



St Martin's Down looking from Ventnor Down © AONB Unit Photographer John Brownscombe

I feel very privileged to be working to help to keep our finest landscapes special. Since boyhood I have had a deep passion for this special place and a rightful pride of the Island, its history, land and seascapes and their subtleties. With this comes a strong desire to share my impressions and reflections with family, friends and visitors to our county.

This is an Island of contrasts, with many different landscapes, a result of complex geology and the use of the land by people over many thousands of years. The change is often gentle but travel a few miles and change it does. Different methods of farming, historic patterns of village settlement and design and richness in wildlife all go to make up the special sense of place. Seasonal change also plays a part. The high summer brings many visitors to our shores with a busy feel, but opportunities still exist for quiet relaxation away from the crowds and with time to reflect and enjoy the summer birdsong on the downs. The same haven in mid winter couldn't be more different. With its dramatic storms and looking out to violent waves at sea, remembering the endeavours of heroic seafarers of old along the Back of Wight part of our Heritage Coast.

Rural life brings its benefits and challenges. I have run my own business within the AONB and then worked for the IW Council as part of the team helping to manage the public path network, both experiences giving me valuable insight into living and working in, and enjoying the Island's countryside.

The role of AONB Officer gives me the

opportunity to work with a diverse group of people who have a concern for the future of the Island's finest landscapes. Seeking to explain the relationship between people and place helps us manage change in a way that is sympathetic to the landscape. This has been made easier by recent changes in national legislation, raising the profile and protection of all AONBs whilst acknowledging the importance of the needs of the community. We have secured increased funding from the Isle of Wight Council and the Countryside Agency to set up our new AONB Partnership. Our primary aim is to conserve and enhance natural beauty within that half of the Island's land area designated as AONB. [Our first task is the review and production of a new Management Plan, which will describe the landscape character of the Island's AONB, issues that have an impact and are of concern and how we will work with others towards addressing these issues to achieve our aims]

This newsletter will include a regular update on our progress including information on how everyone can become involved in the future of the AONB; I look forward to the challenges ahead of us.

John Brownscombe AONB Officer ■

Chairman's Welcome

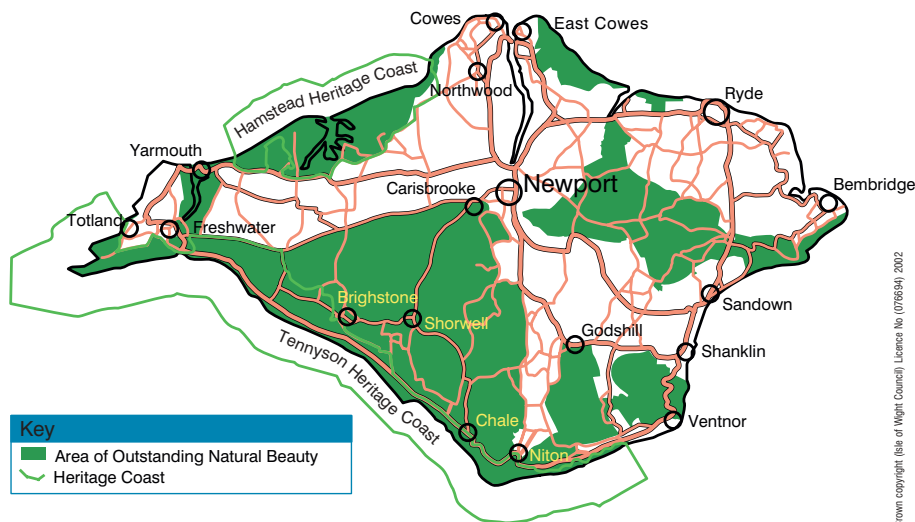
Welcome to the first edition of 'Finest Landscapes' the new newsletter of the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership.

Our aim is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB so that we, and future generations can continue to enjoy this national asset.

We look forward to bringing you quarterly articles about what makes the AONB special, current issues, AONB People, ways to enjoy the Island's finest landscapes and partnership progress reports.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and would like to take this opportunity to wish all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Tony Tutton
Chairman
IW AONB Partnership
Steering Committee ■



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Key
 ■ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 ▭ Heritage Coast

Zummet vor Nippers!!! COMPETITION

Have a look at the Map of the Isle of Wight. The dark green shaded areas show the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. See if one of your favourite spots to visit is there – maybe one of the beaches for swimming or fossil hunting, or walking out in the countryside looking out for flowers, birds, butterflies, etc, or visiting one of the old buildings or tourist attractions.

Then Draw us a picture or write a poem about “Your favourite part of Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty” And send it to: Isle of Wight AONB Unit, FREEPOST NATW339, Newport PO30 2BR. No stamp needed. By 31st January 2003

You could Win
First Prize
A trip to Dinosaur Isle plus a fossil walk for the family
 (2 Adults and 2 Children)
Runner up Prize
A family trip to Dinosaur Isle
 (2 Adults and 2 Children)
 Prizes kindly donated by Dinosaur Isle

Please make sure you write your name, age and address on the back of your picture or poem.

This competition is open to all children up to the age of 13 years old. Winners will be chosen by a small panel of members of the AONB Partnership, whose decision will be final, and their entries will be printed in the next issue of 'Finest Landscapes'. Winners will be notified by post by 28th February 2003. The AONB Partnership reserves the right to use any entry for future promotions of the Area, with the entrants permission.

Sense of Place

Landscape Reflections Project

Reflecting on the Island's finest landscapes - Locally!

Do you live within the AONB, do you know what the AONB designation actually means and is your local landscape important to you? We are asking these questions, because here at the AONB partnership, we want to know much more about what living in the Island's finest landscapes means to people and what gives a 'Sense of Place' to where people live.

A new project entitled 'Landscape Reflections' which uses a wide range of art forms, has been devised to help us find out more. Between January and May 2003, a series of workshops will be held in communities within the AONB. Art forms used may be anything, from drawing or photography to ceramics, music to dance, offering something to wet all appetites. This work will culminate in a series of events. Artist Tim Johnson will also produce a series of paintings in response to the landscapes - you may see him out and about this winter, so do stop and have a chat.

At the end of the project there will be many art works, expressing reactions to the character of local landscapes from the smallest detail to the bigger picture. These will be drawn together in an exhibition at the Quay Arts Centre and through a publication. Ideas and images which emerge will also be used to inform and illustrate the IW AONB Management Plan.

If you, or a group you are involved with, would like to get involved, particularly those based within the parishes of Chale, Totland or Brading please contact Island 2000 Trust on 01983 822118. The IW AONB Partnership has commissioned Island 2000 Trust to run this project on their behalf. ■

Small Grant Fund

Have you got a project or an idea - you want to turn into reality - but need extra funds?

Will it enhance or conserve the landscape?

Is it in the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)?

Will it add to a 'Sense of Place'?

The Sense of Place Small Grant Fund is an exciting way to take a new approach to projects, by working to conserve, enhance and celebrate the diversity of the local distinctiveness and character of the Island's finest landscapes, adding to the quality of landscape and quality of life within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Fund offers up to 50% funding for projects with an estimated total value of between £200 - £4,000 and is available to community & voluntary groups, town or parish councils, farmers or landowners, schools and colleges.

There are six main categories of projects eligible for funding which are:

- Landscape Character Enhancement e.g. Hedgerows, walls, ditches;
- Environmental Landscape Management such as pond restoration or scrub clearance;
- Access enhancements for the benefit of the wider community;
- Local heritage or cultural projects;
- Information or interpretation projects or events; or a feasibility or research studies.

To find out more details, contact us at the AONB Unit on (01983) 823855 or by e-mail aonb@iow.gov.uk ■



View from Carisbrooke Castle towards Whitcombe
 © Countryside Agency Photographer Joe Low

AONB People

© AONB Unit Photographer John Brownscombe



Paul and Sue Brownrigg have been tenant farming within the AONB for many years. Firstly, at Rowridge Farm in the Chalk Downs, near to Carisbrooke and also, more recently, at Sheepwash Farm, with its pastoral landscape near to Godshill. They describe themselves as small mixed farmers with sheep, arable, and poultry.

I asked Sue what living in the Island's finest landscapes meant to her and her family. 'As farmers we live on, not in the landscape', she told me. 'The land gives us our living as our factory floor and we have a different relationship and enjoyment of it than those who enjoy it just for its beauty. The harsh weather and the lows of tending your flock in the middle of winter makes the high of watching new born lambs in the fields on a warm spring day in May all the more valuable.'

Mixed farming is very time consuming with Sue describing it as 'Running to stand still, there

is never a quiet time'. This makes team work very important and the Brownrigg family value the strong relationship they have both with their two employees and with their Landlord at Sheepwash, Miss A Russell of Stenbury Manor.

We talked about the challenges and difficulties that farming has faced over the last ten years and Sue described a gradual worsening attitude towards farmers from the public, which she believes to be a result of historic government subsidisation policies, food scares, changes in how we shop for food, and a lack of true value being placed on food production, preparation and the ritual of eating. This has started to change for the better with initiatives like the Farmers Market reconnecting the farmer with the consumer face to face each week. Sue and her family have had to learn new skills to sell direct. It is something that initially

Sue admits she found difficult but now 'I look forward to it, catching up with other farmers and the regular customers that we have'. Sue sells her poultry and eggs at the market every Friday and has high hopes for a busy time in the run up to Christmas with sales of her farm reared Island Turkeys. Sue and Paul have recently started to supply select hotels across the Island with their Island Chickens both believing that the Island's tourism market has yet to be fully realised for local produce. Recognising the importance of tourism to the economy the Brownriggs in common with many small and tenant farmers have diversified into providing holiday lets at both Sheepwash Farm and one of the farm cottages. Although this is hard work, with change-over day being 'very hectic', it is another valuable way for visitors to get a true sense of rural life and the link between farming and the landscape by being based on a working farm within the AONB.

Finally I asked Paul and Sue to sum up in a few words their life within the Island's finest landscapes - After some thought they said "Hard work but we are so lucky, you are better to be born lucky than rich". ■



© AONB Unit Photographer John Brownscombe

© AONB Unit Photographer Fiona Hanna



Roger Smith was born and has lived on the Island all his life, spending the last 43 years living in Newtown with his wife and family. He fully appreciates this

corner of the Islands finest landscapes calling the estuary and national nature reserve "a Jewel in the Crown". He has a strong depth of feeling for the Island and has seen many changes to the countryside through his lifetime. Now retired following a long career with 'Westlands', he makes the most of the natural habitat that surrounds him, and both he and his wife enjoy watching and feeding the red squirrels, pheasants and host of small birds from their front garden, as well as walking in and around the reserve. The Smith's also have a small meadow where they keep their donkey, this is unimproved grassland and in summer is a mass of wild flowers, which attract butterflies in profusion.

The Newtown Resident's Association, of which, he is Chairman, have over the years developed a good relationship with both the

National Trust and English Nature, organisations that both have a major interest in the future of the nature reserve. Working together helps to ensure that this national beauty spot is conserved.

When we asked Roger Smith for his thoughts and feelings about the AONB he told us. "For me the Island is a very beautiful place which I hope will remain unspoilt for many years to come. I believe that an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be just that and I am concerned that the beauty of the Island be preserved and where possible, enhanced, by for example, the planting of trees

to replace those lost to Dutch Elm disease or to screen unsightly buildings. The beautiful scenery of the Island is not only an amenity for residents it is also appreciated by the many visitors who come each year, many coming because the Island is still unspoilt compared to much of the mainland. These visitors are a vital part of the Island economy. To safeguard the AONB requires in my opinion a very strict control on any new development particularly outside the boundaries of existing communities; only where there are extenuating circumstances should new development be permitted." ■



© Countryside Agency Photographer Joe Low



© AONB Unit Photographer John Brownscombe

'Isle of Wight Farmers Market' and 'Newtown Residents Association' are members of the IW AONB Partnership. We value their views on living and working in the Islands finest landscapes and would like to thank them for their contribution to our work.



Tennyson Memorial at sunset – Christmas Eve 2001 © Countryside Agency Photographer Joe Low



Xmas Extras

If you are looking for some extra special quality produce for the Christmas and New Year then visit the IW Farmers Market

The Christmas Markets run on

Friday 20th December 2002 and Saturday 21st December 2002
St Thomas' Square
Newport
9am until 3pm

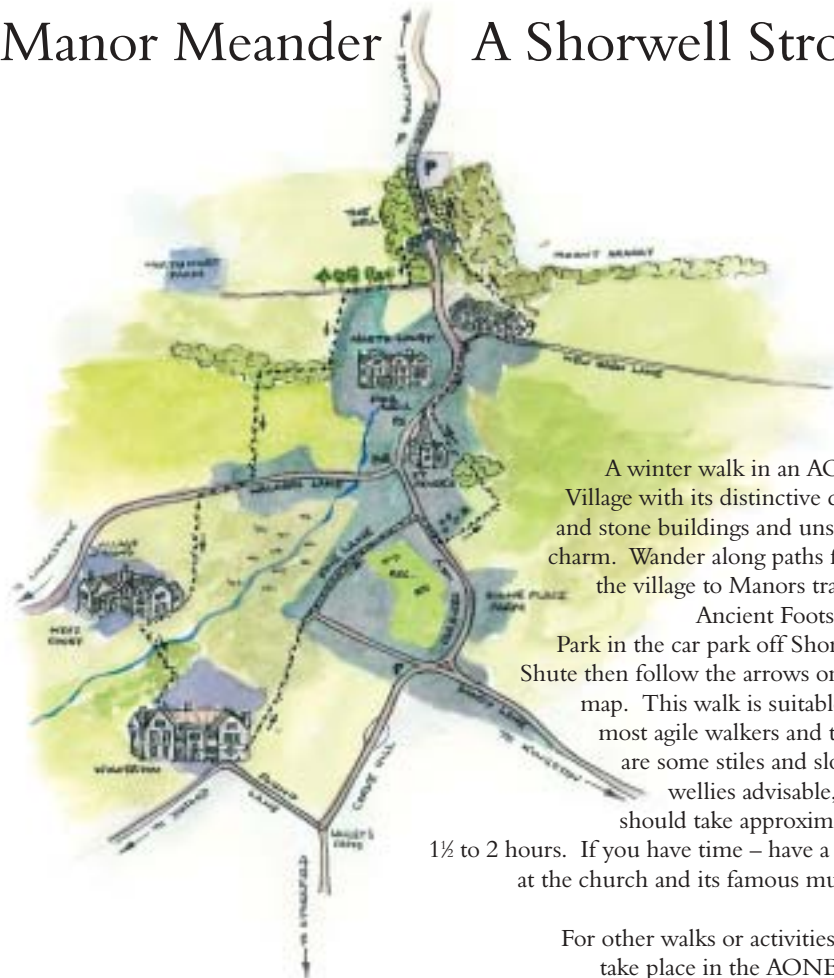
Then every Friday
 At the same time and place.

There is always someone missed
 Off the Christmas Card List

Visit our web site on
www.wightaonb.org.uk

And e-mail them something
 Special from the IW AONB.

Manor Meander A Shorwell Stroll



A winter walk in an AONB Village with its distinctive chalk and stone buildings and unspoilt charm. Wander along paths from the village to Manors tracing Ancient Footsteps. Park in the car park off Shorwell Shute then follow the arrows on the map. This walk is suitable for most agile walkers and there are some stiles and slopes, wellies advisable, and should take approximately 1½ to 2 hours. If you have time – have a look at the church and its famous murals.

For other walks or activities that take place in the AONB try:
 Wight Winter – Countryside Events 2002-2003 at:
www.iwight.com/just_visiting/walking/
 Or telephone the Isle of Wight Council Countryside Section on **823893**.



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The Isle of Wight AONB Partnership is jointly supported by the Countryside Agency and the Isle of Wight Council