the transportation of goods and of animals. Our choice of route is constrained by where we have permission to go, by the topography in front of us and the condition of the routeways themselves. The routes, therefore, that we choose to take through the landscape not only have a functional and economic component, but symbolic and aesthetic aspects as well.

These factors were the same in the past. The major shift that has occurred in the last century has been the increased dominance of the car and lorry (with a brief dominance of the railways in the century before) whereas for millennia before these journeys were undertaken on foot, on horse back, and using horse drawn transportation (water borne transportation is a less important element in the AONB than elsewhere, due to the shallow and variable flow rates on the chalk streams).

Routeways are an understudied and underappreciated component of the historic landscape. This is partly due to their linear nature. They are not easily encapsulated by the point based Historic Environment Records although their individual components may be captured. Similarly, the newer evidence base of Historic Landscape Characterisation and its 'area' approach often fails to capture the nuances of the historic network of routeways.

In modern day terms, what we are discussing in terms of the AONB are the historic character of the network of public roads, private roads and tracks, permissive access, footpaths, bridleways and un-metalled byways and railway lines. Plus extinct routeways which are none the less still legible in the landscape, such as the former line of Roman Roads.

The character of these routeways is defined by their surfacing, width, form, boundaries, related features (such as milestones), relationship to settlements and surrounding land, and of course their time depth (Roman Roads being transformed into droveways, turnpikes then modern highways). Historic Routeways are not only important in their own right but due also to their contribution to the wider historic character of the landscape.

There are some key datable turning points in the development of the historic characteristics of the routeways in the AONB which it is helpful to bear in mind.

AD 1st century — Introduction of the first 'made' Roads by the Romans.

AD 1700 – Establishment of the first Turnpike Trusts.

Circa AD 1800 – Creation of first metalled roads.

AD 1835 – Highways Act – roads 'adopted' by the state.
AD 1845 – Introduction of the railways into the AONB.

Circa AD 1970 – Beginnings of large scale road building and improvement.

Key Secondary Sources

Routeways are notoriously difficult to date, the origins of routeways can be traced backwards through time using modern and Historic Ordnance survey maps, enclosure maps and awards, and tithe maps. The first accurate county scale maps date to the 18th century and include Andrew's and Dury's 1773 map for Wiltshire and Bowen's 1748 map of Dorset. The process becomes increasingly time consuming tracing routes back before this point as individual historic estate and parish maps have to be consulted. The exception being Ogilby's road routes, in his Britannia Road Atlas of 1675, at least one of which crosses the AONB.

Roads, tracks and paths of early origin can begin to be identified by using a combination of evidence including:

- Parish and estate maps
- References to Saxon Charters
- The relationship to historic boundaries such as county and parish boundaries
- Relationship to archaeological features.



Historic Routeway in the AONB

Character of the Network

The AONB is characterised by a dense network of roads, tracks, bridleways, and footpaths (see Map One).

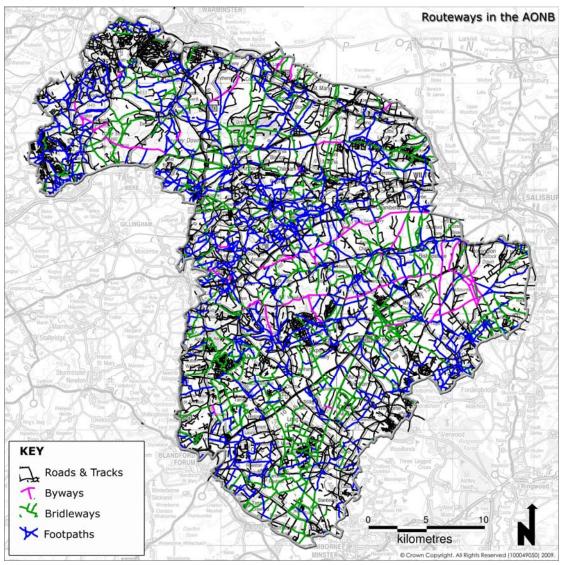


Figure One: Routeways in the AONB

There are over 1500 km² of rights of way in the AONB and the majority of these routeways are shown on the earliest available maps and are of some antiquity.

There main characteristics are: -

 Long distance routes tend to run east west across the AONB. These follow sinuous routes following local topography and include modern roads as well as ancient drove ways now constituting unpaved byways.



- There is only one major north-south route through the AONB on its western side, the A350; this is accompanied in the southern half of the AONB between Blandford Forum and Shaftesbury by a parallel minor road which follows the top of the escarpment.
- The imposition of major modern highway structure is minimal and is restricted to the route of the A350 and A303
- The majority of roads are minor, often twisted and narrow, with steep inclines when they climb onto the downland. With the exception of downland areas they are often hedged.
- Many of the bridleways, footpaths and tracks are associated with green lanes and sunken Holloways. This is especially the case through the Vale of Wardour where there is a dense network of irregular footpaths.
- The only planned network of straight roads, paths and tracks corresponds to the line of former Roman Roads
- Sinuous networks of roads, tracks and paths run through the bottoms of the Chalk Valleys of the AONB. They are often associated with fords and medieval bridges. These contrast with the straighter systems of perpendicular tracks, bridleways and sometimes road which connect the valley bottoms to the downland above. These often connect with the long distance drove ways. They can be sunken and often associated with earthworks of alternative routes created by the movement of people and animals when these routes were in greater use and tended to become eroded.
- Paths and tracks across the downland tend to be straighter and longer. These often represent the survival of one main route, of a series of former tracks which snaked unrestrained across the downland but leading to the same destination. These would have gone out of use when the downland was enclosed, the surviving route often following the edge of field boundaries.
- The same pattern can often be observed in areas of former common land in the AONB where the surviving right of way but represents one of many former closely related tracks crossing the common land. These often funnel into access points in adjoining land especially Woodland. This is especially true of the Wooded Chalk Downland.

Landscape Scale Characteristics and Components

1. Pre Roman ancient routeways

Background

These are very difficult to trace in the landscape. It is possible that the ancient track ways across the chalk ridges of the AONB have considerable antiquity. The route way along the Fovant escarpment, for example, passes a number of Iron Age Hillforts and settlement. However the routeways itself is very hard to date.

More reliable but small scale evidence for Prehistoric routeways in the AONB relate to the systems of crop marks recorded across the AONB relating to Roman and Prehistoric field systems stretching back to the Middle Bronze Age. The majority of these do not relate to surviving field boundaries and trackways but the examples are extensive across the AONB, especially in former downland areas



Landscape scale impact

Example 1: Iron Age trackways near to Wyn Green

A series of ridge dykes on the crest of the hill seem to form part of a track system. They appear to come within an Iron Age 'A' context and, although dating evidence is slight, are perhaps about 500 BC (NMR 201727)

Example 2: The continued use of Prehistoric routeways

An Iron Age Settlement recorded near the village of Damerham by the Bokerley Dyke survey was situated within a landscape of fields and track ways. The line of these field boundaries and tracks continue to the east as a network of sunken bridleways with mature trees.

2. Roman Roads

Background

The origin of 'Made' or surfaced roads in the AONB landscape begins with the Roman Roads. This is the first time there was a nationally coordinated programme of Road construction in the AONB, which often cut across existing land and across Landscape Character Types. This is also the earliest period for which it is possible to get an AONB wide view of routeways.

Landscape scale impact

There are three major Roman Roads crossing the landscape of the AONB (see Map Two): -

- Badbury Rings (Vindocladia) to Old Sarum (Sorviodunum) Roman Road
- Badbury Rings (Vindodadia) to Cold Kitchen Hill
- Charterhouse to Old Sarum running through Cold Kitchen Hill

The roads which converge on Badbury Rings also continue:

- West south west to Dorchester (Dvrnovaria)
- South east to Lake Farm, Corfe Mullen

There is one conjectural Roman Road:

Running NNW from Cold Kitchen Hill in the direction of Bath (Aquae Svlis)

The majority of Roman Roads in the AONB are no longer routeways in the landscape with the exception of Ackling Dyke which is either bridleway or footpath along its length as well as a short stretch of the A354 near Pentridge which was also a former turnpike. See Map Three.

In addition part of the B3081 north of Ashmore traces the course of the former Roman Road between Badbury Rings – and the route is continued down the minor road to Ludwell. However this heritage is much less legible in the landscape due in part to topography, and the lack of obvious continuation of the feature.

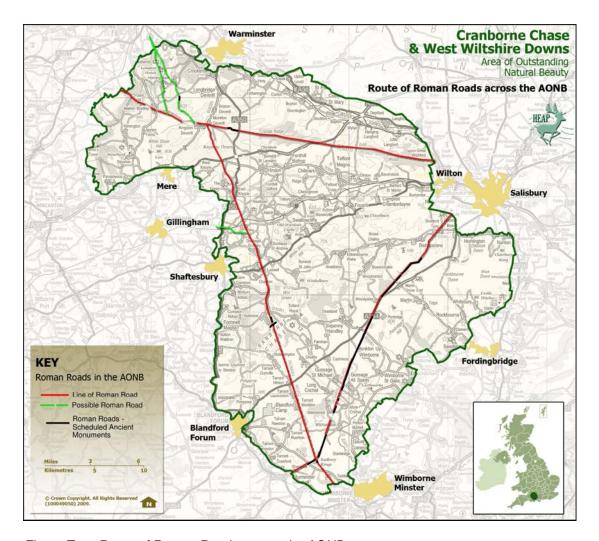


Figure Two: Route of Roman Roads across the AONB

The Roman Road between Badbury Rings and Old Sarum known as the Ackling Dyke is a highly legible feature in the landscape and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument along much of its length. Badbury Rings is also an important landscape feature not just as an Iron Age Hill Fort but as a major Roman Road junction and a focus for Roman Settlement.

The road between Old Sarum and Charterhouse is not nationally protected but its route can still be easily traced through Grovely Wood and Great Ridge. In contrast only the southern half of the route of the Roman Road between Badbury Rings and Cold Kitchen Hill is known, with its route through the Vale of Wardour a subject of ongoing research. In addition, even where the route is known, no earthwork survives for much of its length and no field boundaries or tracks are constructed in respect to it.

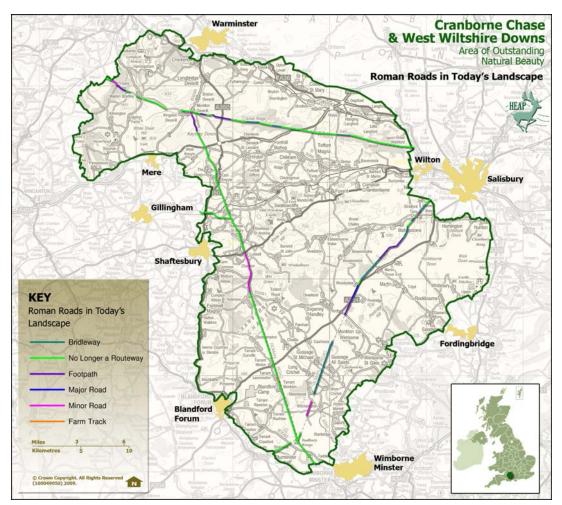


Figure Three: Roman Roads in Today's Landscape

3. Roman Trackways

Background

It is possible to trace routes leading away from known Romano British settlements however their relationship with the wider Roman Road network is unknown.

Landscape scale impact

Example: The track ways in the vicinity of the Romano British Settlement at Woodcutts

A twin-ditched roadway approaches the settlement from the SE, with an oval earthwork called 'Church Barrow' made upon it at one point. Its ditches open out as they reach the settlement site. The roadway was unmetalled, was found to be about 10ft wide, with side ditches 3ft wide and 2ft deep cut in the solid chalk. Beyond the ditches were slight outer banks. A similar twin-ditched roadway approaches the settlement from the N.

4. Routeways in the Early Medieval and Late Medieval Period

Background

At a landscape scale the most visible elements of the network of tracks used in the Medieval period are the east west routes which traverse the chalk escarpments of the AONB (See Figure Four).

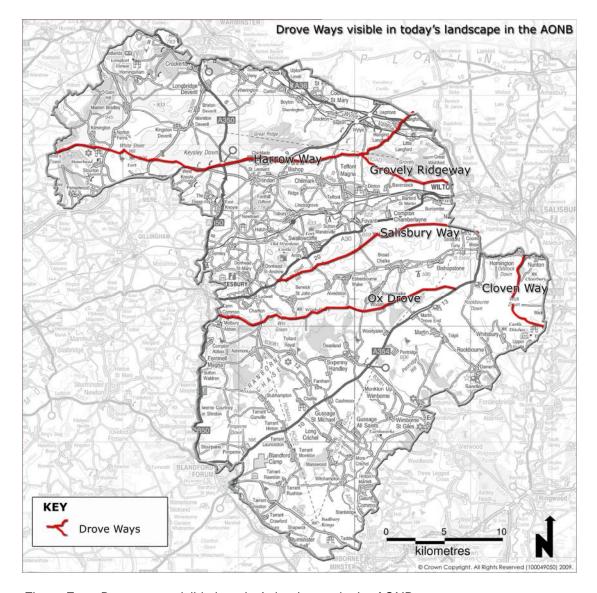


Figure Four: Drove ways visible in today's landscape in the AONB

These include:

- The ancient Harrow Way (also sometimes called the Hardway) which transverses the northern half of the AONB travelling past Old Willoughby Hedge.
- A related route across the West Wiltshire Downs which intermingles in places with the Hardway but leads across the tops of the Downs to Wilton.



- A route way across the Fovant escarpment sometimes called the Salisbury Way which became a turnpike in the 18th century.
- The Oxdrove running from Win Green in the direction of Salisbury.
- The Cloven Way in the Hampshire section of the AONB through Breamore, Downton and Odstock.

Landscape scale impact

Some Drove ways are no longer visible in the landscape. These include:

- The Wilton Way running south from Wilton in the direction of Cranborne. This
 route is now lost.
- The Western extent of the Grovely Ridgeway.

In today's landscape many of these routes remain highly visible, the majority being unsurfaced byways and thus retaining much of their character. The exception being the parts of the Ox Drove and Harrow Way which now form part of the A303.

A less recognised element is the system of trackways which lead from the villages, valleys and terraces to meet these trackways and adjoin them at right angles.

As with the Roman Roads which preceded them these long distance routeways were linked tokey markets and represent trade routes along which animals could have be driven. The destinations of these routes did, of course, change over time. For example, the focus of main settlement in the environs of Salisbury shifted from Wilton to Old Sarum then to the City of Salisbury throughout the Medieval period. It is also likely that the Post Medieval Carriage Way and later Toll Road through Hindon first rose to importance with the establishment of Hindon by the Bishop of Winchester in 1219 providing access to this major market from Salisbury, Warminster and the West.

Another factor that caused routes to rise to prominence during this period was the relationship between ecclesiastical powers outside of the area, such as Glastonbury and Winchester Abbeys, and their land holdings within the area. Similarly the land holdings of major magnates in the Post Medieval Period, such as the Dukes of Norfolk or Earls of Pembroke, had an impact in the development of routeways in the AONB.

It is striking that with the exception of the Ackling Dyke, and possible the Roman Road through Grovely and Great Wood, that the other Roman Roads in the AONB are already obsolete by this point. Badbury Rings being replaced by Willoughby Hedge as the prevailing 'road' junction of the time. It has been suggested that the abandonment of the original Roman crossing of the Stour in the vicinity of Sturminster Newton contributed to the neglect of Badbury Rings in favour of routes via Cranborne.

The direction of travel at this period across the AONB is very much east – west following the prevailing topography. It can be suggested that the inner bounds of the Medieval hunting area of the Chase formed a barrier to north - south travel. In fact it has been surmised that there was no one main road across the Chase south of the Chase Woodlands before the Salisbury to Blandford turnpike made this route accessible. Southward traffic during the Medieval and Post Medieval period appeared to head to Cranborne or possibly through Wimborne St Giles. This pattern of difficult

north-south travel remains a feature in today's landscape with the exception of the A350 on the far western side of the AONB.

The origins of routes through the AONB valley systems are more difficult to trace, however many of the modern roads which transverse the valley bottoms link settlements with Medieval and sometimes Saxon origins so have probably been in use since this date. Royal itineraries and trade records indicate which were the most important routes through the county, but not the exact course of the roads. To a certain extent the course of the roads was determined by the existence of fords and places where it was possible to build bridges. The old pack-horse bridge at Coombe Bissett probably marks the course of the main road towards Blandford from Salisbury. The Gough Map of Great Britain dating from 1360 identifies a main road between Salisbury and Shaftesbury probably via the Salisbury Way. This route is also identified on Ogilby's map of 1675 as an important carriage road. Another major coach route ran from Salisbury to Exeter via Hindon. Hindon was an important staging point in the eighteenth century with 14 inns recorded in 1754, two of which survive today.

5. Post Medieval Routeways

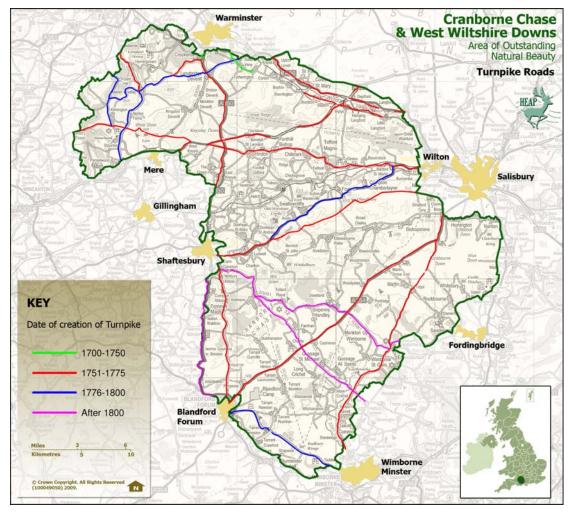


Figure Five: Turnpike Roads

Background

Turnpikes represent the first systematic system of 'made' roads across the country since the Roman Road. Created by Act of Parliament the turnpikes of the AONB remain as fairly legible components of the historic network. The earliest roads to be turnpiked in the AONB radiated from Warminster and were created in 1726, followed by a network of roads which stretched across the AONB. See Map Five.

Landscape Scale impact

The existence of these Toll Roads in today's landscape can be deduced through the network of milestones and mileposts and a series of Toll Houses which are private houses today. The majority of the turnpikes form the backbone of the modern road system and several are modern A roads. See Map Six. The ancient route along the Fovant escarpment exists only as an unmetalled byway as it was succeeded by the modern day A30.

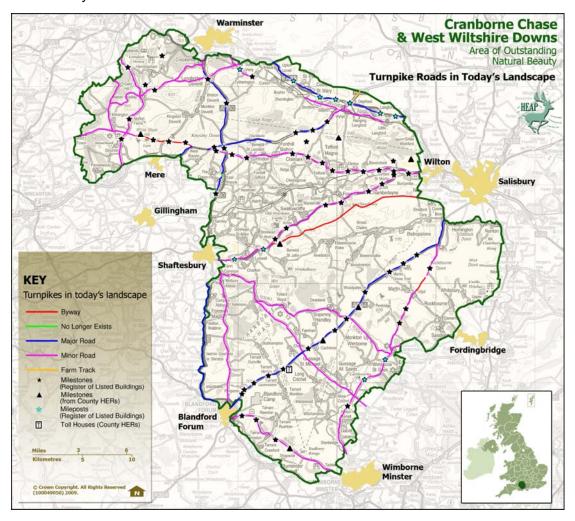


Figure Six: Turnpike Roads in Today's Landscape

6. Railways

Background

The heyday of the turnpike roads was extinguished by the coming of the railways. See Figure Seven.

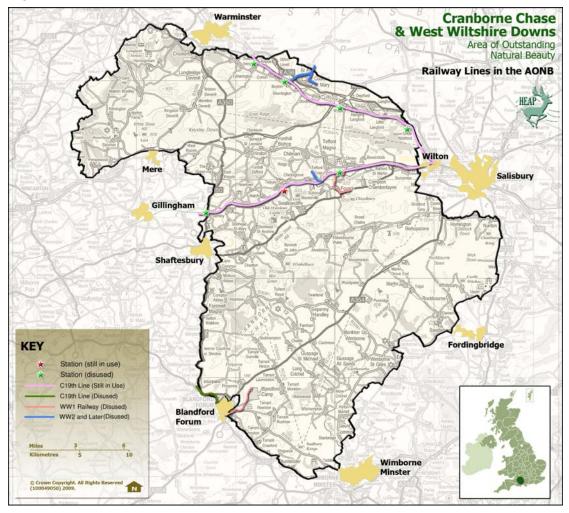


Figure Seven: Railway Lines in the AONB

The two railways lines which still exist in the AONB were built in the 19th century: -

- 1. Westbury to Salisbury Branch of the Great Western Railway commencing with an Act of Parliament in 1845 and completed in 1856.
- 2. Salisbury & Yeovil Railway was begun in 1856 with support from the London and South Western Railway and was finished in 1860.

These lines were served by a series of halts with station buildings, now disused, many of which have been converted into private homes. There are also a series of Railway Cottages along the sides of the tracks and many surving 19th century features such as bridges and sidings.



One railway constructed in the AONB, now disused, the Somerset and Dorset Railway was begun in 1871 and finished in 1874. This line was finally closed in the 1960s. Part of the line brushes the edge of the AONB in the region of Blandford where an old cutting survives.

There are also several relic military lines in the AONB

- Blandford Camp line, a branch railway from the Somerset and Dorset Railway to take personnel to the camp from Blandford Forum during the First World War. The line of this railway can be traced as a cutting.
- 2. A branch line from the Salisbury & Yeovil Railway to the First World War camps at Fovant. The line of this railway can be traced as cuttings and embankments.
- 3. A branch line from the Westbury to Salisbury line to the First World War camps at Codford. These survive as earthworks.
- 4. The depot at RAF Chilmark had a narrow gauge railway, and there was a transfer station at Ham Cross 1km to the south with a 4km spur from the main line at Dinton. This was built during the Second World War and continued in use into the Cold War. The track of the narrow gauge railway survives as well as railway platforms survive but is now disused as well as a large station.
- 5. A branch line from Heystebury to the World War One camps at Sutton Veny.

Landscape scale impact

The creation of the railways in the 19th century had a major impact on the settlements of the AONB with for example, the lessening of the importance of Hindon with the dwindling of the London Exeter coach road, and the rise in the importance of Tisbury.

7. Modern Transportation Networks

Background

Highway districts were created under the Highway Act of 1862 following the breakdown of the Turnpike Trusts. These paved the way for the modern highway authorities.

Landscape scale impact

No new roads have been created in the AONB in the 20th century. However road widening on the A303 has obscured the character of the former turnpike road in places. A new junction between the A36 and A303 near Wylye now dominates the surrounding of this village. In addition the original junction at Willoughby Hedge has been reengineered into the modern junction between the A350 and the A303. The A350 has been reconstructed in some in places, for example, the East Knoyle and Semley Bypass. Finally a small section of dual carriageway has been created at Martin on the A354. However compared to areas to the east the road network of the AONB remains very rural in character and remarkably unaltered since the turnpike era.

Historic Environment Actions



See Background paper 9 for a full list of Historic Environment Actions and the stages identified in their implementation.

The Threat and the Opportunity - The historic highways of the AONB are an under appreciated component of the environment of the AONB and there is no coherent approach to their management and maintenance. The forms of the numerous routeways that thread through the AONB's countryside, and the lines they take, reveal much about their complex history. They are often the means by which people still move around and appreciate the Area's landscape, but like all other parts they are subject to change and the erosion of character and fabric can lead to a loss of historic meaning. Although individual historic features associated with ancient highways, such as milestones, are recorded, the way that these features relate to each other, and the setting of the historic highways, is often ignored. This action would increase understanding, appreciation and knowledge of historic highways and by doing so ensure that their key features are retained and appropriately managed. This action is intended to draw attention to the issues at the same time as realising the potential of routeways to enhance people's enjoyment of the AONB.

The Potential Mechanism - attention could be focused initially on the droveways of the AONB as these represent some of the oldest routeways and are served by a good Rights of Way network. One possible Mechanism could be through the creation of self-guided trails.



Trackway in the AONB

Version 1 December 2010. Written by Emma Rouse, HEAP Officer © Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB

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Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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