

History of the Chutes

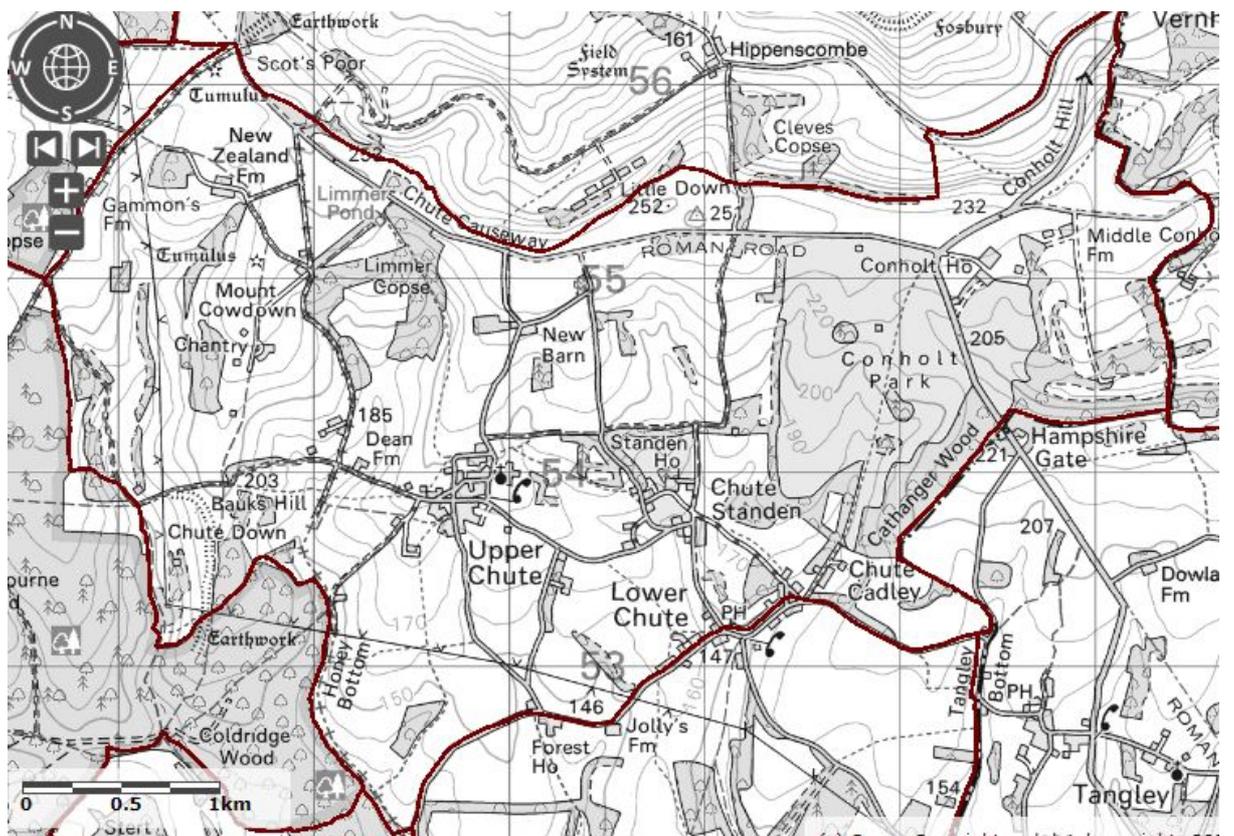
**Location**

Chute Parish (1,313.6 hectares) lies around 10 km. north-west of Andover. Its eastern boundary is the Wiltshire/Hampshire border whilst to the west Collingbourne Woods form the boundary. To the north the boundary is Grim’s ditch close to Chute Causeway. Chute Forest Parish is immediately to the south.

The land falls sharply from north to south. The highest point near the northern boundary is 252 m above sea level whilst the lowest point on the southern boundary is 140 m above sea level. Views throughout the parish are spectacular in all directions particularly towards the south extending over 40 miles. The land is broken by mainly north-south ridges and dry valleys. The only flat land is along the northern boundary. The ground consists of chalk overlaid with clay and flints.

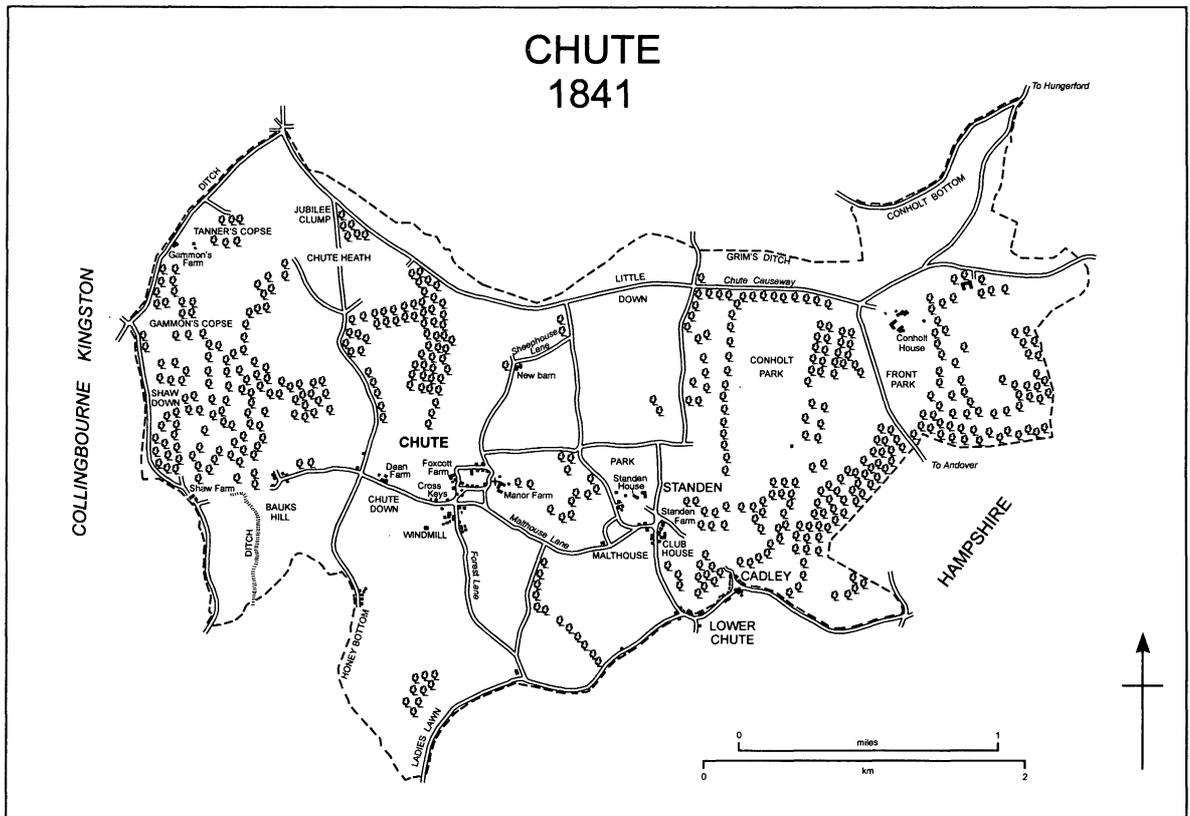
Within Chute Parish there are two conservation areas – the Upper Chute Conservation Area and the Chute Cadley and Lower Chute Conservation Area.

The map below shows the area covered by Chute Parish.



Source: Magic DEFRA

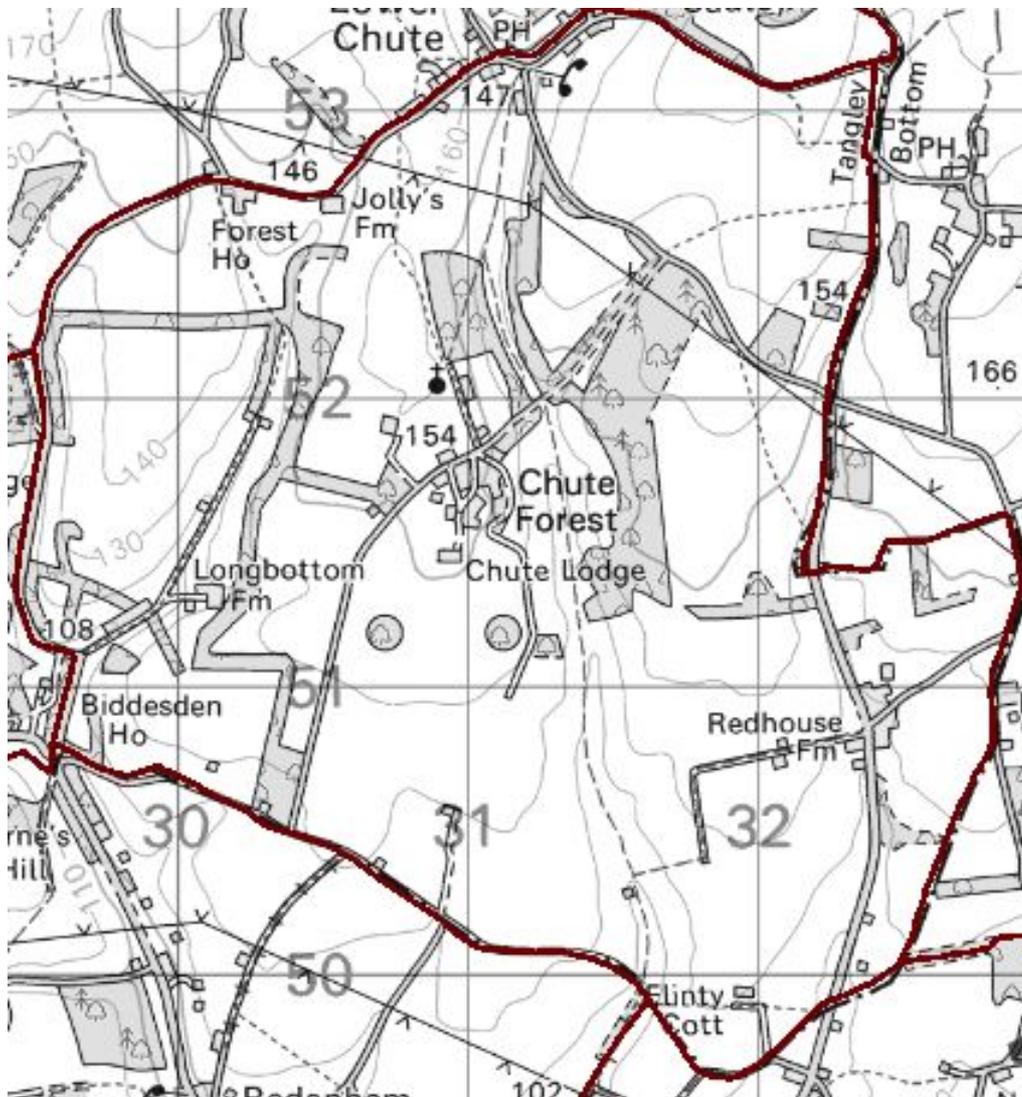
A comparison with the 1841 map of Chute Parish (see below) reveals little has changed in 180 years. The network of roads and tracks, oriented broadly on two axes, north – south and east – west, is almost identical.



Chute Forest Parish (825 hectares) lies about 5 km north west of Andover. It was part of Chute forest until it was disafforested in 1639. In the Middle Ages it was one of nine forests in Wiltshire: Braydon, Chippenham, Chute, Clarendon, Grovely, Melchet, Melksham, Selwood and Savernake.

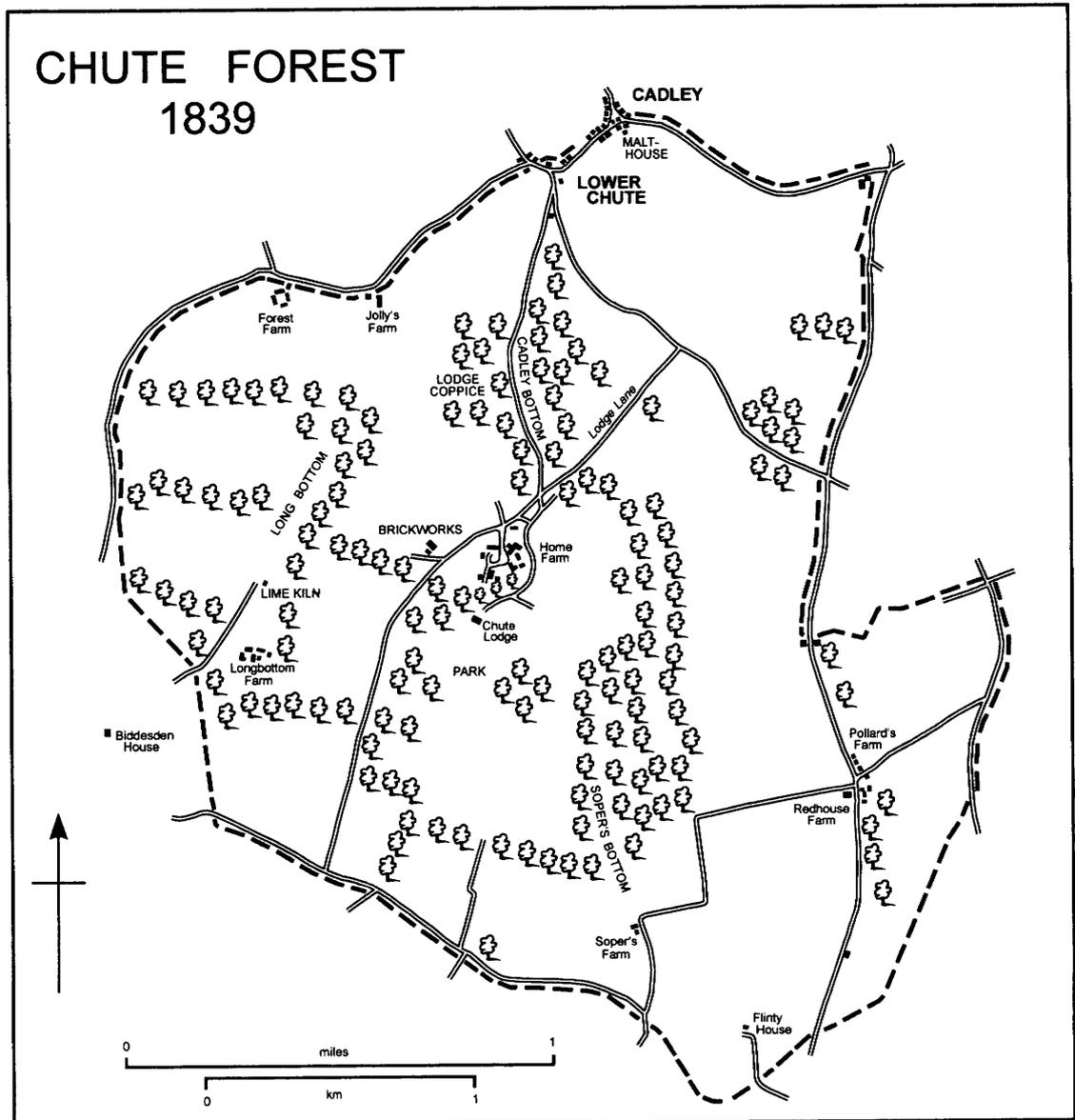
Chute Parish is immediately to the north. The Wiltshire/Hampshire border forms the eastern and southern boundaries. The land also falls from north to south but the gradient is less pronounced than in Chute Parish. It is broken by north-south dry valleys (see Parish map below).

## Chute Forest Parish



Source:  
DEFRA Magic

No major road crosses the parish from east to west. As a royal forest, it may have had restricted access with roads running along its boundaries. A comparison with a 1839 map of Chute Forest Parish (see below) reveals little has changed in 180 years.



An earlier map of the area extracted from the Andrews & Jury map of Wiltshire in 1773 (see below) shows the settlements and the tracks linking them were very similar then. There have been few changes. Shaw farm, a settlement of up to eight houses on Baulks Hill and Escourt a settlement in Conholt Park no longer exist nor does Chute windmill. The main settlements have grown. However generally there has been remarkably little change in 250 years.



area to prehistoric populations. Scotspoor Barrow is considered to be a Neolithic (400-2200 BC) long barrow. Human remains were discovered at this site during excavation in 1934. A number of Neolithic flint implements have been recovered from near Scots Poor and a Neolithic polished axe was found on Chute Causeway. The Bowl Barrow on Mount Cowdown is believed by WA to date to the Bronze Age (2200-700BC). Two Celtic field systems in the south-west part of the parish have also been identified which are believed to date from the Iron Age (700BC- AD43).

The ditch which runs south west to north east on the high ground between Gammon's Farm and Scotspoor Plantation appears to be cut by Chute Causeway. It may have been a boundary similar to the territorial boundaries that survive on Salisbury Plain military area. These are attributed to at least the Late Bronze Age and Iron Age.

Chute Causeway is a section of the road built by the Romans during their occupation of Britain. It was probably completed before 180 AD. The road ran from Winchester (*Venta Belgarum*) northwest to Mildenhall (near Marlborough) (*Cuneto*) and onwards to Cirencester. At Conholt it deviated west to avoid the deep Hippenscombe valley, resuming its straight course near Tidcombe. The length of the deviation is about 4 miles and the Causeway forms the southern 2.5 miles.

The history of Chute Parish can be traced back to 1066 when St. Peter's Abbey, Winchester, (later called Hyde Abbey) held the land of Chute as part of its estate called Collingbourne. The Domesday survey of 1086 records Chute as a royal forest measuring approximately a league, located within the manor of Collingbourne Ducis.

During the medieval period the small hamlet settlements within the parish of Chute would have been located within the King's Forest of Chute. The Forest refers to a legal entity created around a pre-existing nucleus of woodland, rather than implying that the entire area was wooded. The area would likely have comprised broken woodland pasture with fairly poor soils overlying chalk and clay-with flints. By the later medieval period, it seems that most of the parish would have been cleared to form medieval open field cultivation.

Due to the absence of natural watercourses or springs in the area, ponds would have been required in order to water the livestock. A number of carefully constructed, often clay lined medieval ponds, known as dewponds, still survive within the parish eg. Ashmore Pond near Chute Causeway. Other examples survive at Chute Cadley and Chute Standen.

The medieval village of Estcourt is believed to have stood in Conholt Park. Today a network of earthworks remain suggesting stone buildings. On a map of Wiltshire dated 1720 the names Escourt and Chute are depicted of equal size. It is not clear why the village was abandoned.

The settlement of Chute (now called Upper Chute) was called *Ceit* in 1178 and *Cett* in 1235. The name evolved to *Chuch* by 1268, *Cheut* by 1289 and *Chewte* by 1553. The name Chute is thought to derive from an ancient British word meaning forest.

No mention of a church in the hamlet of Chute is contained in the Domesday Book. St Nicolas parish church was probably not founded until the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is first mentioned in 1320. The church was almost completely rebuilt in the period 1868-72 to designs by J. L. Pearson. It is Grade II listed as are several of its monuments.

Hyde Abbey held the manor of Collingbourne until the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s. By 1550 parts of the Conholt estate in the east of the parish and parts of Dean farm

and the Chantry estate in the west were owned by Thomas Corderoy. Tracks would have linked his different holdings with Flashet Lane being the main route from Conholt to Chute.

From the Middle Ages agriculture was the predominant occupation with many residents occupying housing tied to the farms in the parish. The agricultural systems of this period consisted of large open fields divided into rectangular furlongs of individual parallel cultivation strips. The fields were planted in sequences of crop rotation and depended on manuring by communal sheep flocks during fallow periods. A medieval field system is clearly visible from the footpath across Chute Down.

The main grazing pastures were Chute Heath and Cowdown to the north west of the village of Upper Chute, Chute Down and Baulks Hill to the west and at Honey Bottom and Ladies Lawn to south. The agricultural system meant livestock was moved from upland to lowland grazing according to the season, and to fallow grazing on the stubble after the harvest. Chantry Lane is one of a number of north-south lanes in the parish which probably originated at this period as drove roads to move livestock between upper and lower pastures and continued to perform this function for several centuries. Breach Lane is likely to be another.

Many tracks in the parish are unchanged from medieval times or earlier. Chantry Lane provided a link between the upland at Mount Cowdown and, via a network of tracks, to Dean Farm at the bottom of the valley, to Upper Chute on the eastern side of the valley and to the former settlements at Shaw Bottom and Honey Bottom, to the west and south respectively. The continuation of the course of Chantry Lane southwards extends past Honey Bottom and links with the road to Appleshaw which in turn leads towards Weyhill where an important livestock fair was held from at least the medieval period.

WA considers Chantry Lane is a hollow-way with metalled stone surface. WA believes it is a rare example of an early metalled track, using flint as the surface material. 'Metalling' of a surface demonstrates the importance of the road. It took the form of larger stones forming the foundation and then successively smaller stones being placed above to result in a smooth, durable and free draining surface. Chantry Lane is metalled with a layer of interlocked, knapped flint placed on the surface. The process of hand knapping flint is skilled, since field flint is hard and the shaping of it is time-consuming. The placing of the flint on the surface can only have been carried out by hand due to the careful co-ordination required of the interlocking shapes.

The name Chantry Lane is only known since 1773, but in the 1590s it was called *Holdways Lane*. This was the *Haldewey* which in 1353 had given its name to the chantry of the Assumption established in the parish church of Chute and served as the spine road of its estate. The name suggests that it was already considered to be old, and its origins probably lie further back in the late Saxon or early medieval periods as a road for moving livestock between upper and lower common pastures.

Both Flashet Lane and Breach Lane appear to be metalled tracks. Together with Chantry Lane they provide links with the history of Chute going back to Saxon times.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken in 1994 at Tibbs Meadow in Upper Chute. Artefacts were recovered with a date range between the Iron Age and the present day, indicating the continued occupation of Upper Chute throughout this period.

## **Chute Forest**

The early history of Chute Forest is less well documented although a hoard of early Iron-Age coins found in the north-east part is evidence of prehistoric activity in the parish. The Crown owned Chute forest until 1639.

In the Middle Ages much of the parish would have been woodland. By the early 17th century it was mostly farmland.

Chute Forest church was built in 1870-1 and consecrated in 1875. In 1924 the vicarage was united with Chute vicarage and in 1954 the two parishes were united. The church was closed in 1972, and in 1974 it passed to the care of the Redundant Churches Fund, later the Churches Conservation Trust. The church is Grade II listed and remains open to visitors. In 1979 the united benefice became part of Wexcombe benefice.