

Modern – 1900-present

The AONB contains a number of features that date from the modern period (Fig 37).

Wade Court is located in the northwest part of the AONB (Hants SMR 52,016.00; 472000 105300) – see above, and Fig 20. The late C19 and early C20 was the period when the owner, Marshall Nesbitt Inman, purchased additional land to the west of Lymbourn stream, and landscaped the area providing an ornamental waterway, with paths, ponds, bridges and a boathouse. Many trees were planted on the rest of the estate, and parkland (Hants SMR 31,434.00; 472100 105200) was noted first to the north, and then west of the newly built Wade Farm. Two lodges were constructed at different times. In the 1920s Wade Court and the farm had divided ownership. W E S Sotheby acquired the farm in the 1920s, and eventually purchased Wade Court. He also built an observatory near the shoreline. Again in the 1950s the estate was split, Wade Court was divided into 3 separate properties, with 2 adjoining properties, each appearing to have a portion of the garden. It is assumed the farm came under separate ownership. In 1965, the Havant Bypass dissected the Victorian estate, and the northern lodge was demolished.

Many of the modern remains relate to the defence of Britain, especially during WW2. These include airfields, gun emplacements, pillboxes and other structures. Dummy airfields and simulated urban lighting were also used in the AONB in this period. Study of such structures offers insights into the monuments themselves and the landscapes of war they represented. Such monuments are signifiers of our past and agents of remembrance as part of processes of mediation of national, political, official, collective and personal discourses (Brown 2003). Some of these remains were recorded as part of the Defence of Britain project; where this is the case, the ‘DOB’ reference is given in addition to the number relating to the Modern period map.

In WW1, an airfield was located on the Chidham peninsula at Cobnor. This was acquired in 1916/17 by the Wells Aviation Co. (that later became the Chelsea Aviation Co.) (Beale 2002). Aircraft were tested at the base, there was a flying school possibly using Sopworth Pups, and Beale says that there were ‘certainly some moves towards a seaplane base as well’ although ‘the only evidence of seaplane activity that I can remember is the rotting remains of two seaplane floats on the flats nearby.’ A receipt dated 17th March 1917 for payment of flying lessons is headed ‘Under Government Control, contractors to H.M. War Office, Wells Aviation Co. Ltd., Seaplane Branch, Aerodrome and Flying Station,’ (copy held in CHC records).

There was apparently only one attempt to build an aircraft at the airfield, but the aircraft was destroyed by fire before its maiden flight. In 1988, Beale reports, the remains of the aerodrome consisted of ‘a gravel road running along the north hedge of Great Meadow,’ ‘concrete or brick-lined ditches’ and ‘several large cubical concrete blocks that must have been foundations for the hangar uprights.’ There are also WW2 anti-tank blocks on the Chidham peninsula (Anne De Poiter pers comm.), and it is not clear whether the hangar foundations may have been mistaken for these. The location of the airfield is not entirely clear from Beale’s description, but is likely to be on land within a 500m radius of 479500 103000. The airfield does not seem to have continued in use long after the end of WW1 since Wells sold the freehold in early 1919 (Beale undated).

The airfield at Thorney Island was rather longer lived. Thorney was assessed as suitable for an airfield in September 1933. The airfield was completed in 1938 (Defence of Britain site 6; Chi SMR 196; 476200 102500) and put on a war footing in September of the same year.

The airfield ceased flying in 1975, but continued as a military non-flying base under the Royal Navy and then the Royal Artillery (Brooks 1993).

Aerial photos of the airfield showed a collection of demolished buildings as parchmarks (Aerial photo (bb); Chi SMR taken in 2001, centred on 476051 101999). The group consisted of three circular buildings clustered around a smaller circular building, and one rectangular building with its walls lining up with one of the runways. The group was located in the angle where two runways meet. This would suggest these are modern buildings, now demolished, even though they do not feature on OS maps of any epoch.

West Wittering was a 'K' and a 'Q' site (Defence of Britain site 18, located at 477000 098300) – a site where a day-and-night dummy aerodrome was situated to fool enemy reconnaissance during WW2 and to draw attacks away from Thorney. Dummy Blenheims were used on the site, which closed on 11 June 1942 (Dobinson 1996). There was a 'QL' type site at Itchenor (Defence of Britain site 19, located at 478400 100600), referred to in an Air Ministry letter of 5 November 1942. On QL sites, urban lighting was simulated to fool enemy bombers (Dobinson 1996). There may also have been a similar site on the west coast of the Chidham peninsula where it was reported that 'a concrete bunker covered with earth ... housed an electric generator to power a complex of lights intended to decoy German bombers away from RAF Thorney Island,' (Anon ?1960s). The bunker was located '30 yards inland from the boathouse' near Cobnor Hard – ie at c 479330 102390.

The southern tip of Thorney Island was defended by two pillboxes (both Type FW3/22), built of brick and concrete and both currently in 'fair' condition. The eastern pillbox (Defence of Britain site 5; CBA_DOB-2380; 476670 101130) is a Type 22 hexagonal brick-shuttered pillbox, one of the earliest built – in July-August 1940. It had 5 Turnbull mountings that were not installed until March 1941: these were removed in the early 1950s, but the pintle and holding bolts survive as they are cast into the concrete embrasures. The entrance is on the north side. The western of the pillboxes (Defence of Britain site 4; CBA_DOB-2379; 476220 101220) is a Type 22 brick-shuttered pillbox, also with Turnbull mountings that were fitted in March 1941 after the construction of the pillbox in July-August 1940. This pillbox has suffered from the elements owing to its exposed position and the red-brick shuttering is falling away in places. An unidentified military building (Defence of Britain site 14; CBA_DOBNAI-5570; 476200 101300) in bad condition is located nearby.

North of the pillboxes, concrete anti-tank blocks (Defence of Britain site 10; CBA_DOB-12322; 475700 102000) lie parallel with the sea wall; many are now in bad sea-eroded condition. These were built in 1940-41 and some have metal anti-personnel barrier supports on what were once their upper sides.

The island was also defended by a number of machine gun positions. On the west coast, there were two machine gun emplacements. One (Defence of Britain site 1; CBA_DOB-2376; 474890 103020), of a 'unique' construction, was built from large pre-cast concrete blocks and reinforced concrete in 1940-41 and is in 'fair' condition. The second (Defence of Britain site 2; CBA_DOB-2377; 475000 102800) was also built of concrete blocks and reinforced concrete and is in 'fair' condition. A ruck machine gun post or pillbox (Defence of Britain site 11; CBA_DOB-12323; 474850 103220) was located just to the north of this, at the edge of a 'bomb dump' compound. This was constructed in 1940-41, but is currently in an unknown condition. Dobinson (1996) also records the presence of light anti-aircraft guns at Thorney.

A gun emplacement (Defence of Britain site 3; CBA_DOB-2378; 475330 103760) further inland defended the 'Great Deep' linking Emsworth Channel with Thorney Channel and the bridge for Emsworth Road. This concrete structure, built in 1940-41, is currently in 'fair' condition.

The west coast of Thorney was also protected by a seawall built from 1936 and modified in 1940-41 as a partial anti-tank wall (Defence of Britain site 7; CBA_DOB-12319; 475100 104600). It is several kilometres in extent. The wall, as originally built, was a clay/chalk/flint bund *c* 6m wide at its base and *c* 1m wide at its top, but was altered to form a much steeper (vertical in some sections) reinforced concrete anti-tank wall. During the course of WW2, storms breached or undermined the wall in three places and it was mended by the insertion of 'Blockcrete' blocks. For a quarter of its total length the 1940-41 wall is extant and in good condition.

On the east coast of Thorney, a weapons pit (Defence of Britain site 8; CBA_DOB-12320; 476810 103270) was built hard up against the inner edge of the seawall and very well tactically sited. It was brick-lined, with a short brick entry way and a concrete floor. It is *c* 1.7m deep and *c* 2.5m in internal diameter. It was built in 1940-41, is extant but its condition is unknown. The churchyard wall of St. Nicholas was pierced for loopholes in 1940 (Defence of Britain site 9; CBA_DOB-12321; 477000 102600). These were repaired around 1980 and cannot now be seen.

The extensive defences along the east side of Emsworth Channel were supplemented on the west side by a number of other pillboxes and other defences. At the very mouth of the channel, an unclassified pillbox that was built into the sea wall survives (Defence of Britain site 12; Hants SMR 28,101.00; 475100 098700), its entrance a hatch in the top. Other pillboxes in this area may have been removed when the modern boat park was enlarged (pers. comm. in Hants SMR entry). Nearby, 45 concrete anti-tank blocks (Hants SMR 26,064.00; 475100 098600) are probably not in their original positions, having been reused as sea defences. There may have been an anti-aircraft battery to the west (Hants SMR 37,745.00; 474500 098800) that may have contained four guns. These could have been 3.7" (mobile or static), 4.5" or 5.25" guns (Mace 1996).

During WW2, a boom was strung across the mouth of the harbour. Part of this was secured onto underwater concrete pillars. The boom was removed after the war, but some of the pillars may survive (John Wells pers comm.).

A further pillbox (Type FW3/22) on South Hayling (Defence of Britain site 13; Hants SMR 28,018.00; CBA_DOB-12900; 473900 099100). This was built of reinforced concrete in 1940-41 and had a 'Y'-shaped internal blast wall and an external blast wall by its doorway. It is extant, but its condition is unknown.

North of this, a Type 22 pillbox (Hants SMR 28,019.00; 473500 099700) guarded the mouth of My Lord's Pond. The remains of its 'Y' shaped internal blast wall, its external blast wall and shelf supports survive. A further Type 22 pillbox (Hants SMR 24,374.00; 472300 101300) was located further north in a commanding position on the Havant Road. The external blast wall to this pillbox is now lost.

Dobinson (1996) refers to heavy anti-aircraft guns at 'Thorney Island: Chidham' at 4793 1035, just south of Chidham village. These 4 x 3.7 inch guns would presumably have defended the eastern approach to Thorney Island.

Birdham Pool was taken over by the Admiralty in WW2, and the turntable and slipways for the landing craft still survive. Floating docks were also built; at the end of the war, Movietone news filmed these being towed out of the harbour. After the war, naval craft were parked up on the mud outside Birdham Pool and sold off. Some of the craft were scuttled, although these were later removed. The construction of the new marina may have cleared most of these old craft (John Wells pers comm.) although one example can still be seen under the jetty (CHP 011 in HWTMA 2002).

Measures were taken to defend the area around Birdham. Repositioned anti-tank cubes (Period CBA_DOB-12315; 48290 10140), from an original anti-tank wall, now form the edge of the Chichester Marina. At the end of the Chichester Canal iron sheet pillars used as an anti-tank wall still survive (CBA_DOB-12316; 48290 10150), built in 1940-41. Nine anti-tank cones (CBA_DOB-12314; 48235 10082), built in 1940-41 and in good condition with iron loops set in their tops are almost certainly *ex-situ*, and are arranged today at the side of a road.

At Apuldram, a military airfield was established towards the end of WW2 (Chi SMR 2463; 484000 103000). This was an Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) prior to the invasion of Europe. Construction of the cruciform runway began in February 1943 using Sommerfield tracking. The airfield was derequisitioned in November 1944 and dismantled in January 1945. There is no visible trace left (Brooks 1996). Two circular features to the northeast of Rymans in Apuldram can be identified from aerial photos (Aerial photo (u); NMR 4475/32 taken in 1989). These are centred on 484095 103310, and although they are almost certainly modern, their function is not clear.

Burgess and Saunders (1990, 1994, 1995) list the dates and details of planes that crashed within Sussex during the Second World War. Their listings are based on reports contained in Civil Defence, Police and Air Ministry reports, although the many such incidents at aerodromes such as Thorney Island are not all shown. The listings for the AONB are reproduced as a table in the appendices of this report.

The Cold War is the name given to the 40-year long stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union which defined the world's political map for most of the second half of the 20th century. A number of monuments and installations from this era survive across the country and there are two such in the AONB. An underground Royal Observer Corps Monitoring Post was located on Hayling Island (Hants SMR 41,754.00; 473300 100600). This was closed in 1968 and is now destroyed. The second is Thorney Island airfield that was included in an RAF survey of the condition of fighter airfields in 1951 (Cockcroft 2001). No information was listed about the readiness of the airfield for conflict, however.

There are a number of other features that date to the modern period. Near Gutner Point, ridges behind the sea wall are apparently narrow rig ploughing used to drain the upper salt marsh for arable cultivation (Hants SMR 54,708.00; 473471 101865). The ploughing was done in the 1940s-1950s (pers comm. in Hants SMR).

Nearby, a modern decoy pond used to net wildfowl (Hants SMR 54,706.00; 473487 101691). This appears in the fourth edition OS map, but not on earlier OS maps.

The Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology (HWTMA) carried out a preliminary recording of hulks and maritime features around the Harbour (HWTMA 2002). Volunteers and students worked alongside experts from HWTMA to record basic information about five sites of hulks, wrecked vessels and ship remains. At Dell Quay a large wooden fishing-type vessel (CHP 013) was identified. Several other vessels lay to the

north of Dell Quay (CHP 001, 002, 003, 004, 005). These were ‘of relatively simple construction and represent very different traditions of boat building.’

At Langstone is the well-known hulk The Langstone (CHP 012) that lays in mud a few metres in front of the old water mill. This 20 ton gaff rigged ketch was built in 1900 by Albert Apps of Emsworth, and was in service for 40 years. The vessel carried sand, gravel and grain from Chichester to Southampton. This vessel was also recorded in the early 1980s (Goodburn 1984) when it was in a much more complete condition. Langstone barges were cheap to make and built locally. Their shallow draft made them ideal for the harbours of the Solent.

The 2002 HWTMA report also identified a ‘large square timber structure with small bays’ that looked like a set of oyster beds, but the timbers are ‘more substantial’ than would be expected, so it may have been a wharf. ‘There is evidence of some collapsed masonry in the area and a bitumenised platform to the land side.’

Another structure that ‘may be the bows of a boat’ was identified at Bosham Hoe, but this proved impossible to investigate at close hand. Nearby, the Combes boatyard that has been building boats for 70 years may contain remnants of boats and boat building.

The report concludes that the remains identified deserve further recording and that often they are the last examples of vernacular boat building traditions for which there are few, if any, records.

HWTMA also conducted a preliminary assessment of six hulks positioned in the inter-tidal zone of the Harbour that had been scheduled for removal (Satchell 2003). The craft were categorised as iron barges, WW2 craft and sailing craft.

There were three iron barges used at the end of the 19th century to the mid 20th century with limited archaeological significance although they represent some of the last of the regional examples. One was a hopper barge that lay on the foreshore at the Fleet, Hayling Island, aligned east-west and substantially intact with its deck and crane extant. The other two iron craft lay alongside each other at Itchenor, aligned north-south. One was a fuel barge, substantially intact with deckhouse surviving; the other a small iron craft without substantial remains above the mud and may be a barge or ferry.

There were two WW2 craft. One was a landing craft at Itchenor, aligned north-south; it may comprise more than one vessel. It is ‘possibly a Landing Craft Infantry (LCI) vessel.’ Such craft were built from 1942 for the D-Day landings in 1944, although they were used for landing the reserve and reinforcements, not the landings themselves. The second craft was a Motor Torpedo Boat that lay in its east-west berth at the Fleet, Hayling Island. These were constructed from 1935 and in WW2 played a major role in protecting Allied sea communications.

One small sailing craft – a pinnace – was recorded by HWTMA. This lay at its berth in the Fleet, Hayling Island, and was substantially intact. This sleek, swift craft was often used for conveying messages between fleets, and dated to the period 1890-1930. A number of craft are defined as ‘pinnace’, but include a range of sizes and designs so it was difficult to evaluate the importance of this example.

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) lists eleven wrecks in the AONB. The full details of these wrecks are shown in Appendix 2. Eight of the wrecks are categorised as ‘showing any portion of hull/superstructure;’ two are undefined; and one is categorised as a

'dangerous wreck.' This latter wreck (number 20155) was 'probably an aircraft.' Its depth was recorded as about 5m, although it was not found in a search in 1984 leading to its classification being revised to 'previously reported but not detected by survey, leading to doubts about its reported position or existence' (ABEY). Eight of the wrecks are classified as 'live;' and two are 'dead,' or 'not detected by repeated surveys, therefore considered not to exist.' Wreck number 20247 is also an aircraft. The UKHO describes this live wreck as 'remains of an aircraft, covering an area about 50ft in diameter' about 1.22 miles from East Head. The 'highest and sharpest part (wing carriage assembly) stands 3ft above surrounding mud and sand.' Another of the live wrecks (number 20160) is an 'open box, lying N/S, measuring 10 x 2mtrs & standing proud of seabed by 0.8mtr,' 790m from Eastoke Basin.

HWTMA undertook a geophysical survey of the Harbour and identified a number of anomalies (Satchell 2003). In this high resolution side scan sonar survey the equipment is mounted on the hull of a boat or a 'fish' which is towed behind a boat. The equipment emits pulses in a fan shape towards the seabed. The role of this equipment is to detect variations in seabed topography, which can highlight anomalies. Items projecting from the seabed usually produce a 'hard' dark return behind which light acoustic 'shadows' can be used to aid calculation of the size and height of objects. A second technique is to use sub bottom profilers. These use acoustic energy pulses that are emitted vertically and penetrate the seabed and reflect from 'hard' or 'soft' sediments in a similar way to the side scan sonar returns. Results can show the presence of buried archaeological material such as shipwrecks, in addition to buried land surfaces or stratigraphy.

The anomalies shown up by the survey were interpreted and ranked 1-10. A relatively high number of anomalies identified corresponded to moorings, chains, anchor drags, posts, geology or sedimentary features and were subsequently given a low score. Other anomalies that could not be identified with confidence were ranked higher. Some may have been geology or debris, and many were uncharted features. It may be necessary in the future to ground truth these anomalies by diving or other methods to confirm their identity. A table of the anomalies is reproduced from the HWTMA report as Appendix 3 and their location is shown on Fig 37.

The position of a wreck has been identified on aerial photos taken in 2001 and in the NMR oblique collection (Aerial photo (f); NMR 18705/15; 475060 100095). The site consists of the hull of the ship deep in mud, with spars and other timbers apparently scattered to the southwest of this (Fig 36).

Research questions

The AONB includes a number of military features, as detailed above. Research into the location of such features and their historical significance would contribute to ensuring their survival.

Further investigation of the wrecks known in the Harbour, perhaps through diving, would aid the understanding of these features.



Fig 35 Oyster beds at the head of Prinsted Channel, looking southeast (NMR photo; Aerial photos (i), (j), (k)). The oyster beds are the rectangular structures in the central part of the image



Fig 36 A wreck on Pilsey Sand (NMR photo; Aerial photo (f)). The hull of the ship is deep in mud, with spars and other timbers scattered to the southwest

