1.2.3 Cultural

1.2.3.1 Archaeology

The description of the archaeological features of the reserve has been provided by Alison Borthwick of Wiltshire County Council and is reproduced below. The archaeological and historic context is provided in Section 1.2.3.2 Land Use History.

A. The Archaeology

See figure 1.2.3.1a.

1. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SW612
Wiltshire Scheduled Monument No 396

Irregular, roughly oval enclosure with inner ditch situated on the ridge to the north of Yarnbury Castle. Incorporates two straight elements with a sharp angular corner at the east end. Measures 150m E-W by 120m N-S and comprises of a bank up to 0.8m high with an inner ditch 0.4m deep. A simple break on the southern side is probably an original entrance. Two contemporary or later field banks adjoin the north side of the enclosure. No evidence of habitation survives and the Ordnance Survey interpret the feature as an Iron Age or Romano British pastoral enclosure. However Prof Atkinson included the site in a list of doubtful henge monuments.

The site is cut by a trackway leading north from Yarnbury and only a short section of the W side survives. The south side has been used as a field boundary. The enclosure is partially covered by scrub.

2. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SW606
Wiltshire Scheduled Ancient Monument No 396

Ancient Field System covering approx 25 hectares contemporary or later than the circular enclosures (612 and 635). System comprises of a fieldway and a series of roughly square fields enclosed by banks or lynchets approx 0.4m high. A number of square enclosures can also be seen on air photographs.

3. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SW635
Wiltshire Scheduled Ancient Monument No 396

Enclosure - similar in size and form to 612. Seen on air photographs. Scrub cover in centre.

4. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SE667
Wiltshire Scheduled Ancient Monument No 559

Bowl barrow 14.0 metres in diameter and 1.1m high on downhill side. Situated below a lynchet on the false crest of a downland ridge. Visited by the Ordnance Survey in 1972 and 1974 and surveyed at 1:2500 scale.

5. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SW617

Linear feature - possibly boundary ditch to field system to south or boundary to burnbake area to north? Date unknown. Seen on air photographs.

6. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SE684

Field system. Possible sequence from Iron-age to Saxon or medieval period? Series of banks defining small square "Celtic" fields similar to those further west (SU04SW606). Some banks appear to have been removed to create long narrow fields (mostly running N-S) which are typical of the Romano-British period. Ridge and Furrow has then been superimposed - but the R & F respects older field boundaries. Some of the R & F has distinctive reversed 'S' curve but the earlier field boundaries also seem to have this curved aspect as well! The R & F is very long in places and could possibly be Saxon in origin. It has not been divided up into small furlongs or blocks which could suggest it was not in use in later Middle Ages when pressure on land holdings (due partly to inheritance laws) would usually result in a complex pattern of small fields. The location of the R & F so far from the medieval settlement at Winterbourne Stoke might also suggest it was an early medieval or saxon landholding on the border of the Parish, which was later abandoned. Note that the Celtic/Romano British and the later field system appears to continue acorss the line of the Parish boundary suggesting that the boundary is a later feature.

7. Wiltshire CC Sites and Monuments Record No SU04SE702

Enclosure, seen as cropmark on air photographs. Large oval enclosure with possible entrance at east end. Similar in shape to those north of Yarnbury, but larger in size. No other features associated.

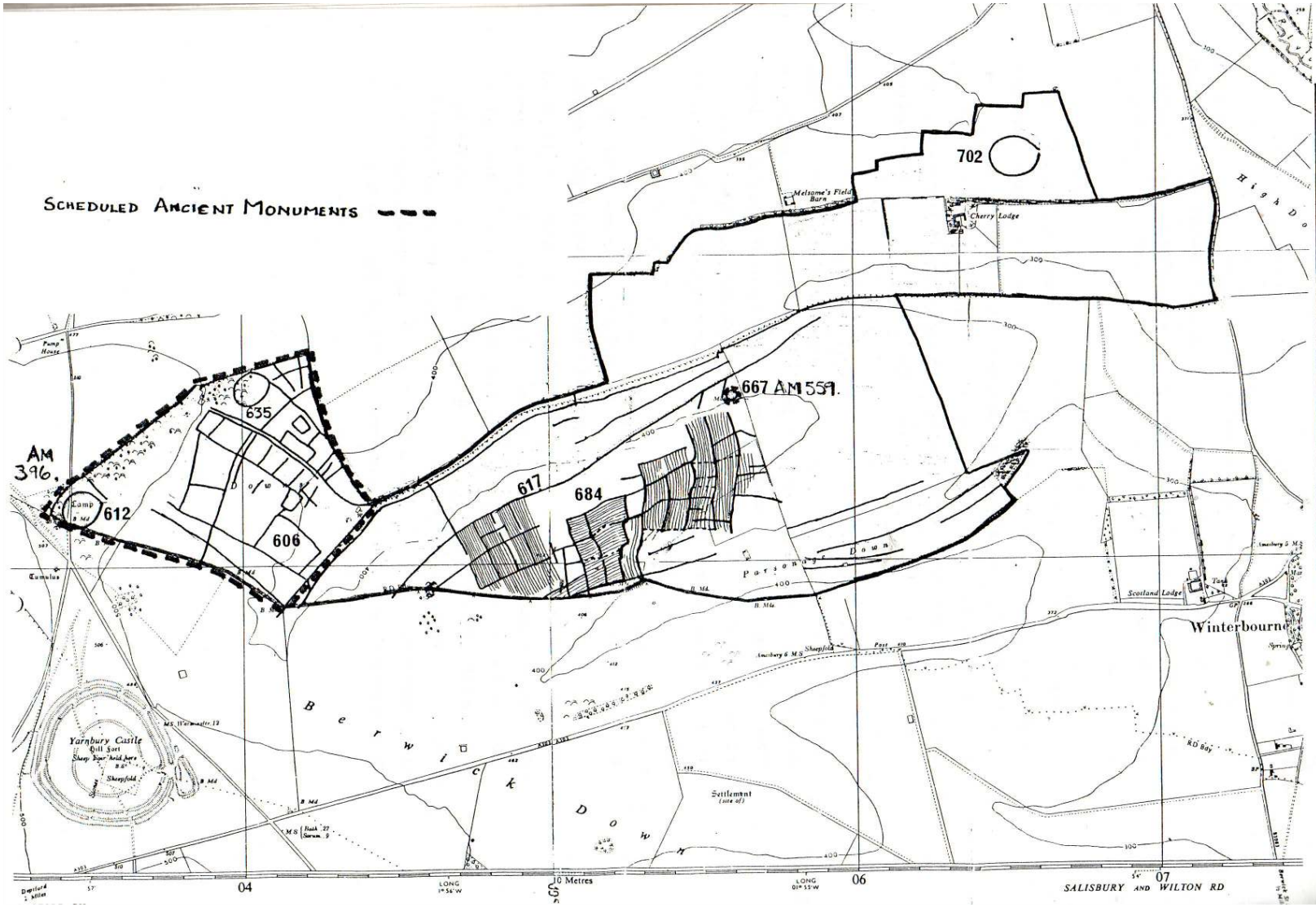
B. Notes on possible land use

1. Yarnbury Castle lies within a "square" of land in which no field systems are recorded but a series of ditches radiate out from the hillfort across the open ground and into areas of ancient arable cultivation. This suggests an area of grazing land associated with the hillfort acting as "dead" ground around the fortification.

2. The field system in the north-west corner of the Reserve (SU04SN606) appears to be a complex one with possible settlements and enclosures associated with it (612 & 635) and these fields do not appear to have evolved in the same way as those to the east. The lynchets are in a reasonable state of preservation and it is therefore unlikely that they have been subjected to very much, if any, ploughing since they were abandoned, perhaps in the late Iron age or Romano-British period.

3. The area of land between the above field system and that further to the east is bounded by linear ditches but has few archaeological features within the strip. The few features showing may be associated with burnbaking. It is not clear whether the fields to the east and west stop on those boundaries or are not appearing within the area because they have been destroyed by the burnbaking process.

4. Although the field system to the south and east of the burnbake area exhibits several elements suggestive of a long period of arable cultivation it is not possible to precisely date the various stages present or to determine the exact evolutionary process they have undergone. The features are now extremely vague on air photos and virtually non-existent from ground inspection and this would suggest that the area has been ploughed since the medieval fields fell into disuse. Alternatively the length of time during which the saxon/medieval fields were in use may have been so short that the resulting features were only very ephemeral and have since been eroded away by natural weathering processes.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES PARSONAGE DOWN NNR

Fig. 1.2.3.1.a

1.2.3.2 Land Use History

A summary of the land use history of the reserve and surrounding area has been adapted mainly from the Soils of Wiltshire, Cope (1976), a historical study of Homanton Manor and Scotland Lodge (N D Elliott 1979) and conversations with D N Elliott.

Pre-history

Post glacial vegetation of the Chalk downs probably reached its maximum development here as a mixed oak-hazel woodland in early Neolithic times (c 3,500 BC). Although there is clear evidence (Evans 1983) that the environment in the immediate locality of Stonehenge was grassland from the first stages of its construction c 2450 BC, it was probably not until the Middle Bronze and Early Iron Ages (c 1,000-450 BC) that significant woodland clearance and cultivation took place on all the chalk upland. The primary woodland on the reserve was therefore most likely to have been cleared between 3,500 BC and 450 BC. Following the woodland clearance there was much soil erosion on sloping land (Parsonage Bank) while more gentle land probably retained depper soils (Castle Barn and Down). The valley bottoms received much of the eroded soil (China Bottom). Cereals were cultivated on a hitherto unknown scale using two-ox ploughs to till a patchwork of small rectangular fields (about 0.8 ha, 2 acres). The field systems on Castle Barn were probably developed at this time although some of the fields here appear to be very much smaller.

In about 250 BC a series of univallate hillforts were established on exposed hill tops, including Yarnbury Castle.

Romans to 1927

In Romano-British times there was a tendancy for settlements to abandon hill tops and spurs in favour of valley or lowland sites; a trend accentuated by the Anglo-Saxons. With the population thus gathered in the valley bottoms, the chalk uplands were left to the shepherds. Much of the area was sheep grazed until the re-introduction of cattle in the early years of the 20th century.

In medieval times the two estates upon which the reserve lay were owned and managed by Lacock Abbey (1329-1539), the estates surprisingly having different policies. Homanton Manor (Castle Barn and Back-up Land) was neglected and Scotland Lodge (Castle Down) was developed. The neglect of Homanton Manor lasted from 1329-1821, and it is interesting to note that the main location for species indicating neglect

TABLE 1.2.3.2.A

OUTLINE LAND USE HISTORY OF PARSONAGE DOWN NNR

Evidence of Iron Age field systems and ranch boundary, land open at time of Saxon conquest 550-560, Homanton a post Norman conquest settlement. Pre 1323 owned by Earls of Sarum

estates divided

	Homanton Manor (Cherry Lodge)	Scotland Lodge
1323 - 1539	Lacock Abbey Manor neglected	Lacock Abbey estates developed, possibly ridge and furrow on Castle Down.
1539 - 1594	Crown Estates further neglect	Crown Estates
1594 - 1761	Bishopric of Salisbury - inefficiently farmed for most of this period.	Clansdown Family
c 1700	Manor House collapsed, no longer focus for estate	
1761 - 1805		George Hely (I) - increase in arable
1782 - 1842	Leased to Goldisboroughs/Cripps - Lease stipulation "the most ancient ruins of the Manor House shall not be restored and the traditional agriculture of the land retained."	
1805 - 1808		George Hely (II) - increase in pasture
1808 - 1813		Hampden Hely (I)
1812 - 1841	Sub let to William Flowers - arable increase attempted	
1813 - 1824		in Trust for Hampden Hely (II)
1821 - 1841	Sub - sub let to Rev. William Roles, James Roles and Charles Wansborough - efficiency increased.	
1824 - 1859		Hampden Hely (II) - increase in sheep farming.
1832		largest sheep flock in district
1841 - 1855	Leased to Charles Wansborough, Harry Hayward and William Millar	
1843	Homanton Manor (Cherry Lodge) rebuilt, 1,000 beech trees planted.	
1855 - 1869	Leased to Charles Wansborough	
1859 - 1870		Henry Bowen - continuation of sheep
1869 - 1890	Sold to Wansboroughs, but conveyed to John Simpkins in lieu of loan - increase in sheep/arable	
1870 - 1880		Henry Bowen - increased cereal production
1880 - 1889		William Salway - increased arable
1890 - 1892	Surrendered to John Simpkins	
1889 - 1895		William Gauge Salway - arable continued
1892 - 1896	George Ferris and Henry Packeridge - increase pasture	
1895 - 1903		George Saunders - pasture increased ?
1896 - 1906	Richard Thackell - reploughed 150 Ac & inc. sheep	
1903 - 1913		Edward Foulger Pye-Smith - arable increased
1906 - 1913	Arthur Gunning - continued corn/sheep introduced some beef.	

estates joined

1913 - 1915	John Fallon - returned to pasture
1914 - 1920	Castle Down, commandeered by Army, half remaining land ploughed
1915 - 1927	John Dawson - increased arable
1927-1979	Robert Wales - increased pasture; sheep/cattle/corn
1940-1946	Castle Down commandeered by Army, most remaining land ploughed
1979 -	Nature Conservancy Council - All pasture, arable ceased in 1985

Based on the research of N.D.Elliott 1979.

(Bromus erectus and Brachypodium pinnatum) are on Castle Barn within this estate.

The main method of cultivating new land and land left fallow was 'denchering' or 'burnbeaking'. The first record of the technique in Wiltshire was at Stoford Manor (near Great Wishford, about five miles from the reserve) in 1315 (Dodgeson and Jewell 1970); it reached its peak in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Napoleonic Wars) and was still occasionally practised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The downland or fallow turf was pared off during summer, using originally a mattock or 'beak', later a breast plough. The turf was allowed to dry, then piled up and burnt, the ashes being scattered across the area to be ploughed. The land was cropped to exhaustion in 2 or 3 years and then left to recover by natural recolonisation while other areas were cultivated. Part of Castle Down was called the Burnbake on the 1841 Tithe map of Winterbourne Stoke, providing evidence that this area was cultivated using this technique. The exact timing of this is difficult to assess as it could have been anytime between 1315 and 1841. The name 'Burnbake' was obviously in use in 1841, but the communal memory is sometimes very long. Botanical differences between the burnbake and other areas (sub-section 1.2.2.1) and plough marks are still visible in this area suggest that it may have been burnbaked or subsequently cultivated towards the end of that time period (maybe during the Napoleonic Wars).

Towards the end of the Middle Ages and certainly by 1500 increasing specialisation meant that the agriculture of the Downs had become the sheep and corn type. The system of folding the flocks at night on arable land to dung it, became an important function of the sheep, and following the decline in the cloth industry in the sixteenth century dunging became their main function.

The general picture of farming in the area during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was one of the sheep downs, much of them common land, occupying wide tracts of the chalk upland, with the lower and middle valley sides under cereal rotation. Although the 'downlands' were mainly under common-field sheep down, owner occupiers had begun to put them under tillage.

The Tithe Commutation Maps of Maddington (1841) and Winterbourne Stoke (1843) give an indication that much of this land use pattern occurred on the reserve (Figure 1.2.3.2a). The back-up-land was common land with a complex system of strips giving rise to the strange northern boundary of the reserve. Castle Barn (compt 1) was also common land but downland. It was known as Hummington Down. Half the burnbake was in arable and half downland possibly in a rotation as described above. Most of the Hundred Acres (compt 4) and Parsonage Down (compt 3) were in arable

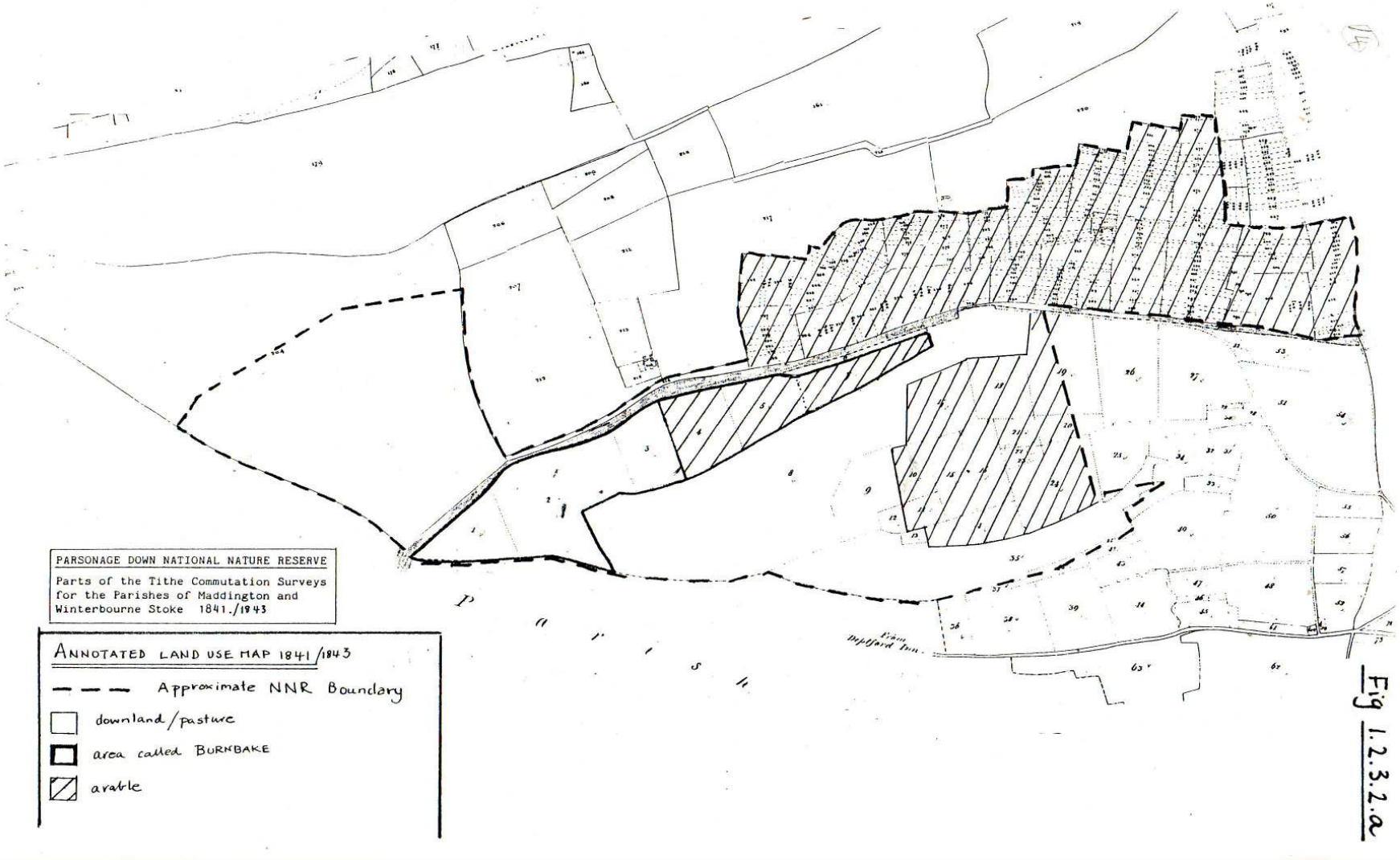
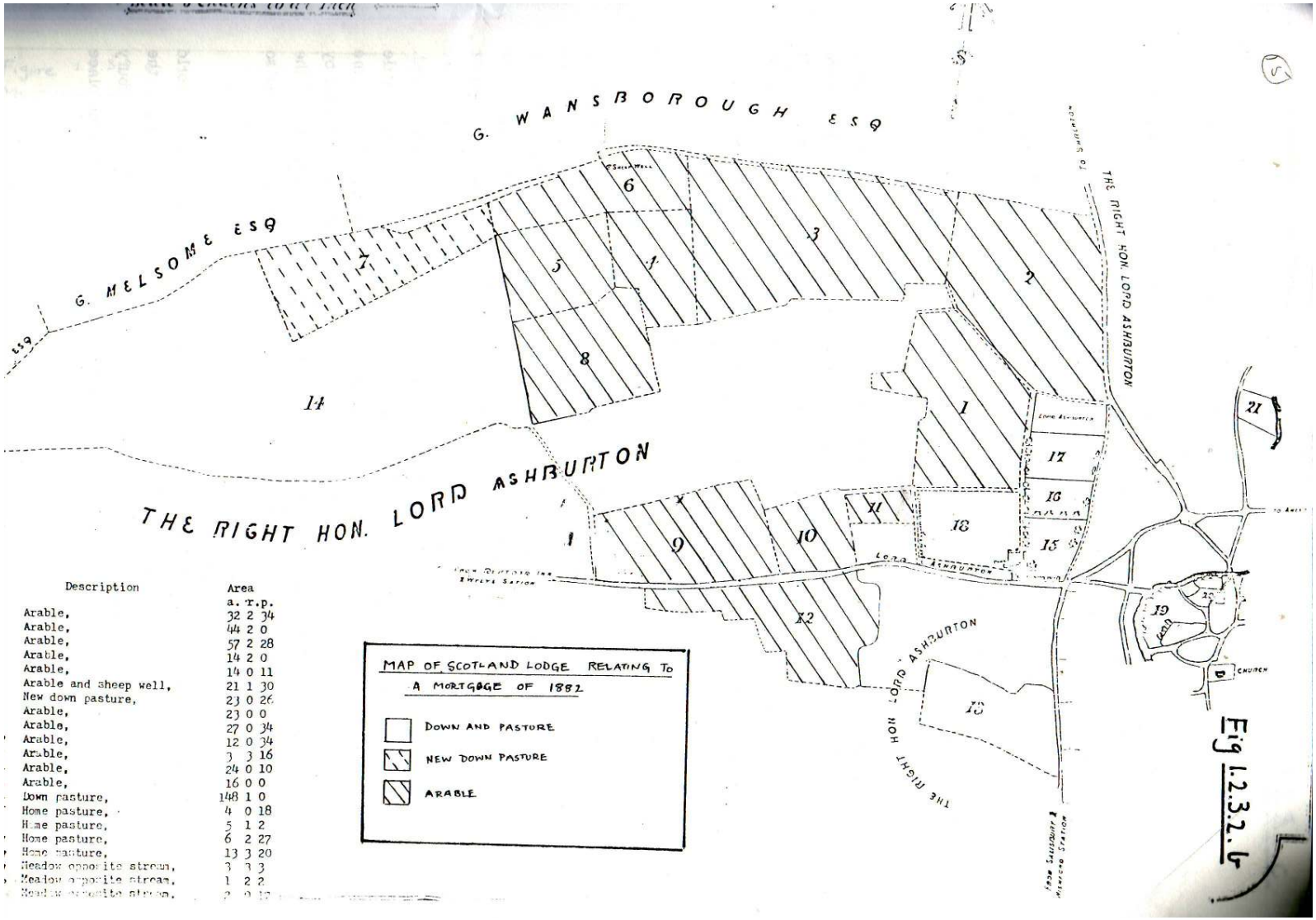

PARSONAGE DOWN NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE
Parts of the Tithe Commutation Surveys for the Parishes of Maddington and Winterbourne Stoke 1841./1843
ANNOTATED LAND USE MAP 1841/1843
Approximate NNR Boundary
downland/pasture
area called BURNBAKE
arable

Fig 1.2.3.2.a



Description	Area a. r.p.
Arable,	32 2 34
Arable,	44 2 0
Arable,	57 2 28
Arable,	14 2 0
Arable,	14 0 11
Arable and sheep well,	21 1 30
New down pasture,	23 0 26
Arable,	23 0 0
Arable,	27 0 34
Arable,	12 0 34
Arable,	3 3 16
Arable,	24 0 10
Arable,	16 0 0
Down pasture,	148 1 0
Home pasture,	4 0 18
Home pasture,	5 1 2
Home pasture,	6 2 27
Home pasture,	13 3 20
Meadow opposite stream,	3 3 3
Meadow opposite stream,	1 2 2
Meadow opposite stream,	2 2 12

Fig 1.2.3.2.6

while Parsonage Bank and the remainder of Castle Down were downland. Area 9 on the Tithe map was called the Old Penning and areas 10 and 11 were called the Penning, indicating may be the folding system. The Old Penning is still clearly visible and much of it supports very herb-rich swards and is unlikely to have been ploughed for many centuries, and may have been an early abandonment of this system. The burnbake may have been part of early nineteenth century enclosures.

Arable acreage expanded considerably following the enclosures reaching a maximum in the mid-1870s. Although this seemed the heyday of arable farming profits were very low, and subsequent unfavourable seasons and price changes hastened its decline. On the reserve all the burnbake had been returned to grassland by 1882 according to a mortgage map (Figure 1.2.3.2b).

Cattle were introduced to the farm between 1906 and 1913, (Table 1.2.3.2a) although this may have only been temporary and few in number. Castle Down and Barn were commandeered by the Army during the 1914-18 War, which probably protected it from wartime ploughing. Bomb craters from hand-held bombs are still visible on Castle Barn (Figure 1.2.3.2c), and Horse Artillery camped at Castle Bushes. Half the remaining area of Scotland Lodge farm was under the plough at this time.

1927-1979

In 1927 the Scotland Lodge estate was bought by Robert Wales, who came from Northampton with his farm manager, Edgar Swinger. At that time much of the farm was under grass (Figures 1.2.3.2d), a pattern that Mr Wales maintained. The estate was neglected when they arrived with many of the fences in disrepair. The fences were made good and the farm was grazed largely by sheep, having only about 30 head of cattle. It was soon realised that cattle and sheep were complementary with cattle taking the rougher grass and sheep taking the shorter grass left behind. In 1931 the numbers of cattle were increased and the pattern of grazing c 80% cattle and c 20% sheep was established and has remained similar ever since. At this time pumps were installed in 2 of the 4 existing wells, water previously being raised by a horse drawn mechanism, and the reservoir at China Bottom was built and the enclosure established. This more effectively supplied the farm with water and so allowed the greater stocking of cattle.

Castle Down was again commandeered for military use during the Second World War, which again protected it from compulsory wartime ploughing. Initially the main use of the down was access from the A303 to the other areas of the Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA). Once the USA joined the war more training took place

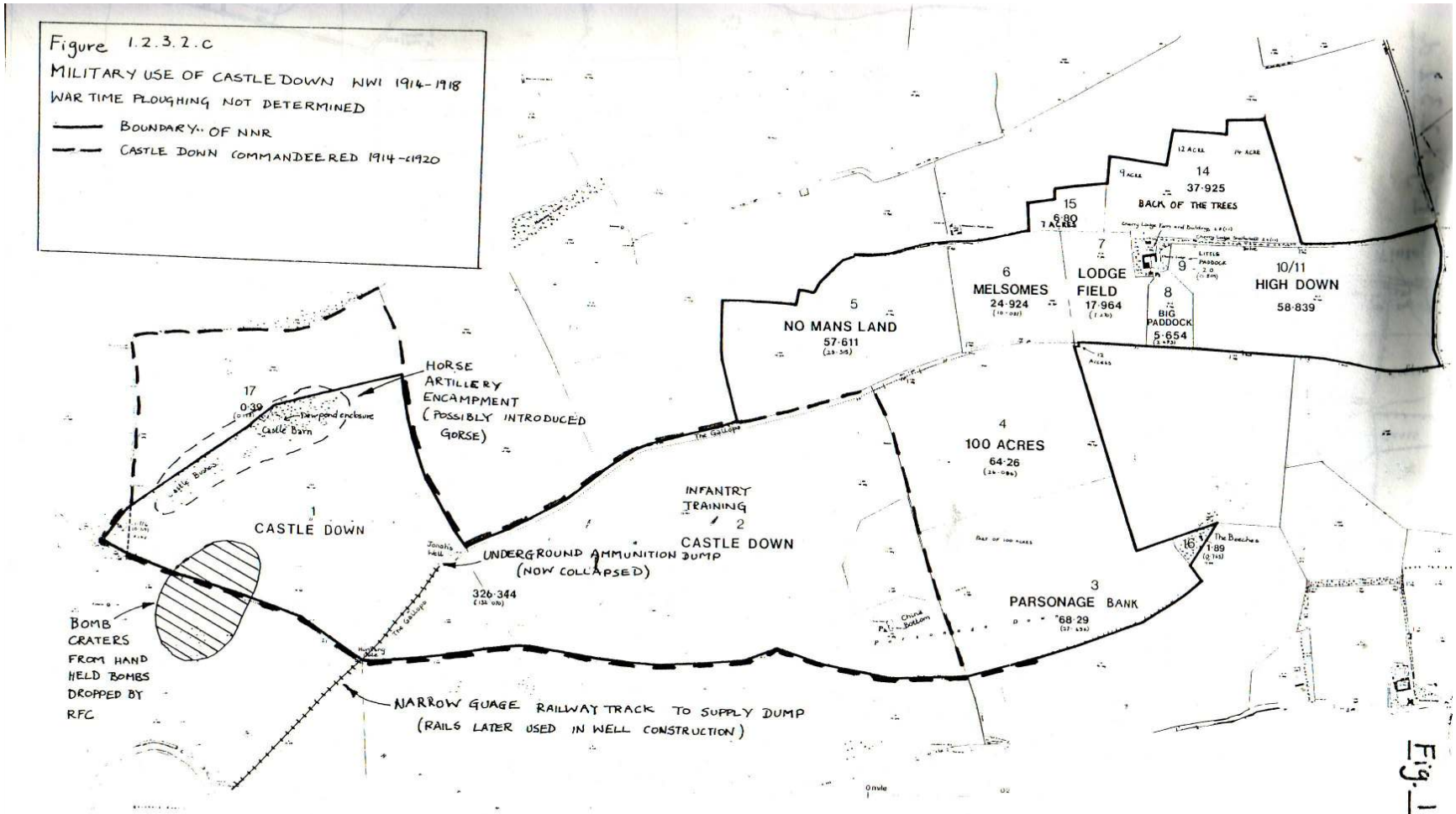


Figure 1.2.3.2.c
MILITARY USE OF CASTLE DOWN NWI 1914-1918
WAR TIME PLOUGHING NOT DETERMINED
BOUNDARY OF NNR
CASTLE DOWN COMMANDEERED 1914-c1920
HORSE ARTILLERY ENCAMPMENT (POSSIBLY INTRODUCED GORSE)
INFANTRY TRAINING
UNDERGROUND AMMUNITION DUMP (NOW COLLAPSED)
BOMB CRATERS FROM HAND HELD BOMBS DROPPED BY RFC
NARROW GUAGE RAILWAY TRACK TO SUPPLY DUMP (RAILS LATER USED IN WELL CONSTRUCTION)
1 CASTLE DOWN
2 CASTLE DOWN
3 PARSONAGE BANK
4 100 ACRES 64·26
5 NO MANS LAND 57·611
6 MELSOMES 24·924
7 LODGE FIELD 17·964
8 BIG PADDOCK 5·654
9
10/11 HIGH DOWN 58·839
14 37·925 BACK OF THE TREES
15 6·80 7 ACRES
16 1·89
17 0·39
326·344
68·29
Castle Barn
The Gallops

Fig. 1.2.3.2.c

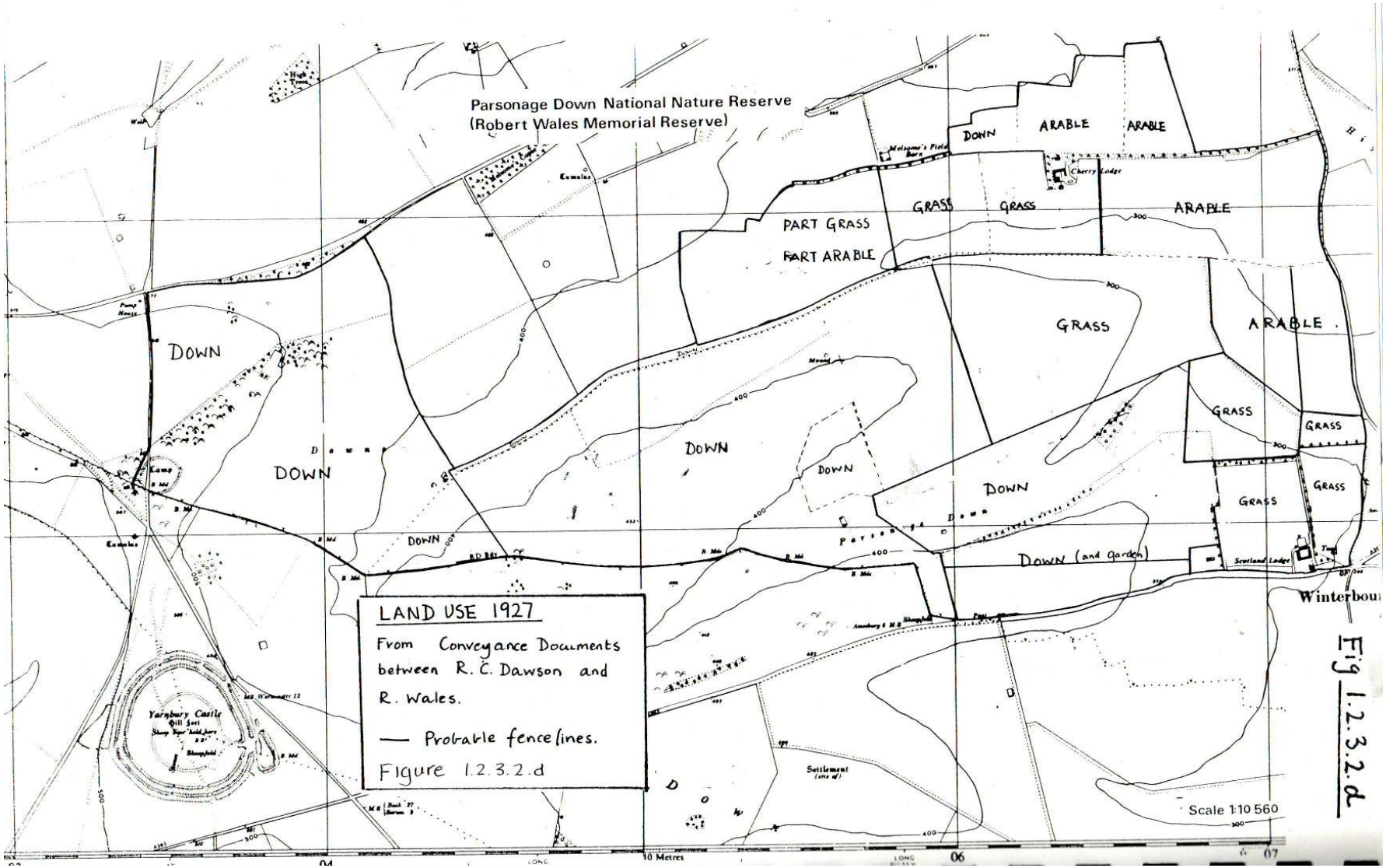

Parsonage Down National Nature Reserve
(Robert Wales Memorial Reserve)
DOWN
ARABLE
ARABLE
PART GRASS
PART ARABLE
GRASS
GRASS
ARABLE
GRASS
ARABLE
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
DOWN
GRASS
GRASS
GRASS
GRASS
DOWN (and garden)
Scotland Lodge
Cherry Lodge
Yarnbury Castle
Settlement
Scale 1:10 560
10 Metres
LAND USE 1927
From Conveyance Documents between R. C. Dawson and R. Wales.
— Probable fencelines.
Figure 1.2.3.2.d

Fig 1.2.3.2.d

on the Down itself, including infantry and tank exercises. Gunpits were set up in the dry valleys. (One at China Bottom was subsequently used as a chalk pit and is still bare chalk.) The central plateau was used as an unofficial parachute dropping ground.

Grazing, however, continued on the commandeered downland, the southern fenceline was removed and Mr Wales grazed all the old downland up to the A303 (Berwick Down). By 1943 the fences were so damaged that they were no longer stock proof and Mr Wales grazed stock only during the day taking them off each night. No grazing took place from Sept '43 - July '44, the down being grazed by the thousands of rabbits there. The Ministry of Defence did not want to relinquish the down and Mr Wales fought hard to have it returned to him. When it was eventually returned to him in 1948, the MoD paid for the fences to be made good. The Down has been continuously grazed by stock since then.

On the remainder of the farm the Agriculture Department controlled what was grown where. The control lasted from 1940 to 1951/2 being relaxed in latter years. Most of the remainder of the farm was ploughed with the exception of Parsonage Bank and the valley bottom at its base, parts of the Hundred Acres, Lodge Field and the Paddocks. A variety of crops were grown including barley, flax, wheat and potatoes (see Figure 1.2.3.2e and Table 1.2.3.2c).

The pattern of wartime ploughing on the Hundred Acres is relevant to subsequent development of its flora in the absence of further ploughing and little fertiliser application. Steeper banks to the north and south (Figure 1.2.3.2e) were left unploughed. A corn crop was taken for five years on Hundred Acres A and for six years on Hundred Acres B (Table 1.2.3.2b). The land was rough ploughed with horses in spring, sown with barley and harvested in late July. The crop was stooked for 3 weeks. Once the crop was removed in August stock were grazed until spring. No artificial fertilisers, herbicides or pesticides were used during this period and little if any farmyard manure. It may be that some of the plant species now present in the Hundred Acres may have survived this period of arable cultivation. Hundred Acres A was laid down in 1944 and Hundred Acres B in 1945, with a spring barley undersown with a ley. The grass seed was most likely to have been barn sweepings. These were the last cultivations to occur on the SSSI. A summary of known arable cultivations are shown on Figure 1.2.3.2f.

Table 1.2.3.2b Pattern of Cultivation on 100 Acres 1939-1945

Year	1939			1940			1941			1942			1943			1944			1945		
Season	Sp	S	A	Sp	S	A	Sp	S	A	Sp	S	A	Sp	S	A	Sp	S	A	Sp	S	A
100 Acres A	G	G	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	U	G	G	G	G
100 Acres B	G	G	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	C	G	P	U	G

Sp = spring, S = summer, A = autumn + winter, G = grazed, P = ploughed, C = corn crop. U = Corn crop undersown with grass ley.

The wartime campaign to plough up the large aras of downland continued in the post war period. The adjacent Berwick Down was ploughed in the early 1950s. Mr Wales, however, continued to be committed to livestock and put much of his land back to pasture. He was interested in rare breeds and kept small numbers on the farm as a hobby. Rare cattle included Gloucester, Highland and Longhorns. A small Longhorn herd was started in 1947 and is still kept. Although remaining a rare breed and classified as vulnerable, its numbers have risen to about 400, rather than the tens of animals there were when he first started. Mr Wales therefore played a major role in the survival of this breed. The main breeding herd on the down were crossbred cattle, with characteristics from British White, Angus and Galloway.

A flock of about 100 Jacob sheep were kept for hardiness and interest. Some of these were crossed with the Dorset Horn to produce a breeding ewe for fat lamb production. Mr Wales kept Jacob sheep at a time when they were unpopular and declining and so contributed to their survival also. Jacob sheep are no longer classified as a rare breed and are no longer kept on the farm.

About 100 acres of corn was grown each year largely to provide straw for winter cattle feed. Most was grown on parts of the farm sold following NCC purchase. The 38 acres (15 ha) of Back of the Trees (compt 14) was usually in arable, oats, barley and rye being grown on a 3 year rotation (1 year grass). Oat straw was fed to the cattle and draught horses which originally carried out the farm work, barley straw was fed to the cattle only. Small quantities of rye were grown to thatch the ricks, and bearded wheat was occasionally grown for house thatch and bread wheat. Mangolds for winter feed and kale for game cover were also grown occasionally. Hay was also grown on about 60 acres.

Small quantities of artificial fertiliser were used on the back-up-land and the Hundred Acres. Farmyard manure was mostly spread on Back of the Trees (compt 14). Basic slag was applied on Castle Barn and Castle Down from just after WWII until 1974.

Slag was applied at a rate of 7 cwt/acre over 70 acres each year. Any one area received an application once out of every 5-6 years. Over the 26 odd years of this practice each area would have received 35-42 cwt/acre. One area never received basic slag application (T Williams 1980). Slag was obtained from Corby which was closed in 1973. Slag obtained from South Wales was judged inferior and applications were stopped. (See 1.2.4.)

Bill Elliott the present Warden who grew up on the farm took over as Farm Manager from Edgar Swinger, his grandfather in 1953. In 1967, the old downland was 'discovered' by the local Nature Conservancy staff and Mr Wales had no objection to scheduling of the Down as SSSI when contact was made. He was described by NC staff as an authority on old grassland and was particularly anxious about its conservation. Ultimately he enabled the NCC to purchase the farm by giving them an option to buy at a reduced rate in his will. He was not a 'nature conservationist' in the commonly accepted sense, but his interest in the downland and his overriding interest in cattle and sheep led him to maintain the downland at a time when the surrounding farming community was converting pasture and old downland to arable. Neither did he 'improve' it by fertilisation although this would have allowed him to carry more stock. Mr Wales died in 1979.

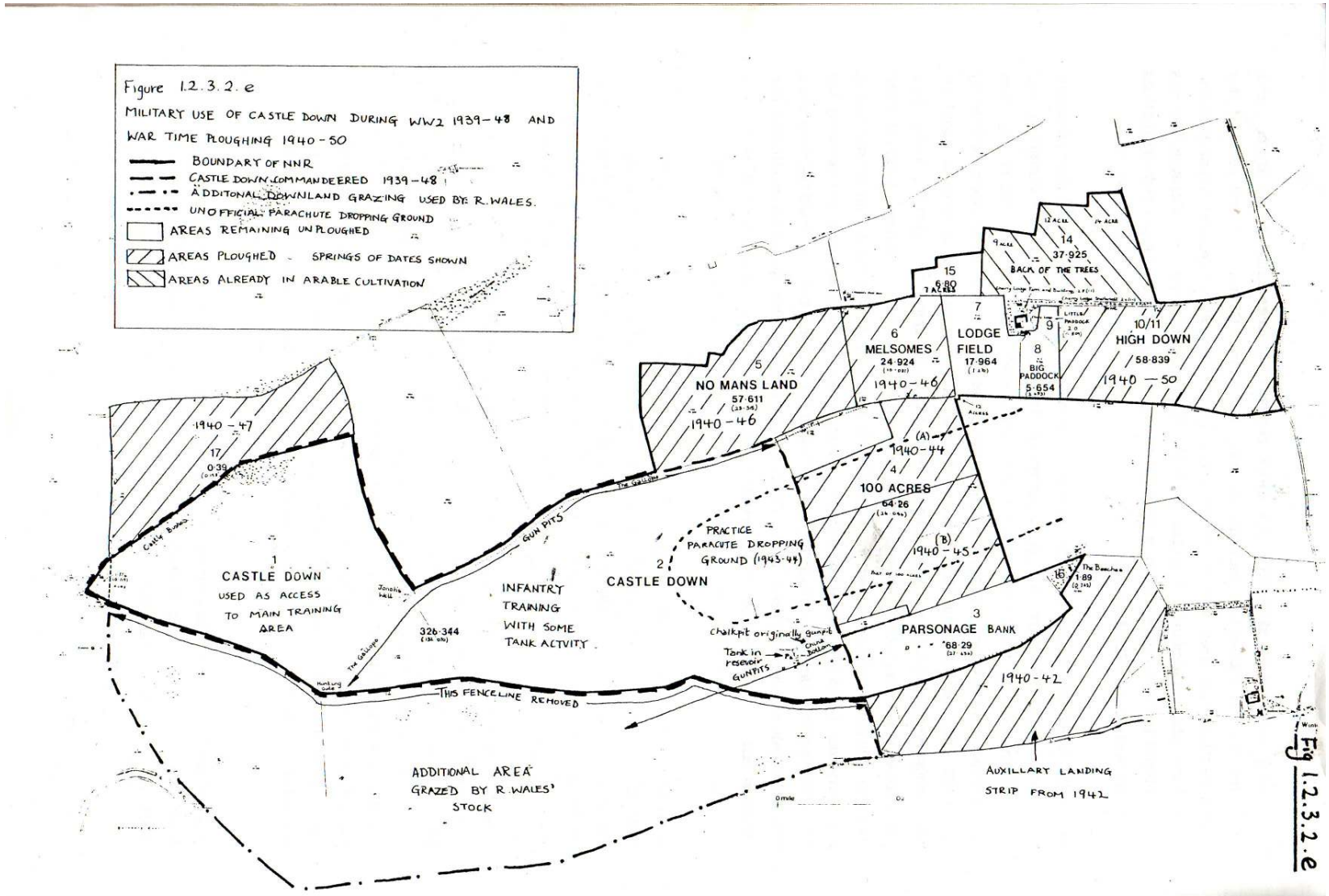


Figure 1.2.3.2.e
MILITARY USE OF CASTLE DOWN DURING WW2 1939-48 AND WAR TIME PLOUGHING 1940-50
BOUNDARY OF NNR
CASTLE DOWN COMMANDEERED 1939-48
ADDITONAL DOWNLAND GRAZING USED BY R. WALES.
UNOFFICIAL PARACHUTE DROPPING GROUND
AREAS REMAINING UNPLOUGHED
AREAS PLOUGHED - SPRINGS OF DATES SHOWN
AREAS ALREADY IN ARABLE CULTIVATION
1940-47
17
0·39
1
CASTLE DOWN
USED AS ACCESS TO MAIN TRAINING AREA
326-344
INFANTRY TRAINING WITH SOME TANK ACTVITY
GUN PITS
2
CASTLE DOWN
PRACTICE PARACUTE DROPPING GROUND (1943-44)
Chalkpit originally gunpit
Tank in reservoir
GUNPITS
THIS FENCELINE REMOVED
ADDITIONAL AREA GRAZED BY R. WALES' STOCK
5
NO MANS LAND
57·611
1940-46
15
6·80
7 ACRES
14
37·925
BACK OF THE TREES
6
MELSOMES
24·924
1940-46
7
LODGE FIELD
17·964
8
BIG PADDOCK
5·654
9
LITTLE PADDOCK
10/11
HIGH DOWN
58·839
1940-50
(A)
1940-44
4
100 ACRES
64·26
(B)
1940-45
3
PARSONAGE BANK
68·29
1940-42
16
1·89
AUXILLARY LANDING STRIP FROM 1942

Fig 1.2.3.2.e

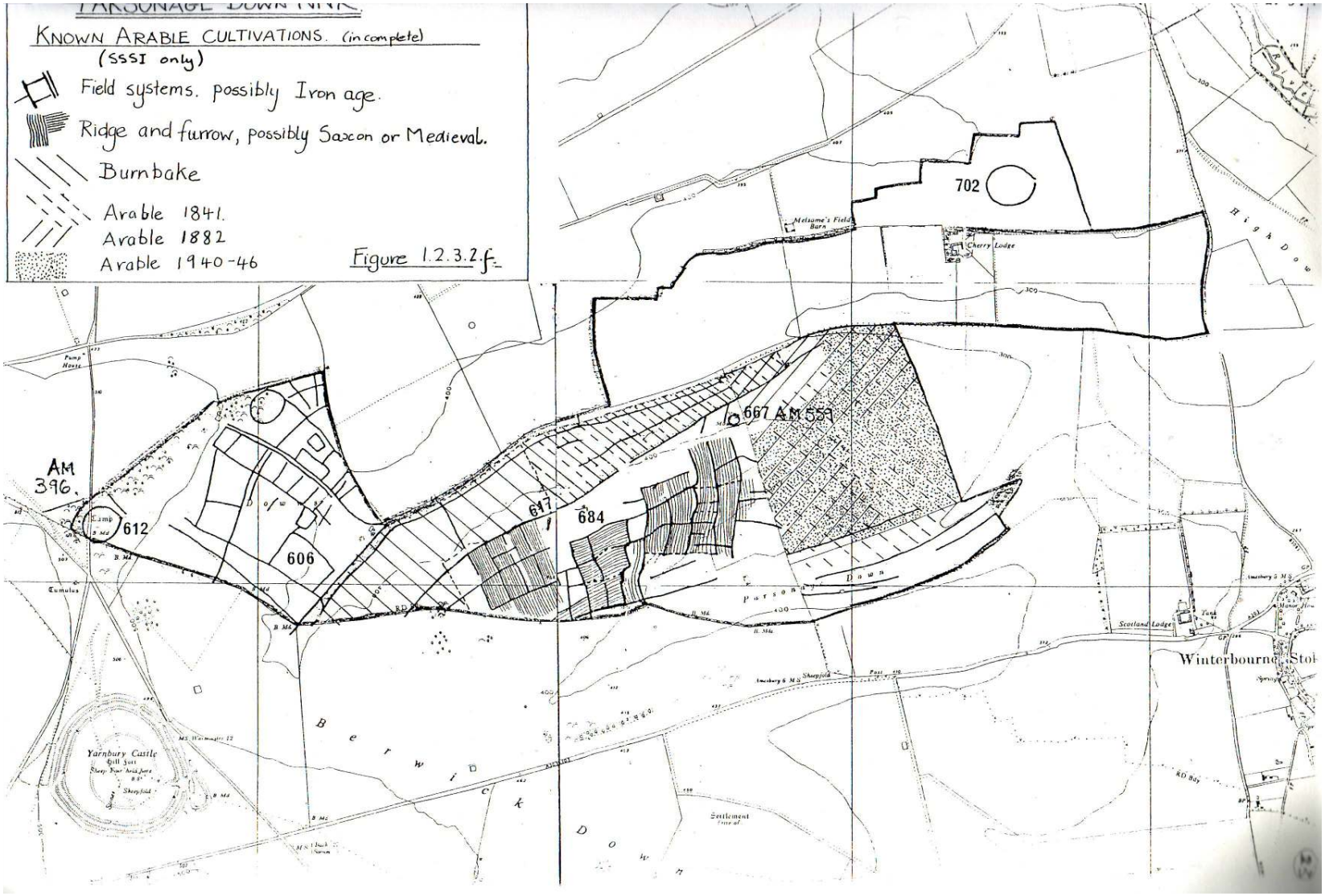

KNOWN ARABLE CULTIVATIONS. (incomplete)
(SSSI only)
Field systems. possibly Iron age.
Ridge and furrow, possibly Saxon or Medieval.
Burnbake
Arable 1841.
Arable 1882
Arable 1940-46
Figure 1.2.3.2.f.
AM 396
612
606
617
684
667 AM 559
702
Melsome's Field Barn
Cherry Lodge
High Down
Pump House
Tumulus
Yarnbury Castle
Hill Fort
Sheepfold
Scotland Lodge
Winterbourne Stok
Settlement
Berwick Down

Table 1.2.3.2.c, Parsonage Down NNR

Land Use 1927 to 1987, by compartment

COMPARTMENT		LAND USE
1.	Castle Barn	1927-present downland
2.	Castle Down	
3.	Parsonage Bank	
4.	Hundred Acres (parts)	1927-1940 pasture, 1941-1944/5 arable, 1946-present pasture
3.	Parsonage Down (parts)	
5.	No Mans Land	1927-1940 pasture, 1941-1946 wheat/flax(U) 1947-1984 pasture, 1984-present ley
6.	Melsomes	1927-1940 pasture, 1941-1946 wheat/barley (U) 1947-1962 pasture, 1963-4 spring barley (U) 1965-1984 pasture, 1985-present pasture (U 1985)
7.	Lodge Field	1927-present pasture
8.	Horse Paddock	
9.	Little Paddock	
10/11	High Down	1927-1940 pasture, 1941-1950 arable (U), 1951-1952 ley, 1953-1956 arable (U), 1957-1978 ley/arable (U 2 yr ley), 1978-1982 pasture, 1983-1985 pasture, 1986-present ley
14	Back of The Trees	1927-1940, arable rotation, oats/rye/ley 1941-1970s arable rotation oats, barley, rye (farmed as 3 fields 9, 12, 14 acres with 3 acres mangolds plus some kale) 1984-present ley
15	Seven Acres	1927-1984 pasture (U), 1985-present ley

Notes

U = is spring sown arable crop with an undersown pasture ley seed mix. A hay crop is usually taken from the first grass crop the following summer.

Apart from High Down the term ley has only been used for rye-grass leys used since NCC ownership, earlier mixes have been termed pasture although they may strictly speaking also be leys.

Table 1.2.3.2.d, Activities possibly affecting biological features

CASTLE DOWN AND BARN

Ploughing:-	Celtic field systems, Saxon/Medieval ridge and furrow. Burnbake, Part in arable 1841.
Grazing:-	Undoubtedly many changes Bronze/Iron age to 1927 mostly sheep. 1927 - evolution of current grazing regime. 1931 - proportion of cattle increased to about 80%. 1957 - virtual eradication of rabbits, 7 extra cattle grazed.
Fertilising:-	Late 1940s to 1974 Application of basic slag.
Other land sold:-	1980, loss of stone curlews on both sold and unsold land.

PARSONAGE BANK AND DOWN

Ploughing:-	Ploughing unlikely on steepest area of the bank, both top and bottom ploughed, last time possibly 1914-18 or certainly 1841.
Grazing regime:-	Many changes Bronze/Iron age to 1927 1927 - establishment of regime 1930 - breeding cows 80% of grazing 1980 - lower % cattle, lighter stock, steers, heifers. More fluctuations, decline in Gentianella anglica.
Fertilising:-	None.
Area:-	1980 reduced to 37 acres 1984 enlarged to 68 acres

HUNDRED ACRES

Ploughing:-	Repeated ploughing likely and documentary evidence of it in 1843 and 1882, majority ploughed in 1940-1945.
Grazing:-	Many changes. Still used flexibly 1984 area reduced from 97 acres to 64.26.
Fertilising:-	WWII to 1980 small quantities of artificial fertiliser applied.
Sale of adjacent land:-	Loss of stone curlews on both sold and unsold land.

1.2.3.3 Past Management for Nature Conservation

The NCC bought the whole of Scotland Lodge Farm (Figure 1.2.3.3a) at approximately a quarter of its market value on 19 March 1980. The additional grant-in-aid was provided by the Secretary of State for the Environment on the understanding that NCC sold in 1980/81 enough of the total farm to repay the Treasury and that he (SoS) would not undertake to accept any continuing revenue losses on the land retained. Mr Wales stated in a memorandum attached to his will, that he wished the farm to be kept as one unit as far as possible, that Mr D N (Bill) Elliott be kept on as Farm Manager and that the rare breeds be maintained.

Three main options were considered: a) to retain only the unimproved downland, b) to retain the unimproved downland plus some improved land for management purposes and c) to retain the whole farm. Some sale of land was stipulated by the SoS and was necessary to raise sufficient money to repay the Treasury, while to keep the reserve economic and retain the Farm Manager and rare breeds, retention of some improved land was essential. In November 1980 330 acres (133 ha) of improved land including Scotland Lodge was sold, as well as stock that was carried by this land. In the interim period between purchase and re-sale, Mr T Williams was employed as ecologist/caretaker, carrying out biological survey of the farm (T M Williams 1980) and acting as caretaker for Scotland Lodge.

The sale of Scotland Lodge and 330 acres had major implications for the farming system. It was desirable to maintain the general style of the farming regime, while keeping the management of the unimproved parts of the farm essentially the same. One of the major effects on the farming system was the increased proportion of unimproved land changing from 46% to 67% of the farm. This led to a reduction in land available for stock movements, especially when for a part of the year this land was tied up with hay and cereal production. Many of the farm buildings at Cherry Lodge were in a very poor state of repair and there were no sheep dipping facilities.

Since 1981 a programme of works has been in hand to overcome these problems.

i) A building programme has provided an office, dry store, workshop, stock handling facilities, sheep dip, winter calf housing, and a lambing shed/machinery store.

ii) Most of the back-up-land has been resown with improved agricultural leys (usually by undersowing spring barley, Table 1.2.3.2c) and received

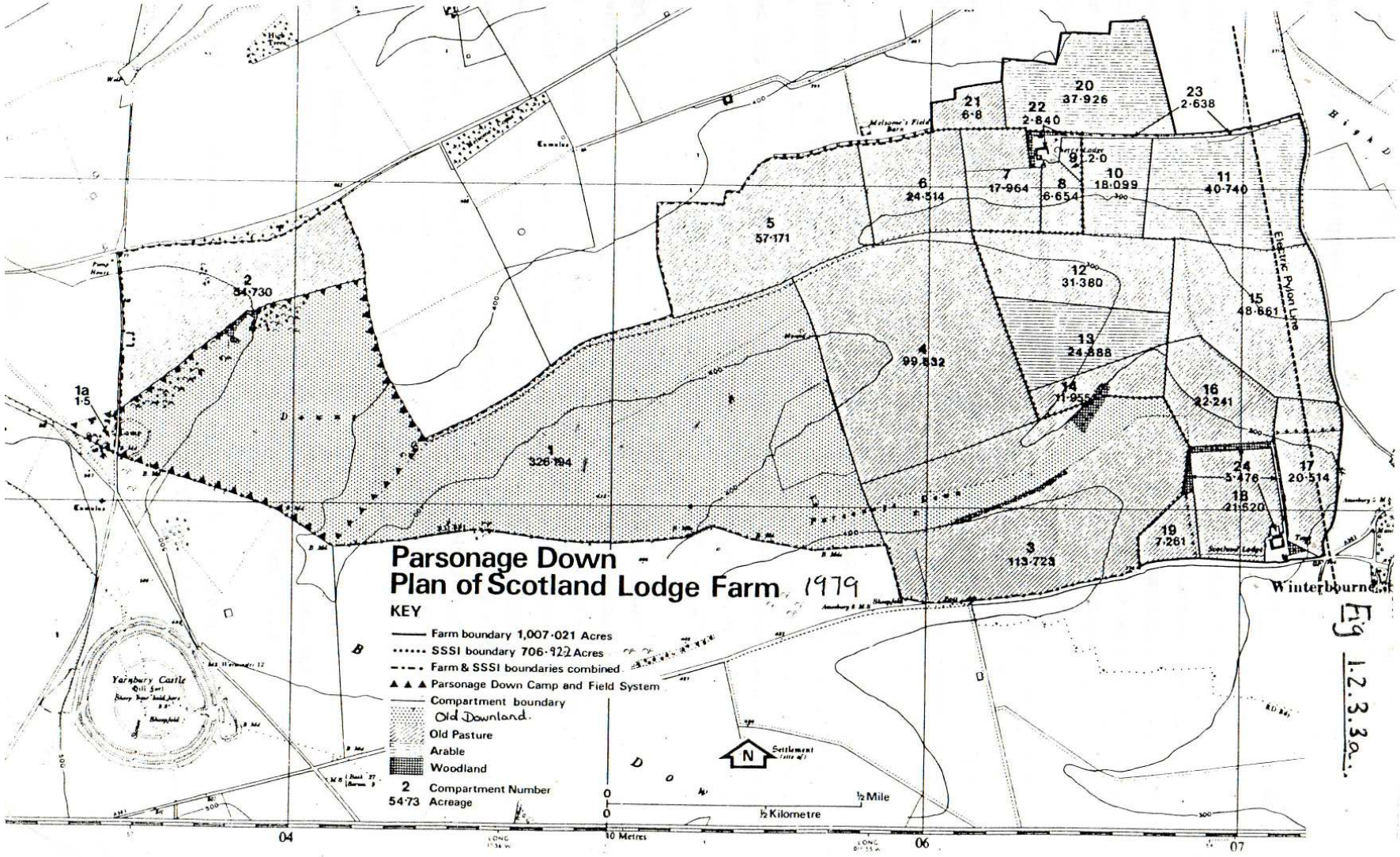

Parsonage Down
Plan of Scotland Lodge Farm 1979
KEY
Farm boundary 1,007·021 Acres
SSSI boundary 706·922 Acres
Farm & SSSI boundaries combined
Parsonage Down Camp and Field System
Compartment boundary
Old Downland
Old Pasture
Arable
Woodland
2 Compartment Number
54·73 Acreage
½ Mile
½ Kilometre
10 Metres
Yarnbury Castle
Winterbourne
Electric Pylon Line
1a 1·5
1 326·194
2 54·730
3 113·723
4 99·832
5 57·171
6 24·514
7 17·964
8 6·654
9 2·0
10 18·099
11 40·740
12 31·380
13 24·888
14 11·955
15 48·661
16 22·241
17 20·514
18 21·520
19 7·261
20 37·926
21 6·8
22 2·840
23 2·638
24 5·476
04
06
07

Fig 1.2.3.a.

greater inputs of artificial fertiliser. Although botanically poor previously they had unproductive grassland species and were little fertilised. They now have a greater productivity.

iii) A change was made from an Angus bull to continental breeds, initially Limousin, which proved too wild, and now Charolais. Larger, faster growing more marketable calves are produced, and are consequently on the farm for a shorter time period, easing the problem of less land. Breeding cow replacements cannot now be home produced, and have to be bought in. Older cows find the larger calves difficult to calve, and cows over 12 years are no longer kept. The stocking rate on the reduced acreage is now similar to the whole farm previously. The small herd of Longhorn cattle has been maintained. Few other rare breeds remained on the farm at the time of purchase (1 Highland cow and a few Jacob sheep), and these have not been replaced.

iv) Arable production ceased after 1985. The costs of replacing old machinery (combine harvester) and providing new (grain dryer) proved prohibitive, especially in the light of a small area grown (60 acres/24 ha) and uncertainty in the cereal market. The enterprise is now entirely based on cattle and sheep. Straw previously home grown is now purchased from a neighbour (from behind the combine).

The management of the unimproved downland has been kept very largely the same particularly on Castle Down and Castle Barn. Land originally in the same compartment as Parsonage Bank was part of that sold. The subsequent changes in grazing pattern appear to have caused a decline in Gentianella anglica (Wild 1988). The only other effect on the biological interest that is thought to have been brought about by the sale of land is the loss of the Stone Curlew population. This bred on both land retained and land sold. The change from pasture and spring corn to winter corn on land sold may have caused the birds to leave.

Since purchase, a programme of biological monitoring and scientific research has been initiated on the reserve. Steps have also been taken to improve wildlife of the back-up-land and other areas.

The public interest generated by the reserve has been considerable and interpretive facilities for visitors have been provided.

1.2.3.4 Public Interest

A high level of interest in the reserve has been shown by the general public interested in the countryside. The response to media coverage has been large, particularly following Bill and Margaret Elliott's appearance on the BBC Radio 4 programme 'On Your Farm', Feb 1986. This interest stems from a combination of the high wildlife value, the long running farming system, the rare farm breeds and the long association of the Warden and his family with the farm. Other areas of public interest are discussed below.

i) Research Parsonage Down NNR, has been recognised as extremely valuable for ecological and archaeological research, and work by ITE and Cardiff University has been carried out. There is potential for agricultural and agricultural history research but little interest has been shown from these quarters.

ii) Demonstration The reserve is generally not suitable for school use, but requests for visits have been made by Shrewton Primary School. Lackham College of Agriculture has brought several groups of students to the reserve. There has been a high demand from farmers, farming groups, natural history societies and the general public for visits to the reserve these have been presented with a strong educational element.

iii) Recreation The reserve is not open to the general public and there are no public rights of way except between Castle Scrub (1a) and Castle Barn). Fox hunting has been discouraged due to stock disturbance. The guided visits, do however, have a recreational element.

iv) Local Activities Unconsequential trespass occurs occasionally for activities such as mushrooming. Far more serious is the regular use of the down for hare coursing over the winter months. Previous encounters between coursers and local landowners has led to violence and property damage. Close liaison is kept with the police.