



**Directorate of Community Services**  
Director **Sarah Mitchell**

## **Historic Environment Action Plan Freshwater Isle**

**Isle of Wight County Archaeology  
and Historic Environment Service**

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**01983 823810**  
*archaeology@iow.gov.uk*

## HEAP for Freshwater Isle

### Introduction

The *Freshwater Isle* Area comprises land to the west of the River Yar and mainly to the north of the chalk downs. The chalk cove of Freshwater Bay and land to the west of the Bay below Tennyson Down has been included in this Area since the historical development of this locality can best be considered in relation to the rest of *Freshwater Isle*.

This HEAP Area has been defined on the basis of historic enclosure and settlement patterns that differentiate it from other HEAP Areas. Historically, *Freshwater Isle* was isolated from the rest of the Isle of Wight and had developed a distinctive landscape character by medieval times (as had Bembridge Isle at the other end of the Island). This rural landscape was modified by the construction of Victorian military structures and overlain by Victorian and Edwardian development, particularly the creation of small coastal resorts at Colwell and Totland.

The HEAP describes the effect of later 20<sup>th</sup> century development in this Area and considers the most important forces for future change in the landscape. Particular management issues affecting this Area are set out and HEAP actions particularly relevant to the Area are listed.

### ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

#### **Location, Geology and Topography**

- Situated at western end of Island to north of *West Wight Chalk Downland*.
- Coastline comprises soft eroding coastal slope between Norton and Cliff End, low cliffs with sand and shingle beaches at Colwell Bay and Totland Bay and eroding coastal slope to north of Headon Hill.
  - The cliffs at Alum Bay are composed of brightly-coloured sands and clays for which the bay is famous.
  - Freshwater Bay is a chalk cove cut into the upper part of the Western Yar valley where this forms a gap in the *West Wight Chalk Downland*.
  - *Chines* with small streams cut down through cliffs at Alum Bay, Totland Bay (Widdick) and Colwell Bay (Colwell, Brambles and Linstone).
- Western Yar River forms the eastern boundary of the *Freshwater Isle* Area.
  - Coastal recession in the fairly recent geological past removed extensive areas formerly drained by the headwaters of the River Yar on land to the south of the present land area.
  - This coastal recession 'beheaded' the Western Yar, which now rises c.200 metres from the high-water mark at Freshwater Bay and is a tidal estuary from Freshwater Causeway.
  - The River Yar flows northward into the Solent at Yarmouth
- Solid geology is *Palaeogene*, mainly Osborne and Headon Beds and some Bembridge Limestone, with Reading Beds, London Clay and deposits of Bracklesham Group to north of chalk.
  - Superficial deposits include Plateau Gravel at Headon Hill and near Hill Farm, Alluvium in floor of Yar valley and Gravel Terraces on valley slopes.
- Fairly low altitude generally, maximum 125m OD at Headon Hill but elsewhere 20m OD - 55m OD. Moderate slopes except at Headon Hill and Golden Hill where gradients are steeper.
- Agricultural land is classified Grade 4 to the south of Freshwater and Totland but mainly Grade 3 to the north of Norton Green.

- **Defining Attributes and Principal HEAP Types**

- A well defined Area, isolated to some extent from the rest of the Island by the Yar Estuary and known historically as 'Freshwater Isle'.
- *Polyfocal* medieval and early post-medieval rural settlement pattern (lots of small settlement clusters rather than one or two large villages). Much of this pattern survives although later development dominates part of this Area.
- Freshwater 'village centre' at School Green and Totland 'village centre' are of late 19<sup>th</sup> century origin.
- Freshwater 'Village' at School Green is the main shopping centre for the rural western part of the Island.
- Resorts were developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century around Totland Bay and Colwell Bay.
- Later 20<sup>th</sup> century development around Norton, Colwell, Totland and Freshwater Bay gives much of the Area a suburban feel but agricultural land still survives to the north and south of Freshwater and Totland.
- Field patterns show clear evidence of enclosure from medieval *open-field*.
- Headon Warren is the largest surviving area of heathland on the Island.
  - Open Land also survives at Golden Hill.
- Woodland forms a relatively small percentage of overall land area.
  - No *ancient woodland* except for Saltern Wood and Stroud Coppice.
  - *Secondary woodland* within Fort Victoria Country Park (formerly Norton Common) and south of Golden Hill Fort.
  - Scrub on eastern side of Headon Hill and around Golden Hill Fort.
  - *Secondary woodland* and scrub also occurs within Afton Marsh.
- Valley-floor wetland at Afton Marsh along upper course of River Yar.
- Saltmarsh north of Freshwater Causeway.
- Norton Spit is a shingle bank extending eastward across the mouth of the Western Yar Estuary and has a small sand dune system at end of spit.
- Eroding coastal slopes are a feature of this Area, particularly around Headon Warren and from Fort Victoria to Fort Albert.
- Military structures are a strong feature of this Area.
- This HEAP Area has quite an intricate pattern of roads and rights of way.

### **Principal Historical Processes**

- A variety of prehistoric material has been recorded from this Area, including worked flint and metal work but no clear evidence survives for use of landscape or for settlement other than the Headon Hill Bronze Age *round barrows* (see under 'Archaeology and built Environment').
- Roman burials, coins and pottery have been recorded but no Roman buildings have been recorded to date. However, it has been predicted that the site of a Roman villa may exist in this Area (Margham 1992, 102; Wessex Archaeology 2005, 19).
- By the late Anglo- Saxon period Freshwater was a royal estate.
  - The estate centre was at Kings Manor (known at the time of the Domesday Survey as Kings Freshwater). The bounds of this estate may have corresponded with the *mother parish* of Freshwater before the Norman Conquest, including land to the east of the Yar Estuary.
- Freshwater Parish Church of All Saints has some Anglo-Saxon fabric.
  - The church was given to Lyre Abbey after the Norman Conquest, as was the manor of Priors Freshwater (taken out of Kings Freshwater).
- In the 12<sup>th</sup> century further land was granted out of Kings Freshwater to form the manor of Weston Braboef (Page ed. 1912, 243).

- In medieval times *open-field* arable seem to have occupied a significant percentage of land within this Area, in contrast with the much smaller amount of open-field land in the Northern Lowlands Area.
  - This cannot be explained in terms of better quality land since one of the two main areas of *open-field*, to the south of Freshwater, lay on poor quality Grade 4 land.
- There are no references in Domesday Book to woodland within Freshwater.
  - This apparent lack of woodland may be a much older phenomenon. Extensive woodland clearance may have taken place by later prehistoric or Roman times, allowing the development of relatively large areas of open-field in the later Anglo-Saxon period.
  - However, elsewhere on the Island extensive prehistoric woodland clearance is associated with archaeological evidence of contemporary settlement.
- An Anglo-Saxon settlement may have grown up beside the parish church on gravel deposits beside the Yar Estuary, close to the lowest fording point of the River Yar and north of the estate centre at Kings Manor.
  - A *planned settlement* may have been laid out after the Norman Conquest in the area later known as School Green (Margham 1992, 107). However, other interpretations are possible for the *morphology* of this area as shown on the OS 1793 map (see under 'Archaeology and Built Environment').
- A *polyfocal* settlement pattern of hamlets around greens (which provided small areas of common grazing) developed in Freshwater Isle from medieval times and is shown on the OS 1793 Map.
  - This settlement pattern is unusual on the Isle of Wight but has parallels in other parts of England (Margham 1992, 105-107).
  - Within the classic region of medieval *open-field* agriculture in the English Midlands farmsteads were usually grouped into *nucleated villages*.
  - However, in Bedfordshire there is evidence for medieval *polyfocal* hamlets associated with *open-field* agriculture, as in *Freshwater Isle*.
  - In those parts of England where medieval *open-field* agriculture was not so dominant in the landscape (including much of the Isle of Wight) historic farmsteads are usually more isolated (*dispersed*).
- In addition to greens around hamlets, there were larger areas of common grazing within *Freshwater Isle* e.g. at Golden Common, Norton Common and Colwell Common.
- Gravel heathland at Headon Warren was used as a rabbit warren in medieval times (Margham 1992, 112) and a beacon was sited there in 1324.
  - Gravel was also dug on Headon Hill in the past but these workings are thought to be of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century date (Wessex Archaeology 2005).
- In addition to common grazing on heathland, the Freshwater Isle manors owned land on West High Down (now Tennyson Down) and East High Down within the *West Wight Chalk Downland* Area and this was also used as common grazing by manorial tenants.
- Until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century access to Freshwater Isle could be gained only via the causeway from Afton Farm to Freshwater Parish church, via Black Bridge at the western end of Newport Road or at Freshwater Bay above Afton Marsh.
  - The relative inaccessibility of the Area was of potential defensive significance and in 1638 it was observed that 'the parish of Freshwater by a cut overland between the sea and the haven may easily be made an island fit to receive the people of the country ...in case of invasion (Page 1912 ed. 241).
- The majority of the present-day roads and some present-day rights of way are shown on the OS 1793 map and appear to be related to the medieval settlement and land use pattern.
  - However, Copse Lane may be a relatively late enclosure road (but pre-dating the 1793 map) laid out in connection with the enclosure of open rough grazing land on the east side of Golden Hill Common.
- Some of the valley-floor land of Afton Marsh was probably used as *grazing marsh* in medieval and post-medieval times and some small meadows are shown on the tithe map of 1838

- The OS 1793 map shows a watermill on the Afton side of the Freshwater Causeway and a millpond on the south west side of the causeway but the mill disappeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the millpond was drained, turning the area into marsh.
- Enclosure of all the open fields within this Area except Easton Common Field was piecemeal, often involving individual strips or small groups of strips. It took place from the later medieval period but some unenclosed strips survived into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - The tithe map of 1838 and the OS 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 6<sup>n</sup> map of 1862 provide good evidence for layout of open fields
  - Enclosure of 37 acres within Easton Common Field, on the eastern flank of High Down (now Tennyson Down) was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1861 (Tate and Turner 1978, 132). Easton Field was one of only two areas of *open-field* enclosed by Act of Parliament on the Isle of Wight (the other being at Niton).
- In the post-medieval period open grazing land was mainly enclosed or used for other purposes.
  - Heathfield Farm, to the west of Heathfield Road, may have been enclosed in the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century as quite small irregular fields are shown on the OS 1793 map.
  - Part of Golden Hill Common had been enclosed by 1793 but the OS map shows quite large fields with straight boundaries, suggesting a later enclosure date than at Heathfield Farm.
  - The remaining area of open land on Golden Hill Common was purchased by the War Office in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Proposals were made to enclose Norton Common by Act of Parliament but in 1856 this land was also sold to War Office.
  - Some open land at Amos Hill seems to have been enclosed into small allotments in 19<sup>th</sup> century and remaining area built on in 20<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Colwell Common declined in size from 19<sup>th</sup> century but the surviving area remains a public open space (Chatters 1987, 17-24).
- Early fortifications within *Freshwater Isle* were Worsley's Tower (built at Round Tower Point to the north of Cliff End in 1525) and Sharpnode Blockhouse (built in 1547 at Sconce Point near the sites of the later Fort Victoria). These complemented other Tudor defences against the French e.g. Hurst Castle (on the mainland) Yarmouth Castle and Cowes Castle.
  - A timber fort existed at Freshwater Bay in 1558.
  - During the Napoleonic Wars a new battery was built at Sconce Point and a barracks at Colwell Chine (Margham 1992, 119).
- From the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century forts were built around the Isle of Wight coast (including several in this Area) to protect the Solent and the docks of Portsmouth and Southampton (Margham 1992, 120).
  - Fort Victoria and Cliff End Fort (later known as Fort Albert) were built in 1850s and connected by a road along edge of former Norton Common.
  - Warden Point Battery, Cliff End Battery, Hatherwood Point Battery and Golden Hill Fort were built between 1861 and 1871.
- Alum (used as a mordant for fixing natural dyes, as an adhesive to bind paper fibres in papermaking and as an agent to increase the suppleness of leather in the tanning process) may have been produced locally at Alum Bay in the 16<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier but the documentary evidence is limited. See article on 'The Alum in Alum Bay' at [www.iwhistory.org.uk](http://www.iwhistory.org.uk).
- In the 18<sup>th</sup> century sand was worked at Alum Bay
  - The sand was shipped round to the mouth of the River Yar at Norton where it was stored in the Sand House and then shipped to the mainland for use in glass making and pottery production (Cole 1951, 30).
- Clarke's map of 1812 shows salterns on west side of Yar Estuary between Saltern Wood and Norton Spit.
  - Saltmaking by evaporation of seawater was a local industry and salterns formerly existed in various locations along the north coast of the Island and in the Lymington Area.

- 1862 OS map shows claypits and tilekilns close to Copse Lane and a brick field to west of Sheepwash Farm but both had gone out of use by 1898 (Margham 1992, 118).
  - 1898 map shows a new brick field site near Sheepwash Farm and a brick field and clay pits in School Green area but main development by this date was a brick, tile and pottery works at Warden Road, Colwell.
- Appreciation of the Island by the wealthy from late 18<sup>th</sup> century led to building of isolated larger houses at Norton, Westhill and Farringford. In mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Lord Tennyson lived at Farringford and other well-to-do and artistic residents also came to Freshwater Isle. Weston Manor dates from 1870s.
  - Farringford and Weston Manor added parkland and estate buildings to the landscape (Basford 1989 57-58).
- As well as larger Victorian and Edwardian villas, modest semi-detached cottages were built around Freshwater.
- Present village centre at Freshwater grew up around the existing hamlet of School Green (shown as 'Freshwater Green on the OS 1793 map) developing from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Tennyson Road and Avenue Road were laid out to the west of School Green Road.
- In late 18<sup>th</sup> century the only buildings at Freshwater Bay were two public houses, one known as 'The Mermaid' and one as 'The Cabin'.
  - By 1860s the Royal Albion Hotel had been built beside Freshwater Bay with a small row of villas and a coastguard station to the north. Plumbleys Hotel was sited above the cliffs on the west side of the Bay.
  - Continued growth around Freshwater Bay and Farringford from 1860s until end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. An artistic community of well-to-do residents grew up in this location, attracted by the presence of the poet Tennyson (Hinton 1992, 10-29).
- Development of Freshwater Isle as a holiday destination was facilitated by regular steamship service across Solent between Lymington and Yarmouth from 1830.
- Toll bridge across River Yar from Yarmouth to Norton, completed in 1860, was an equally important factor in facilitating access to Freshwater Isle.
- Alum Bay, Totland Bay and Colwell Bay developed as small holiday resorts from the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - In 1860 the Needles Hotel was built above Alum Bay.
  - From 1870 the 'Totland Bay Estate' Company built Totland Bay Hotel (now gone), Totland Pier and a number of villas (Medland 1995, 57).
  - In 1873 Alum Bay Pier was constructed at foot of Chine and in 1873 Alum Bay New Road was completed, linking Alum Bay with Totland Bay, Colwell and Yarmouth.
  - In 1875 the new parish of Totland was taken out of Freshwater Parish, reflecting development and population growth in the area. Totland's village centre developed along The Broadway.
  - In 1885 Afton Road was built on the east side of the river, providing a new route into Freshwater Isle via Bow Bridge and easier access to Freshwater Bay.
  - Railway link between Newport, Yarmouth and Freshwater from 1889 to 1953, with station at Bow Bridge to the east of School Green.
  - Smaller scale development at Colwell Bay, mainly in early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Holiday camps and holiday centres were developed beside the coast in second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, sometimes on former military land.
  - Brambles Chine Holiday Camp and the Savoy Holiday Camp are shown on the OS 25" map of 1946 but Fort Warden Holiday Centre was later.
  - Norton Grange Holiday Centre is on the site of the former Norton Lodge, a house and small landscape park dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Needles Pleasure Park was developed on the site of the Needles Hotel from c.1970 and the Alum Bay Chairlift opened in 1971 (Medland 1995, 84-87).
- Considerable residential development in later 20<sup>th</sup> century, many properties being bungalows.
  - Some later 20<sup>th</sup> century light industry at Golden Hill.

- Prosperity of Totland affected by changing patterns of tourism in late 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in loss of shops in village centre.
- Limited job opportunities affected prosperity of Area in late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This factor, and increased use of Newport as shopping centre, led to closure of shops in Freshwater.
- In early 21<sup>st</sup> century the holiday centre at Fort Warden and surrounding land was developed for housing.
- The National Trust purchased Headon Warren in 1974.
- Fort Victoria Country Park established by IW County Council in 1970s.
- Cameron House and Dimbola were purchased by the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust in 1990s and restored as the Dimbola Lodge Museum.

### Archaeology and Built Environment (details in HER)

- Prominent Bronze Age round barrow on summit of Headon Hill, two more round barrows on hill slope of Headon Warren and remains of a further barrow on edge of coastal slope.
  - Two further round barrows recorded from Headon Hill have not survived.
  - A single surviving round barrow exists to the south of Alum Bay Old Road.
- Bronze Age axe hoard recorded from Moons Hill and Bronze Age urn fragments recorded from Totland.
- Only a few recorded prehistoric flintworking sites from this Area, including one to the west of St Agnes Church and another nearby in Easton Field.
  - Various individual flint and stone implements have been recorded from the Area.
- Close to Freshwater Bay metal objects associated with smelting have been found with a coin of Iron Age date.
  - In the same area Roman pottery sherds have been found.
- Roman burials have been recorded from Totland and Sheepwash, the latter being within a stone cist.
- A Roman coin hoard was recorded at Farringford in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and there are a few other finds of Roman coins and pottery from the Area.
- Freshwater Parish Church has some Anglo-Saxon work but is mainly medieval with heavy Victorian restoration (Lloyd and Pevsner 2006, 138-141).
- Early 18<sup>th</sup> century manor house of Kings Manor is on an Anglo-Saxon site.
- The *polyfocal* historic settlements in this Area exhibit a variety of forms and buildings.
  - The *Historic settlement core* close to Freshwater Parish Church is small, linear in form, and contains stone cottages and Victorian brick cottages.
  - Other small *historic settlement cores* of linear or clustered form exist at Norton Green, Pound Green, Middleton, Easton and elsewhere. These have a mix of vernacular stone farmsteads and cottages, higher status 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings and smaller Victorian buildings.
- Freshwater village centre at School Green contains mainly 19<sup>th</sup> century and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
  - In form it has evolved from a hamlet of medieval origin around a triangular green, with a narrow linear green to the east (named 'Freshwater Green on the OS 1793 map).
  - A planned medieval settlement may possibly have been set out to the north of this linear green. Narrow plots are shown on the OS 1793 map running from School Green Road to Longhalves Lane but only a few buildings are shown and the area is shaded green, suggesting that it could formerly have been a small common that had been enclosed.
  - In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century a small shopping centre grew up along Tennyson Road to the west of the triangular green.
- Surviving examples of properties built for wealthy incomers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century include Buddles Butt, Norton Grange, Westhill and Farringford (later the home of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and now a hotel).
- Dimbola is a 19<sup>th</sup> century property famous as the home of Julia Margaret Cameron, the pioneering Victorian photographer.

- Weston Manor is an eclectic High Victorian building with private chapel, dating from 1869-70, built as the home of W. G. Ward
  - Headon Hall is small 19<sup>th</sup> century cottage orné built by the Ward family.
- Good examples of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century religious buildings including Roman Catholic St Saviour's at Totland, 20<sup>th</sup> century thatched church of St Agnes at Freshwater Bay, and non-conformist chapels such as isolated St Andrews' Chapel on Hill Lane (now redundant) and Colwell Baptist Chapel.
- Predominant built character of Area at the present day is that provided by modest Victorian and Edwardian brick-built villas in the village centres of Freshwater and Totland with modern residential development elsewhere.
- Modern pattern of fields, roads and rights of way provides clear evidence for the medieval and post-medieval arrangement and use of the landscape.
  - Certain roads and rights of way, including Moons Hill, Summers Lane and Spinfish Lane, define the edges of former open fields.
  - A few field boundaries in the Middleton Area preserve the boundaries of individually enclosed strips, formerly unfenced strips in the common open field.
  - The footpath running from Norton to Monks Lane runs through an area of former common meadow shaded green on the OS 1793 map and named as 'Lower Mead' and 'Middle Mead' on the 1839 Freshwater Tithe Map.
  - Farm tracks and rights of way running south from Farringford and Alum Bay Old Road to the Chalk downs originated as drove roads leading to downland common grazing and also gave access to the chalk quarries along the flank of the downs.
  - More recent road patterns are associated with the development of this Area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- The 18<sup>th</sup> century Sand House at Norton has survived and is a reminder of a small local industry.
- The best preserved 19<sup>th</sup> century forts are those of Fort Albert, Fort Redoubt and Golden Hill but remains of the other fortifications also survive.
- The Military Road between Fort Victoria and Cliff End survives as a public right of way within Fort Victoria Country Park and forms part of the long distance Coastal Path around the Island.
- Totland Pier survives but Alum Bay Pier was destroyed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.
- Remains of lime kilns at Moons Hill may be associated with the building of Weston Manor c.1870.

#### **Relationships with other HEAP Areas and with Mainland**

- Close relationship with *West Wight Chalk Downland*. This downland was used as manorial common grazing land from the Middle Ages and provided chalk for building and agricultural use. Drove lanes lead from *Freshwater Isle* onto the downs.
- The medieval parish of Freshwater occupied an area similar to that of the Anglo-Saxon Freshwater estate and included the manors of Wilmingham, Compton and Brook. These manors were on the eastern side of the River Yar within the *Thorley/Wellow Plain* HEAP Area.
  - Despite parochial links with the land on the eastern side of the River Yar *Freshwater Isle* was largely isolated from the rest of the Island by the Yar Estuary until the advent of improved sea and road links in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  - Distinctive pattern of *polyfocal* settlement and late survival of *open-field* strips within Freshwater Isle may be connected with physical isolation from rest of Island but could also have resulted from different patterns of lordship and landholding in this Area.
- The Victorian forts around the coast were part of a national defence programme, protecting the Solent and its mainland dockyards.



## Time-Depth

- Bronze Age round barrows on Headon Hill and Headon Warren.
- Anglo-Saxon medieval and Victorian work in Freshwater Parish Church.
- Polyfocal rural settlement pattern originating in Middle Ages.
- Existing field patterns provide evidence of medieval open-field agriculture and of post-medieval enclosure, both of *open-field* and of former common land at Golden Hill.
- Roads and tracks cannot usually be accurately dated but those in Freshwater bear a close relationship to patterns of land use in medieval and post-medieval times, with some roads running along the edges of former open fields and other tracks leading up to the chalk downs.
- Vernacular stone farmhouses, farm buildings and cottages.
- Individual houses for wealthy incomers built from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, often picturesque in form and sometimes surrounded by landscaped grounds.
- 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings illustrating later development of the area.
- Estates of Farringford and Weston Manor with surrounding parkland.
- Landscape is strongly influenced by 19<sup>th</sup> century military features.
- Later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing appears somewhat sprawling and unplanned, possibly as a result of the historic *polyfocal* settlement pattern within the Area and the lack of one large *nucleated* village.

## Contribution of Historic Landscape to Present Landscape Character

- Medieval settlement and land use patterns provide the basic framework of the Freshwater Isle landscape, overlain by patterns of Victorian and Edwardian settlement, tourism and defence, and by recent residential development.
- Distinctive Victorian and Edwardian character of domestic architecture in certain parts of *Freshwater Isle* but with internal variety within the area e.g. the character of Freshwater Bay is very different from that of Totland.
- Even where recent residential development has taken place, boundaries, roads and features of an earlier date survive. Thus all present-day landscape is historic.

## Values, Perceptions and Associations

- George Morland was one of the earliest artists to visit *Freshwater Isle*, staying at Freshwater Bay in 1793.
  - He was followed by 19<sup>th</sup> century engravers and by Victorian painters such as Myles Birket Foster and Helen Allingham (McInnes 1990, 126-128).
- Strong cultural associations with the poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron and with other Victorian and Edwardian writers and artists such as the painter G.F. Watts.
  - Freshwater, in fact, had a distinctive creative community at this period, although many writers, painters and intellectuals were summer visitors rather than permanent residents.
  - The local environment both influenced this creative community and was influenced by it, for instance by the building of new houses (Hinton 1992, 10-29).
  - The inhabitants of Freshwater were satirised by the novelist Virginia Woolf in a privately performed drama (Hinton 1992, 17) and form the subject of a more recent comic novel by Lynne Truss (1996).
- The scientist Robert Hooke was born in Freshwater in 1635.
- The Catholic convert W.G. Ward came to live at his newly built Weston Manor c.1870 and was a friend of Tennyson.
- The inventor G. Marconi is associated with Alum Bay where he tested early radio equipment (Medland 1995, 59-62).
- Alum Bay is famous for its coloured sand and is probably one of the key places for which the Isle of Wight is known nationally (Medland 1995).

- Visitors and residents value access to open heathland of Headon Hill and views from this point.
- Colwell Bay, Totland Bay and Freshwater Bay have popular beaches, valued by local people and by visitors.
- Most residents and visitors probably do not fully appreciate the medieval framework underling the existing landscape.
- Holiday chalets in the Colwell Bay area have quite a stark appearance in the landscape
  - However, this area would not have had much woodland cover historically although the 1839 Tithe Map shows a somewhat more varied landscape than that of today, comprising fields of varying size and shape enclosed from *open-field* as well as a remnant of Norton Common (still surviving today as rough ground to the south of Cliff End).
- Recent studies have identified a need for regeneration in the village centres of Freshwater and Totland e.g. 'West Wight Partnership Landscape Strategy' (2007).

### Research and Documentation

- Historic Environment Record is basic resource for archaeology, built environment and historic landscape character (includes HLC layer).
- 'Freshwater – Man and the Landscape' (Margham 1992) describes archaeology and landscape history of Freshwater Parish.
- The Western Yar Estuary Management Plan (revised 2004)
- [http://www.iwight.com/living\\_here/environment/estuaries/Western\\_Yar\\_Estuary\\_Management\\_Plan/](http://www.iwight.com/living_here/environment/estuaries/Western_Yar_Estuary_Management_Plan/)
- West Wight Landscape Assessment (LUC 2005)
- <http://www.westwight.org/West%20Wight%20LCA%20Final%20Report%20September%2005.pdf>
- Survey of West Wight Estate for National Trust by Wessex Archaeology (2005) deals mainly with *West Wight Chalk Downland* but includes Headon Warren

### Amenity and Education

- Coastline is an important amenity within this area, including beaches at Colwell Bay, Totland Bay, Alum Bay and Freshwater Bay.
- Open access to heathland of Headon Hill, owned by National Trust and offering excellent views of Needles and Solent.
- Good rights of way form an integral part of the historic landscape and allow access to it. The long distance Coastal Path runs through this Area from Norton Spit to West High Down.
  - The 'Freshwater Way' long distance trail runs from Freshwater Bay to Norton, passing Afton Marsh, The Causeway and Kings Manor.
  - Afton Marsh Local Nature Reserve is accessible via footpath F36 and a permissive path between Blackbridge Road and Afton Road.
- Fort Victoria Country Park is maintained by the Isle of Wight Council.
  - Privately run attractions within park include Underwater Archaeology Centre (run by Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology), a marine aquarium and a planetarium.
  - Educational tours of the park are run by the Council's Countryside Service.
- Golden Hill Park is managed by the Isle of Wight Council Countryside Service and access to this open land around Golden Hill Fort is valued by local residents.
- Dimbola Lodge Museum has a permanent display of photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron and other exhibitions.
- Varied architectural heritage enhances visual amenity and interest of Area. This architectural heritage includes vernacular stone farmhouses, farm buildings and cottages, 19<sup>th</sup> century villas and 'gentry' houses, and seaside buildings of late Victorian and Edwardian date

- Good educational opportunities to explore time-depth within the present landscape, utilising minor roads and rights of way. Visible time-depth in the landscape includes areas of former *open-field*, areas of former common grazing and historic settlement patterns. The HEAP Officer has led community field trips in this Area as part of the HEAP Project.

### **Features of Particular Significance within this HEAP Area**

- Heathland on Headon Hill is of great ecological significance and has time-depth going back to the Bronze Age.
- Surviving evidence for open-field agriculture in present field patterns and associated roads and tracks.
- *Polyfocal* rural settlement pattern and possible evidence for planned medieval settlement at School Green.
- Pattern of roads and rights of way, largely medieval in origin.
- Late 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century country houses built by wealthy incomers, particularly Farringford which has retained its surrounding park (now used as a golf course) although most of the historic trees have been lost.
- In certain parts of this Area the Victorian and Edwardian built environment is distinctive and well preserved.
- Victorian coastal forts are of national significance.
- Late Victorian and Edwardian coastal resorts at Colwell Bay and Totland Bay, Further study of the origins and development of these resorts (particularly Colwell) could usefully form the subject of a student thesis.

## **VULNERABILITY**

### **Rarity and Typicality**

- Headon Hill is a rare survival of heathland on the Isle of Wight.
- Surviving traces of medieval and post-medieval *open-field* agriculture are more evident in Freshwater Isle than in nearly all other parts of Island.
- *Polyfocal* rural settlement pattern is not found in other HEAP Areas.

### **Coherence**

- Victorian and Edwardian development has affected the coherence of the earlier rural landscape but has added another layer of historic interest and represents a particularly coherent landscape in itself, confined to the east by the River Yar.
- Layout and design of later 20<sup>th</sup> century development has in some places obscured the distinctiveness of this Area and given it a suburban feel.
- The Needles Pleasure Park and Alum Bay Chair Lift are both highly visible from Headon Hill and affect the iconic views of the Needles and the English Channel.
- Holiday parks to the north of Colwell Bay are not well integrated with the surrounding rural landscape.

### **Condition and Fragility**

- Rural landscape has been fragmented in places by built development and some parts may not be actively managed.
- Afton Marsh is a Local Nature Reserve but there have been some difficulties in maintaining optimum water levels and the Reserve is also at risk from longer-term sea level rise.
- Some buildings in the centres of Freshwater and Totland are not well maintained and some shops are unused. Totland is fragile economically as commerce revolves heavily around seasonal business.
- Larger Victorian and Edwardian properties that help to define the character of the Area are vulnerable to demolition for redevelopment or to brownfield development in their grounds.

- Military remains have survived to a variable extent.
  - Fort Albert and Fort Redoubt have been converted to private dwellings.
  - Golden Hill Fort was in commercial use for some years but has recently been unoccupied and is on the English Heritage 'Buildings at Risk' Register. It is currently undergoing conversion into apartments.
  - New residential development at Warden Point has incorporated remains of battery.
  - Hatherwood Battery has been partially destroyed by erosion but is still a significant monument. Cliff End Battery has been destroyed by erosion.

### Overall Survival

- A considerable part of the historic farmed landscape has been lost to later development although much of the historic rural settlement pattern has survived, overlain by Victorian and Edwardian settlement and obscured in some places by later 20<sup>th</sup> century development.

## **CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

### Forces for Change

- Rising sea levels and climate change will lead to increased coastal erosion and flooding and may affect semi-natural habitats such as Headon Warren.
  - Sea levels are predicted to rise by about 50cm in the next 50 years. To prevent Afton Marsh becoming inundated would require significant expenditure on flood defences and would cause other problems. It may be necessary to allow coastal habitats to migrate inland and this will alter the landscape as well as the natural environment.
  - Affects of sea level rise and climate change on wetlands area explored in the Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan.  
<http://www.wildonwight.co.uk/resources/publications/haps/WetlandsHAPRevpublished2003.pdf>
- Possible future regeneration projects in Totland and Freshwater
- Need to meet housing targets by means of brown-field development will put pressure on the grounds associated with larger Victorian and Edwardian properties.
- Changing tourism patterns may lead to rebuilding, redesign and redevelopment of holiday parks and this will have an impact on landscape. (Development has already taken place at Fort Warden)
- Some surviving areas of undeveloped land may go out of agricultural use and become unmanaged or used for horse-keeping
- Projects and action plans supported by Heritage Lottery Fund or other funders may enhance the conservation and enjoyment of the landscape.
  - The West Wight Landscape Partnership Landscape Strategy includes an action plan which sets out specific actions covering landscape conservation and enhancement, improved access for all, understanding the landscape and cultural heritage and celebrating the landscape of the West Wight.
  - The various actions identified in the West Wight Landscape Partnership Strategy, if funded, should help to support the conservation, management and interpretation of the historic landscape.

### Management Issues

- Historic landscape character should guide the location and design of future change in the landscape, including housing development, infrastructure and roads. The Isle of Wight *HLC* can be used to guide change but there is also a need for more detailed *character appraisals* within settlements.
- The landscape components listed below exemplify particular aspects of historic landscape character within *Freshwater Isle* and have particular management needs.
  - Field patterns between Summers Lane and Moons Hill which provide evidence of enclosed *open-field* strips.

- Field patterns between Fort Victoria Country Park and Norton Green which provide evidence of former *open-field* with some enclosed *open-field strips* (and a piece of secondary woodland – Pratlands Copse- which occupies the site of former strips).
- The former common meadow surviving as a long strip of grassland running from Norton to Monks Lane.
- Land within Golden Hill Park and to the east of Copse Lane which exemplifies late enclosure of common land and rough grazing land and is characterised by medium sized fields or enclosures with straight boundaries.
- *Polyfocal* settlement patterns throughout *Freshwater Isle*. This is still a significant component of historic landscape character despite later infilling.
- Military structures of 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century date.
- Larger late 18<sup>th</sup> century and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses and their grounds.
- Victorian and Edwardian built environment, which exhibits considerable variety within the different settlements of this Area.
- Buildings, structures and design features associated with 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century coastal resorts.
- Careful planning and management of future changes to holiday parks and tourist facilities within this Area (e.g the Needles Pleasure Park) may mitigate the visual impact of these facilities on the landscape to some extent.
- There is a need to encourage sympathetic social and economic regeneration of Freshwater and Totland whilst conserving and enhancing natural and historic environment.
  - The relative socio-economic deprivation of the West Wight in general and *Freshwater Isle* in particular is highlighted in the ‘West Wight Landscape Strategy’ (2007, 18-19). One of the aims of this strategy is ‘to ensure that the West Wight operates in a sustainable economic environment’.
  - A joint protocol could be drawn up and adopted by the Isle of Wight Council Conservation and Design Section, Isle of Wight Tourism, AONB, Chamber of Commerce and Parish Councils to promote awareness of historic landscape character and of the need to manage it sustainably whilst encouraging and supporting local businesses in Freshwater, Totland and Colwell.
- There is a need to promote local understanding of the Area’s distinctive historic landscape, thereby contributing to its conservation, management and enjoyment.
  - This need is emphasised in the West Wight Partnership Landscape Strategy Action Plan (2007, 27) particularly in the section headed ‘Understanding the Landscape & Cultural Heritage’.
  - If successful in attracting a Stage 2 HLF grant the West Wight Landscape Partnership could support local projects in line with its Action Plan.
  - The *Freshwater Isle* HEAP provides basic information on historic landscape character which could be used in future community-based study and interpretation projects. These could be based around themes such as medieval settlement and land use patterns, the history of medieval open field agriculture, past use of valley-floor land and marsh, the relation between patterns of land use, roads and tracks and patterns of landholding. Community projects could involve both adults and school children.

### **Conservation Designations**

- Western bank of Yar and Headon Warren area is within AONB.
- The Tennyson *Heritage Coast* includes the coastline within this Area from Alum Bay to Widdick Chine.
- Four *Scheduled Monuments*: Golden Hill Fort. Bronze Age round barrows at Headon Hill, Headon Warren and near Alum Bay Old Road.
- *Conservation Areas* at The Briary, Pound Green and Norton Green.
- 36 *Listed Buildings*, all Grade II except for Farringford which is Grade I.
- There are no sites on the *English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens*.
- Farringford and Weston Manor are on the Isle of Wight Council List of Historic Parks and Gardens of Local Interest in the Unitary Development Plan.

- The Solent and Southampton Water SPA and RAMSAR sites and the Solent Maritime SAC include the Estuary of the Western Yar and a small amount of land to the west of the estuary.
- The South Wight Maritime SAC includes the coastline of Alum Bay.
- The SSSI of Freshwater Marshes lies entirely within this Area and Headon Warren and West High Down SSSI lies partly within this Area. A small part of the Yar Estuary SSSI lies within this Area.
- 10 SINC's including Saltern Wood, Fort Victoria, Cliff End, Fort Warden, Golden Hill, Stroud Coppice and Moon's Hill.
- Afton Marsh is a *Local Nature Reserve* managed by the IW Council.

## **FUTURE MANAGEMENT**

The *Isle of Wight HEAP Aims, Objectives and Actions* are generic and applicable to the whole Island. However, some actions are particularly relevant to the management issues identified for this Area and these are listed below.

- A10.** Completion of Coastal HEAP, drawing on existing Coastal audit and HLC; identifying management objectives and actions, proposals for adequate recording of eroding coastal archaeology and funding sources.
- A11.** Seek funding for long term coastal archaeology recording project in response to coastal erosion.
- A16.** Completion of character appraisals for existing and potential Conservation Areas, using appropriate HLC and HEAP data.
- A20.** Complete Valley Floor HEAP.
- A29.** Complete Climate Change HEAP.
- A32.** Facilitate supply of HEAP and HLC information to land managers, farm advisers, farmers and funding bodies.
- A39.** Promote the retention of significant historic field patterns.
- A40.** Support traditional grazing and other appropriate management of valley floor Land through provision of historic environment information and land management advice
- A47.** Promote the conservation of urban fringe land shown to be of historic landscape value.
- A51.** Support the conservation of historic parks, gardens, cemeteries and public open spaces, including appropriate restoration schemes which follow an agreed Conservation and Management Plan.
- L3.** Study of Island seaside resorts in terms of historic processes and historic character.
- L11.** Encourage, support and help identify funding for enhancement projects identified in Area HEAPs.
- L13.** Investigate compilation of a Tourism and Recreation Type HEAP covering holiday centres, camp sites, golf courses and allotments.