

Landscape Character Assessment

Methodology

The process of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the characteristic patterns and features of our countryside, and explains how an area has developed over time. The methodology undertaken for the Landscape Character Assessment undertaken in Devon has comprised of 3 individual studies which broadly identify areas with similar character which are Land Description Units, Landscape Character Types and finally Landscape Character Areas.

Land Description Units

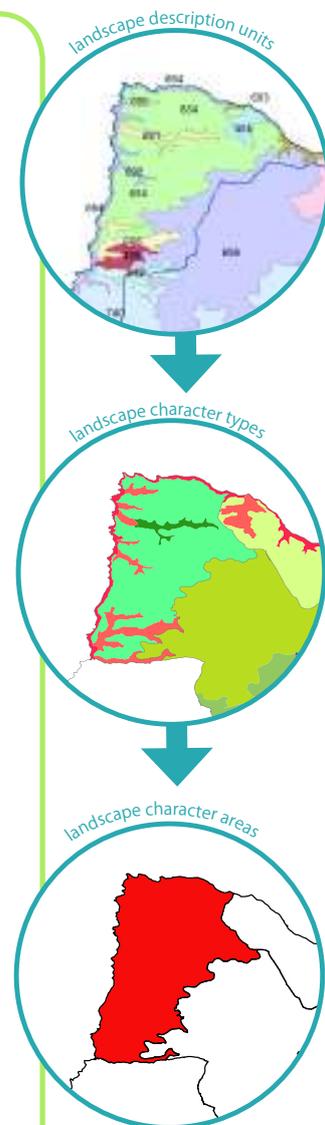
These are often described as the fundamental building blocks at the landscape level and are the smallest of the landscape units. They are derived from a desk based assessment and are areas of broadly similar character defined by overlaying different layers of information using Geographic Information Systems software. These layers included information about the landform, the underlying geology, the soils and the influence of human activity as seen in patterns of settlement, land cover and differences in tree cover.

Landscape Character Types

The process of deriving the larger Landscape Character Types from the Land Description Units relies on field survey work that records the visual/perceptual dimension, records the condition of the landscape and assesses any particular qualities and problems in an area. These types are used as a management tool and it is at this level at which most countryside planning and land management activity takes place.

Landscape Character Areas

Landscape character areas are the largest units of landscape which may embrace areas of differing character but which in some way have a coherent and recognisable local identity or 'sense of place'.





Water wheel at Docton Mill

section 2:

Landscape Character



Screda Cove, near Hartland Quay

Landscape Environment Character

The Hartland Peninsula is located at the southwestern end of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, adjacent to the Cornish County boundary. It extends further inland than much of the AONB, covering all of Welcombe Parish and most of Hartland Parish.

The Hartland Peninsula has a complex geology, combined with centuries of pounding by the full force of the Atlantic waves, it has produced some of the most dramatic seascapes and coastal scenery in Devon. The profile of Lundy is visible in the open seascape and dramatic sunsets over the sea add to the drama of the area. Coastal heathland on the cliff tops produces vivid and changing colours for much of the year. Inland, the area contains an open, flat, elevated plateau of agricultural land, which contrasts with the twisting, wooded and secretive combs that are cut into the plateau at its coastal edge. This woody vegetation combined with the many hedgebanks defining relatively small fields, creates a rich and varied tapestry, with little human intrusion beyond the small settlement clusters and individual farmsteads. Land within the peninsula is largely in agricultural use and whilst pasture predominates, there is increasing farm diversification into alternative enterprises to avoid relying solely on livestock.

- Carboniferous Culm rocks folded and faulted into extraordinary shapes, with twisted, zig-zag strata clearly visible in the cliffs.
- Erosion by the sea creating extensive wave-cut platforms and coastal waterfalls which contribute to the dramatic seascape.
- An undeveloped coast of rocky headlands and pebbly bays, many of which are inaccessible.
- Inland, relatively flat plateau land, incised by steep combs running down to the sea.
- Occasional hedgerow trees and shelterbelts on the open plateau; woodland (usually ancient and oak-dominated) confined to the coastal combs, where it is a distinctive feature.
- Relatively poor soils, traditionally supporting pastoral agriculture.
- Fields irregularly shaped, and of varying sizes, divided by hedgerows and hedgebanks. Remnant strip field systems remain around Milford Common and Hardisworthy.
- Extensive semi-natural habitats, including inaccessible cliffs and shoreline, oak woodland and colourful coastal heath, which support a rich diversity of plants, insects, animals and birds.
- An ancient landscape, containing the Iron Age hillfort at Embury Beacon, and medieval settlements, lanes, churches and fields which are still integral to the landscape fabric today.
- Other historic features that include ancient wells, historic parkland (around Hartland Abbey), watermills, and relics of former industry such as limekilns and the remains of Hartland Quay. Black and white wooden finger posts at road junctions are a distinctive feature of the lanes.
- A dispersed pattern of ancient farmsteads, hamlets and villages – including the larger settlements of Welcombe and Hartland – connected by an intricate network of lanes, with wide verges and high hedgebanks.
- Distinctive skyline buildings such as the Tower of St Nectan's Church, Stoke, (one of the highest in Devon) and Hartland Point radar dome; Lundy as a landmark in open sea views.
- Great contrasts between the open coastal plateau with its long views and big skies, and the dramatic coastline with its enclosed, wooded combs.

Landscape Types

Cliff Scenery - This is a complex geology with high, rugged cliffs that have zig-zag faults and folds. Wavecut platforms and spectacular coastal waterfalls are also distinctive features of this exposed and windswept coastline. Much of the shoreline is inaccessible, and the lack of trees and settlement increase its sense of wildness and remoteness.



Coastal Combes - These steep-sided stream valleys run down to the western coast of the Hartland Peninsula. Their sense of softness and shelter is in direct contrast with the rugged cliff scenery, and the coastal plateau which they cut through. Towards the coast they support extensive areas of colourful coastal heath, but further inland their sides are covered in ancient oak woodland.



Inland Moors - The southeast of the Peninsula is strongly influenced by the underlying Culm Measures. Some of the moors were enclosed in the 19th Century, whilst others (such as Bursdon Moor) remain open and are valuable Culm Grassland habitats. They can feel bleak and exposed, but are rich in prehistoric archaeology and have panoramic views over the surrounding landscape.



Coastal Plateau - This relatively flat, elevated landscape covers the majority of the Peninsula. It has smooth, near-horizontal skylines and a strong sense of openness, although views are often restricted by the hedgerows alongside the roads. It is an agricultural landscape which has been divided up into irregularly-shaped fields of varying sizes.



Geology

The underlying geology of the Hartland Peninsula is formed of carboniferous sandstones and shales deposited between 360 to 300 million years ago. The zig-zag folding of these rocks can be seen at Hartland Quay. The Carboniferous rocks are so named as they contain coal, which is a rock rich in a mineral called carbon, although in Devon no economic coal was found because the sediments were laid down in a sea, instead of in tree-choked swamps where more commercial coal forms. The rocks in Devon are predominantly marine shales and sandstone.

The mudstone, sandstone and siltstone beds of the Carboniferous Culm rocks have been folded and faulted into extraordinary shapes, with their twisted strata clearly visible in the cliffs. This illustrates how the rocks were crumpled and contorted by the collision of crustal plates, and thrust up into mountains. Between the layers of sandstone and shale, other types of rock can be seen such as Lavas from volcanoes and layers of volcanic ash are common within the shales, and other igneous rocks also occur.

The Hartland Peninsula coastline contains geological formations of national significance, and is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The coastline forms a series of small headlands interspersed with pebbly bays with spectacular cliffs north and south of Hartland Quay that show massive sandstone beds with interbedded shale of the Crackington Formation, all of it being spectacularly folded by Variscan earth movements. Close examination of the sandstones shows many features formed by rapid turbid flows of intermixed sediment and water, where the underlying sea-bed muds were ripped and gouged by the currents, now preserved as casts in the underside of the sandstone beds.

The carboniferous hard sandstones and tough igneous rocks underlying the Hartland Peninsula are one of the most useful rocks found in Devon, and consequently many small quarries worked in the past, to obtain building stone and roadstone. These rocks were extensively used for building houses, walls, bridges and churches, most of them still in use today due to the durability of the stone (www.devon.gov.uk/geo-carboniferoussandstonesandshales.pdf)



Combes Spekes Mill Valley

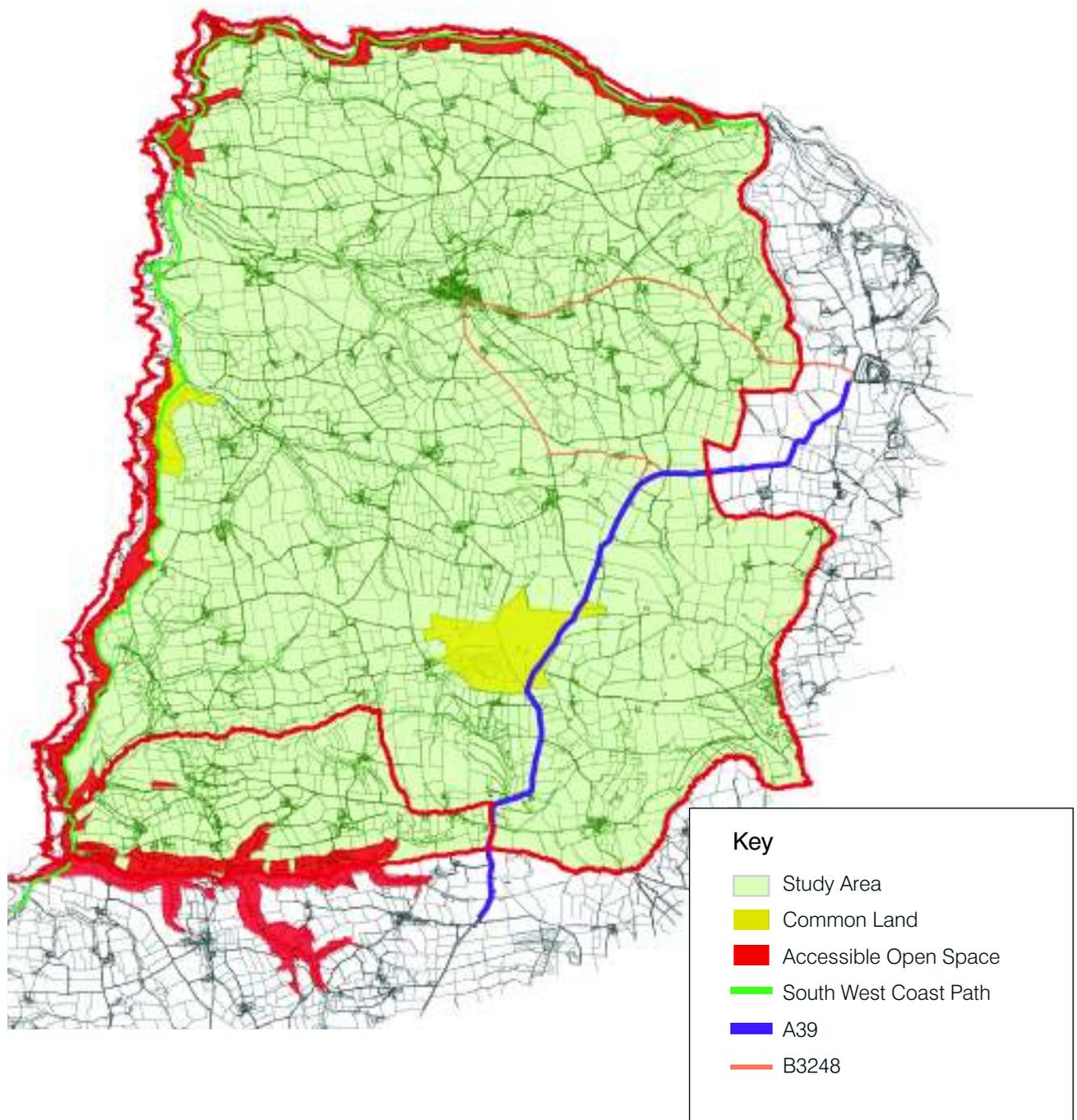
Environmental Designations

There are a number of environmental designated landscapes within the Hartland Peninsula. The north western corner of the zone, between the A39 and the coast, is designated as part of the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A narrower coastal strip has the Devon County Council designation of Coastal Preservation Area, and has also been defined as Heritage Coast by the Countryside Agency. The Hartland Peninsula is also included within the North Devon Biosphere Reserve. There are four SSSI landscapes within the Hartland Peninsula, these are: Marsland to Clovelly Coast; Burson Moor; Welcombe and Marsland; and Tintagel-Marsland-Clovelly Coast, which is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation. Both Marsland to Clovelly Coast SSSI and Tintagel-Marsland-Clovelly Coast SSSI have exposures of Crackington and Bude formations of the Upper Carboniferous Cliffs, cliff tops and valleys with ancient woodland and parkland which support important lichens and grassland, heath and scrub. Bursdon Moor is a lowland moor and has a wet and dry heath and herb-rich grassland. Welcombe and Marsland SSSI consists of ancient woodland, maritime heath, grassland, meadows, woodland glades and bracken slopes.

Scheduled Monuments within the area include: Windbury Head Camp, an Iron Age enclosure or Hill Fort dating back to the last millennium BC; Embury Beacon Iron Age hillfort; and St Clare's well at Philham. Other designated landscapes include Marsland Valley as a Local Nature Reserve and RIGS sites at Colpit Quarry, Hartland Quay and Embury Beacon.

Public Access

Hartland Peninsula contains a short section of the South West Coast Path, plus a very good network of public footpaths, bridleways and byways, which link with others on the Cornish side of the Marsland valley. This provides excellent recreational access into the area, with common and/or access land along much of the cliff tops. Significant areas of land are also owned and managed by the National Trust (the Welcombe Estate and part of the Brownsham Estate). The Atlantic Highway (A39) provides a modern link to the North Devon Link Road (A361) and passes through the northern part of the district and into north Cornwall.





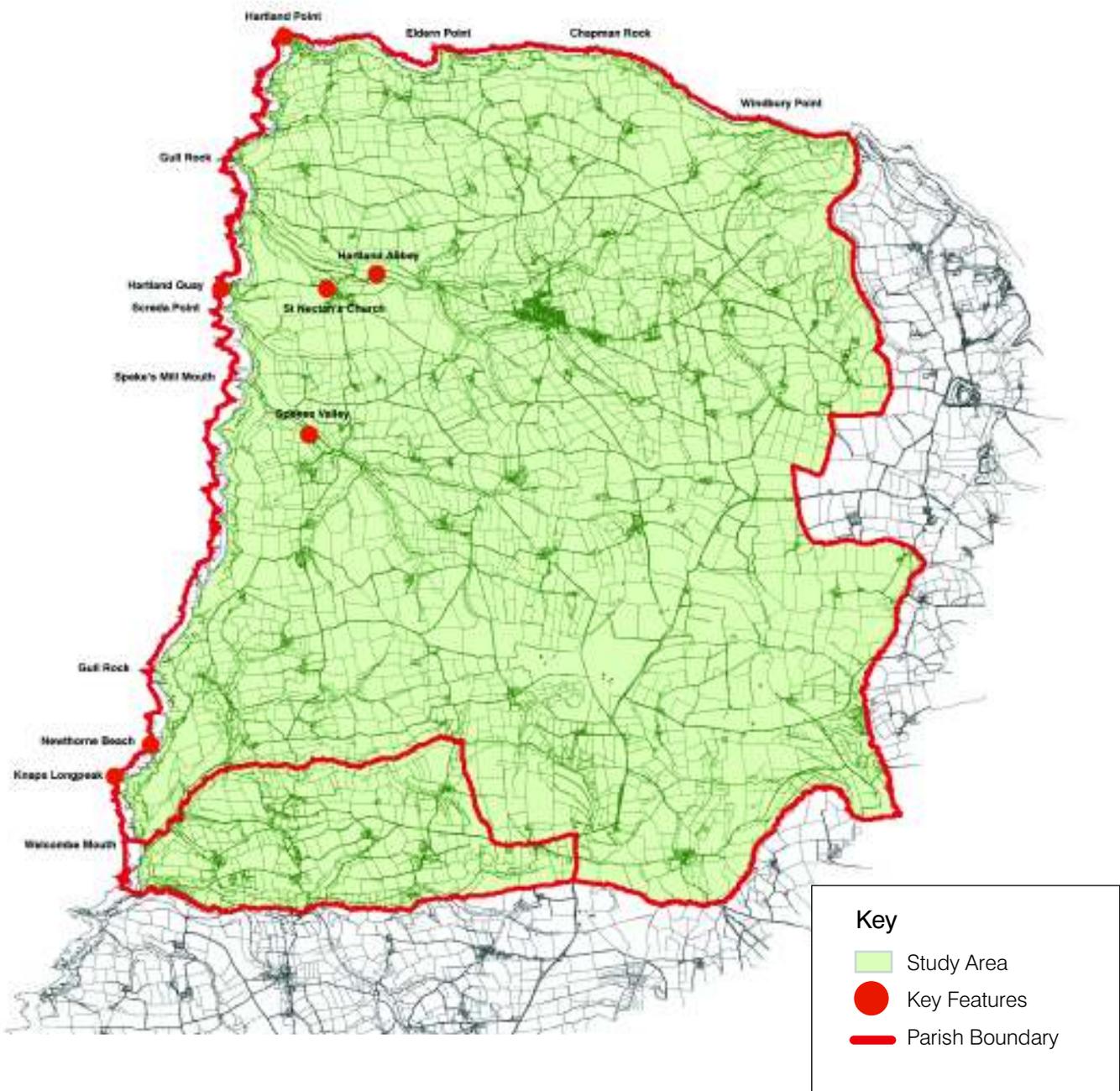
Hartland Abbey

Wildlife & Biodiversity

There is a considerable diversity of fauna and flora due to the extensive and contrasting habitats which range from the coastal margins, to the wooded coombes and the small fields on the higher ground that are often enclosed by hedgebanks. The coast to the west and the wooded coombe to the south form part of the Marsland to Clovelly Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It includes the Devon Wildlife Trust's (DWT) Welcombe and Marsland Nature Reserve, together with smaller landholdings. The reserve extends several kilometres inland and contains a great diversity of habitats - wooded steep-sided valleys, maritime heath and grassland meadows, bracken covered slopes, small streams and ponds. Most of the hedges along the lanes in the parish could be classified as species-rich, with an average of six woody species in a 30m length. The Welcombe Millennium Wood has been established in the centre of the parish with the aid of the Woodland Trust. It surrounds the village hall and is an open access area (Wood on Your Doorstep) with a permissive path running through it.

Notable Buildings & Historic Landmarks

One of the most notable buildings in the Hartland Peninsula is Hartland Abbey, the historic home of the Stucley Family since 1539, but first founded in 1157 as a monastery. Other key features include: Hartland Point, an impressive headland standing 350ft above sea level, the point is where the Atlantic meets the channels and is marked by a lighthouse (built in 1874); Hartland Quay, once a paradise for smugglers, this 16th century quay is now the site of a ship wreck museum and Hotel (the Wreckers Retreat); and the Church of Saint Nectan at Stoke, with it's high tower that still remains a significant landmark for ships in the Bristol Channel.





Road bridge near Welcombe Mouth

section 3:

Settlement Character



Standing Stone at Sheeplace Warren behind Hartland Quay

Historical Background

Prehistoric

The Hartland Peninsula has been settled for several thousand years, and has had a relatively isolated past. The earliest visible signs of human activity in the area include a prehistoric settlement; a number of prehistoric standing stones; Bronze age Tumuli and Barrows; ancient burial mounds; and finds of flint and chert tools. The Prehistoric settlement at Embury Beacon is a prehistoric iron age promontory fort that shows that local communities were established along the coast prior to the Roman conquest of AD43. This is a fine example of a coastal promontory fort defended at the seaward side by high cliffs and at the landward side by a rampart and ditch. There are also visible features located on high land or preserved amongst the heath of Bursdon Moor, which has a number of barrow cemeteries. Roman remains from the area are rare but Hartland Point (known as 'Hercules Head') was already a well-known landmark on a coastline which has been strewn with wrecks since prehistoric times.

Medieval (5C-15C)

During the Middle Ages, the distinctive pattern of dispersed hamlets, farmstead and fields became well established. Historic features are therefore very much a part of the fabric of today's landscape. By the time of the Domesday Book, and the 14th century, the foundations of new farms, hamlets and villages had been laid. The settlements from this period tended to be located within the wooded combes and had an intimate small-scale nature with views often restricted outwards. Settlement names such as: Berry, Blegberry, Tosberry and Titchberry may indicate former enclosed settlements; Leddon and Meddon, come from the word "dun" which means hill in Old English; Welcombe and Hollacombe, probably have Saxon origins; Henaford Down and Milford suggest places sited on a ford; whilst Darracott, Elmscott, Natcott, and Upcott have the common suffix "Cott" used to describe the first small and humble dwelling which were usually associated with farms.

The emergence of Hartland (meaning 'Stag Island') as a Saxon royal estate mentioned in King Alfred's will shows us that the area had political importance prior to the Norman Conquest of AD 1066. The medieval foundation of Hartland Abbey (founded in 1167 as an Augustinian House), and the parish churches at Welcombe and Hartland (St Nectan's Church at Stoke a 13C building which is thought to have originated from a 7C monastery) bear witness to the area's religious heritage. Other examples of Hartland's medieval past can be traced in features such as: the two early medieval deerparks; the ruin of a Warrener's House dating 13C; medieval fish ponds; a Chapel site at Tor Marsh; well preserved medieval buildings such as 'Church House' in Stoke; medieval wells; medieval farmsteads; medieval mills; medieval field systems; and medieval earthworks.

In this rural landscape Hartland itself played a central part as a market town and borough. In the 13C Hartland village was granted the rights to Markets and Fairs, these would have been held in the Town Square.

Post Medieval Period 16C-18C

The main activity in the Hartland Peninsula was farming, however there is also a rich history of smuggling and wrecking occurring at the historic port of Hartland Quay which is positioned precariously amongst spectacular coastal scenery. Hartland Quay built in 1566, afforded maritime links in a part of Devon, where land travel was slow and unpredictable.,

Many of the hamlets and villages exhibit 17th to 19th century development attesting to the growth and development of settlements during this period. The traditional farmhouse of this period had a narrow, long plan and are referred to as a three room cross passage type house . These were distinct and separate from the Devon long houses that also housed animals. Traditionally many roofs were thatched, although these were progressively replaced by slate as fire was a persistent risk especially in close housing. Examples of special features from this period include: the C17 Hartland Well House; the oldest working Town Clock (17C) ;and a turnpike defensive site installed C17. Limekilns along the coast date back to the time when limestone was brought in from south wales for use in fertilising fields.

19C to the present

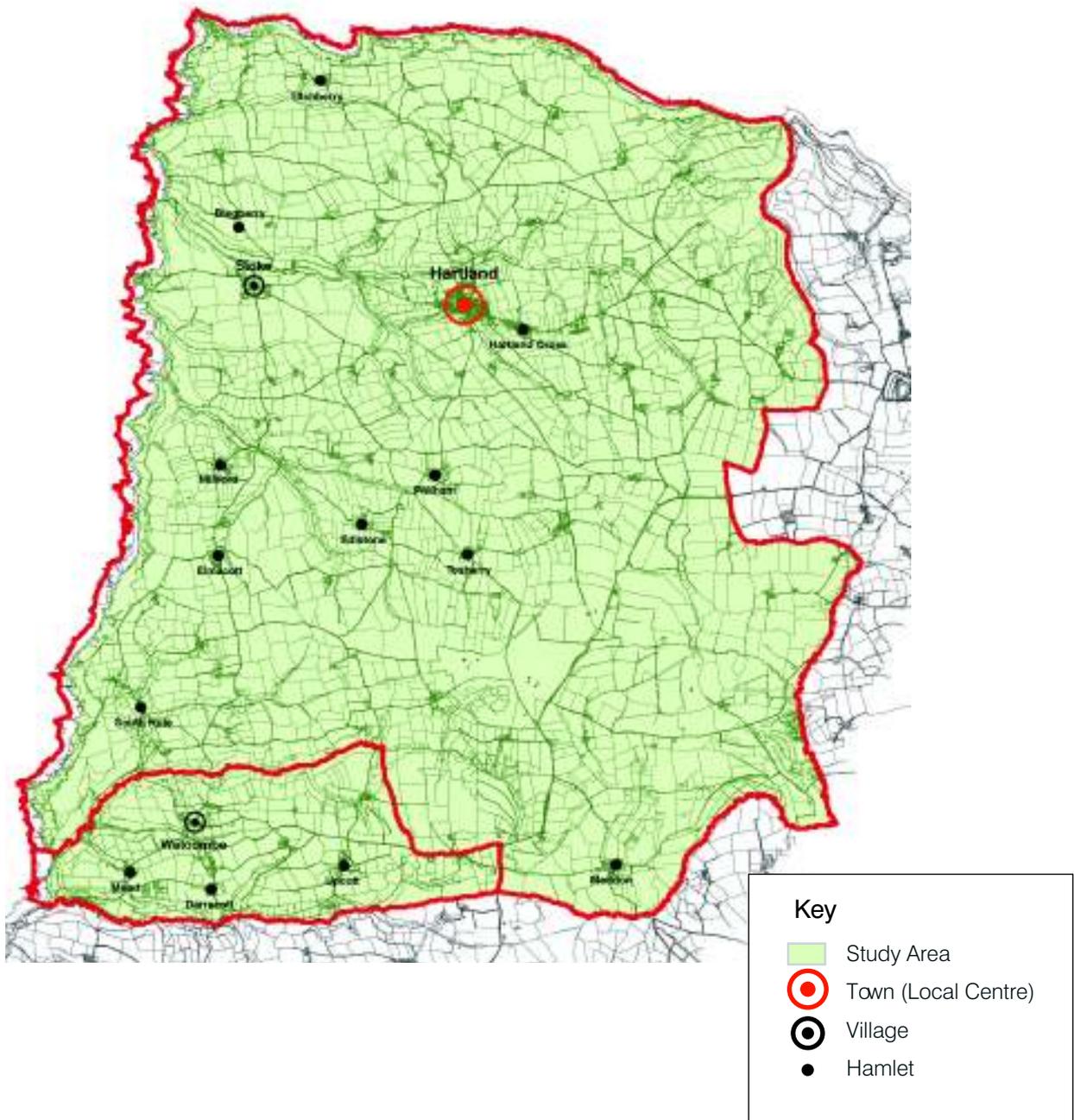
In 1890 the Borough of Harton ceased to exist and the responsibility of Borough matters passed to the Harton Town Trust. The Town Trust is now a Charity set up to manage the residue of the ancient Borough. This includes the properties all of which are listed buildings, the wells, markets, fairs, land and streets. The village of Hartland used to be a completely self sufficient and in the 1870's there were some 32 shops, plus businesses, which were run from peoples homes. In the 20th Century, modern demands meant that the village of Hartland changed, primarily due to the motor car.

There are examples of industry in the area from this period which include: numerous windmills (Bond's Windmill 19C, Five Acre windmill 19C, Wester Windmill C19, Rosedown Mill C19; a mine producing copper; and C19 Hartland Tannery.

Iconic landmarks include: the Folly, once believed to be the Warreners House as it has been associated with a nearby warren, and which was later fashioned into a Victorian Folly; and St John's tower dating; the Hartland Point Lighthouse (1874) a circular tower some 57 foot high and still flashes today. Other interesting features include the various ship wreackages from 19C and 20C. In fact the cruel, rugged and remote coast is littered with ship wrecks with over ten shipwrecks for every mile.

Settlement Pattern

Hartland Peninsula has a dispersed settlement pattern mostly consisting of small hamlets. It comprises of the parishes of Hartland and Welcombe. Hartland Parish is the most north-westerly settlement in Devon, incorporating the village of Hartland at its centre, the village of Stoke to the west and the hamlet of Meddon in the south. The village of Welcombe is located within the parish of Welcombe to the south. There are numerous hamlets that include Elmscott, Meddon together with smaller communities such as Edistone, Hardisworthy, Milford, Natcott, Philham, Southole and Tosbury. All of this settlements are included within the AONB designation with the exception of Meddon.





ERECTED BY THE PARISHIONERS IN
HONOUR OF THE MEMORY OF THE HARTLAND MEN
WHO DIED IN THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1918.

Edward Bailey	James Davison
Arthur Bunn	Leonard Clarke
Thomas Bull	John Halsey
James R. Butler	Tom J. Hilly
Frank Cartwright	Thomas F. Jones
Edward Clark	Walter Kippen
Frank Cornhill	Franky Patten
Samuel F. Cowley	William Patten
Alfred Baynes	Edwin Smith
Charles Love	John T. Smith

James Jeffery, William Kemp,
Herbert St. Leon, Stanley,
Major General G. G. G.

The Square, Hartland

Hartland Village

Introduction

Hartland village occupies an important strategic position to the north west of the District, and is the main village serving a wide rural hinterland. The name “Hartland” presumably derives from the Old English word “heort” for a deer (compare with Swedish “hjort” and Dutch “hert”). Historically, Hartland was an important port, but now acts as a centre for a rural neighbourhood that has minor tourist traffic. In medieval times there was an important abbey at Hartland where the shrine of St Nectan was venerated. Hartland Abbey and the parish church are located some two miles away at Stoke. The village of Hartland has a thriving community and provides a significant range of services and facilities in support of its population, whilst acting as a focal point for the surrounding rural community.

Many of the older style buildings, particularly those located within the oldest part of the settlement, are built using the carboniferous hard sandstones and tough igneous rocks which underlie the Hartland Peninsula. These rocks were used for building houses, walls, bridges and churches, due to the durability of the stone.



Fore Street, Hartland

Hartland: Settlement Form and Views

