

Isle of Wight Ancient Woodland Survey: Appley Park, Little Appley Wood and Harcourt Sands

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N.B. Much of the information on the historic land use and woodland character of this site has been taken from a research report on Appley Towers, Little Appley and Appley Park prepared by John Brownscombe for the Isle of Wight Gardens Trust in 2012.

MODERN EVIDENCE FOR NAME

Appley Park: Ordnance Survey digital data (Figure 1).

Little Appley Wood: no cartographic or documentary evidence for name identified.

LAND OWNERSHIP

Appley Park: Isle of Wight Council

Little Appley Wood: not known

Harcourt Sands: private ownership

LOCATION

Appley Park is centred at SZ 6074 9218.

Little Appley Wood is centred at SZ6089 9201

AREA CURRENTLY DEFINED AS ANCIENT WOODLAND (SOURCE: MAgic 2012)

Neither Appley Park nor Little Appley Wood is included in the Provisional Inventory of Ancient Woodland.

STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS

None identified.

WOODLAND EXTENT MAPPED IN 2012

Figure 2 shows the extent of woodland mapped by the Isle of Wight Council in 2012. This woodland is located within Appley Park (Area A), Little Appley Wood (Area B) and the Harcourt Sands site (Area C).

SITUATION IN LANDSCAPE AND WOODLAND CHARACTER

Appley Park and Little Appley Wood lie on the eastern edge of the town of Ryde in a seaside location between St Cecilia's Abbey and the former St Clare estate, now part of Harcourt Sands Holiday Centre. There is also a small remnant of woodland within the Harcourt Sands site.

Appley Park is a public park of approximately 11 hectares (27 acres). It was acquired by Ryde Borough Council after World War II and is now owned and maintained by the Isle of Wight Council. The park is bounded by Ryde Sands to the north, by Middle Walk to the south, by Appley Lane to the west, and by the boundary with Harcourt Sands to the east. The site slopes downward from Middle Walk to the promenade above the beach. It lies to the north of a later 20th century housing estate built on the site of Appley Towers and its pleasure grounds.

Brownscombe (2012) has described Appley Park as follows:

There are four main areas within the boundaries of the park. The north-west corner of the site is occupied by a café, Ryde Rowing Club, a row of beach huts, a Southern Water treatment plant and public conveniences, with a public car park to the south.

The water treatment plant is quite a dominant feature, dating from the 1980s and extended in the 1990s. To the east of the water treatment plant the park is lightly wooded and here there is a children's play area with modern play equipment. Beyond the play area there is a more thickly wooded area that extends to the eastern boundary of the site. The southern half of the park is occupied by open grassland which until 2011 was used as a putting green. In this area the trees are more scattered and the bunkers and other features associated with golfing have recently been removed.

A small area of woodland which appears to be known locally as Little Appley Wood lies just outside the south-east corner of Appley Park to the north of a public playing field.

SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In the late 18th century and early 19th century most of the present-day Appley Park was within a wood on the St John's estate. Humphry Repton landscaped St John's Park for Edward Simeon after 1796. In the mid 19th century the area of the present park and land to the south was acquired by George Young, a Scottish Corn Merchant, and formed his Apley Tower estate. The main building was designed by local architect Thomas Hellyer. This was purchased by Sir William Hutt in 1872. The Apley Tower estate was later known as Appley Towers and as Appley Hall. The principal building was demolished in the 1950s and is now occupied by a housing estate.

DOCUMENTARY AND CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The following account of land ownership and landscape development within and around the area of the present-day Appley Park has been adapted from Brownscombe (2012).

The 1759 Taylor's map (Figure 3) shows Great Appley (*sic*), Troublefields, a property in the location of the later Little Apley and an area of woodland between it and the coast consistent with what was later called East Appley Wood.

In 1771, William Daish sold East Appley Wood (15 acres) to William Amherst, at that time the owner of the St John's estate. In 1773 William Amherst settled Troublefield Farm and East Appley Wood upon trustees for the benefit of his wife and children (IWCRO/late JER/300 & 395).

The unpublished Ordnance Survey drawing of 1793-4 (Figure 4) shows an unnamed wood stretching from the eastern boundary of 'Apley' to the western edge of Puckpool Farm and this appears to be the 'East Appley Wood' named in the deeds of 1771 and 1773. The southern edge of the wood has an indented southern profile formed by small fields taken out of the woodland. In 1793 Apley (also known as Apley House or Appley House and now as St Cecilia's Abbey) was owned by the Hutt family.

In 1796 Jeffry Lord Amherst, as guardian of William Amherst's children, sold Troublefield Farm (alias St John's) with East Appley and East Appley Wood to Edward Simeon (IWCRO/late JER/302). Humphry Repton may have been engaged by Edward Simeon to landscape the grounds of St John's and was certainly working there in 1799, if not earlier (Temple 1988, 96; Pedley 2007, 282). His work included the removal of hedgerows to create parkland, the positioning of seats to take advantage of sea views and the laying out of paths and drives associated with St John's House.

A plan of the St John's Estate surveyed in 1803 (IWCRO/JER/BAR) shows the extent of ownership of Sir Richard Godin Simeon of St John's and also land leased from and to Dr Walker of Apley House. Each plot is numbered and has a description (see Figure 5). This records the woodland on the coast in the north of the site as 'Apley Wood Woodland' (plot 9) and the three fields taken out of the

woodland as 'Apley Wood Arable' (plot 10), 'Apley Wood Arable' (plot 11) and 'Apley Wood Meadow' (plot 12). A small field to the west of Apley Wood, owned by Sir Richard but used by Dr Walker of Apley House, is recorded as 'Little Apley Mead Meadow' (plot 13). Between Appley Road and the fields taken out of Apley Wood a series of small arable fields are shown (plots 5, 6, and 7). Little Apley and its garden is described as Cottage and garden (plot 4). Close to the western boundary of the site the 1803 plan records plot 3 as 'Meadow and Plantation'. Interestingly, two fields to the north of Appley Road between St John's House and immediate grounds and Little Apley, are recorded as being owned by Dr Walker of Apley House although used by Sir Richard.

The Greenwood Map of 1826 (Figure 6) shows the extensive area of wood north of Little Apley. The parkland of St John's is shown as lying largely to the west of Appley Lane and is shaded dark green. This area may have been the focus of Repton's landscaping work.

By 1839 East Appley Wood seems to have become known as 'Marine Wood' and 'Marine Coppice', since plots 124 and 192 on the St Helen's tithe map of that date (Figure 7) cover the same area as the woodland shown on the 1793 Ordnance Survey drawing. In 1839, Marine Wood and the plots numbered 116, 117, 125 and 126 on the tithe map were owned by Sir Richard Godin Simeon of St John's. At a later date much of this land was included within the Apley Tower estate and is now within the public park.

By 1862 'Marine Coppice' had become a small landscape park attached to the property of 'St Clare'. This area is shown as land parcel no. 60 on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of that date (Figure 8).

In 1852 George Young acquired land from the Simeon family for his new Apley Tower estate, including part of Marine Wood. The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch map, surveyed in 1862-3, shows a boundary running north-south through the wood and it would appear that only the western half of the wood (parcel 43 on the Ordnance Survey map) fell within the Apley Tower estate at this date (see Figure 8). The eastern half of the wood is shown as parcel 58 and is described as 'Wood & road' in the Ordnance Survey Book of Reference for the Parish of St Helens (1862). However, the legend 'St John's Wood' shown on the 1862 25 inch Ordnance Survey map spreads across parcels 43 and 58.

The western edge of the wood had become quite industrialised by 1862 (this area was possibly Little Apley Mead in 1803). On the 1862 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of that date parcel 41 is shown as 'Apley Brick Yard'. This formerly wooded area contained a 'Saw Mill', 'Clay Pit', 'Kilns' and 'Clay Mill' (see Figure 8).

The 1862 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map shows a tree-lined drive or promenade running west-east from Appley Lane but terminating abruptly at the boundary dividing the western half of St John's Wood from the eastern half (Figure 8). It would appear that this promenade stopped at the eastern boundary of the Apley Tower estate. The line of the promenade corresponds with the southern boundary of the plots numbered 116, 117, 125 and 126 on the tithe map. The corresponding parcel numbers on the Ordnance Survey 1862 25 inch map are 52, 53 and 54. These plots are shown as parkland rather than woodland. At the present day the promenade forms the southern boundary of the public park and is known as 'Middle Walk'. However in the Ordnance Survey Book of Reference to the 1862 map the plots are described as follows: '52' Pasture, houses and garden; '53' Pasture, house and pool; '54' strip (wood); '55' Pasture; and '56' Occupation Road (this is Middle Walk). At the northern edge of St John's Wood the 1862 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map shows another drive or promenade running above the seashore from Appley Lane to the eastern boundary of the Apley Tower estate.

In 1872 George Young sold the Appley Towers estate to Sir William Hutt. Sir William Hutt appears to have acquired the eastern half of St John's Wood and to have extended the seaside promenade to the boundary with St Clare as shown on a sketch of 1887 (Figure 10) and on the Ordnance Survey 1898 25 inch map (Figure 11).

Little Appley and its grounds to the south-east of the Appley Towers estate was let to Mr Yelf by the Simeon family of St John's who still owned this part of the estate. Mr Yelf commissioned Thomas Hellyer to design a new house in the grounds of Little Appley to be called Sturbridge House which was built by John Denham in 1861-62. Mr Yelf paid for the cost of the house in instalments clearing the debt (of £2,000) in 1864, including wine for part of Mr Hellyer's debt. He may also have purchased the land from the St John's Estate at this time. Sir William Hutt of Appley Towers bought Sturbridge House from Mr Yelf in 1876, changed the name of the building back to Little Appley and leased the property out to successive occupiers. The area of land occupied by Appley Tower and Little Appley and owned by Sir William Hutt from 1876 is shown on Figure 9. In 1897 Little Appley became Little Appley School. The school closed in 1966 and the site was bought by the Isle of Wight County Council. The site and grounds were sold to Portsmouth City Council in 1968 and Little Appley House became student's halls of residence in 1969. It was still being used as late as 1978 for conferences for Portsmouth Polytechnic. It closed and was sold becoming Appley Manor Hotel which it remains today.

A sketch of the Appley Grounds from the Sea Wall to the Middle Walk from 1887 shows the northern Lodge now under the cafe, the Boathouse, and the Appley Tower folly (Figure 10). This provides some details of the laying out of paths in the woodland close to the sea wall, indicating that this woodland was 'landscaped' to provide pleasing grounds. The sketch indicates where the woodland was 'thin', 'thick' and 'very thick'. An area of 'thin' woodland is shown on the site of the former clay works and brickyard. A narrower band of woodland is shown at the eastern edge of the site than is depicted on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1862 (Figure 8). Shrub planting is shown in the northeast corner and along the eastern boundary with St Clare. The southern parts of the grounds are shown as being divided into two fields separated by an iron wire fence and bounded from the northern woodland and Middle Walk by an iron wire fence. Each of the two fields is labelled 'Grass field with some large trees'.

The Ordnance Survey 25 inch surveys of 1897, 1909 and 1947 show narrower blocks of woodland both at the northern and at the eastern edges of the site than was shown on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1862. On the maps of 1897, 1909 and 1947 the area between the woodland and Middle Walk is shown as two fields divided by a straight boundary running north-south. An ornamental clump of trees is shown in the western field on all three maps and in the eastern field a small building is marked, possibly a garden pavilion of some type. An open area corresponding to Appley Brick Works is shown at the western end of the site on the 1898 map (Figure 11) but this area is shown as wooded on the later maps.

An aerial photograph from the late 1940s in the Isle of Wight Record Office shows the layout of the Appley Tower (Appley Hall) Estate including the parkland. Appley Lane, Middle Walk, and Appley Rise are all clearly shown as lined by avenues of mature trees. Little Appley to the east of Appley Towers has grown in size and now has its own kitchen garden area. The parkland north of Appley Towers comprises an open area of grassland beyond the formal terraces and gardens with a few parkland trees. Further to the north, beyond the avenue of Middle Walk, is more open parkland with mature trees giving way to a denser woodland strip along the coast.

The 1970s Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map names only the wooded, northern part of the site as Appley Park. The southern part of the site is labelled 'Appley Approach Golf Course'. The promenade along the southern boundary of the site is labelled 'Middle Walk'.

SUMMARY OF PLACE-NAME EVIDENCE

Deeds of 1771 and 1773 refer to 'East Appley Wood' (IWCRO/late JER/300 & 395).

A plan of the St John's Estate surveyed in 1803 refers to 'Apley Wood' (IWCRO/JER/BAR).

The St Helens tithe map of 1839 refers to 'Marine Wood' and 'Marine Coppice'.

The Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25 inch map, surveyed in 1862, refers to St John's Wood.

HER DATA (Figure 1)

Various sites are recorded in the Isle of Wight Historic Environment Record within the area of Appley Park. These sites are all of 19th or 20th century date and relate to the use of the area for industry and as a designed landscape. Full details are available from the HER. Abbreviated site descriptions are as follows:

HER 2680

Appley Tower: Building

Early-mid C19. Fairly squat tower of coursed rubble with ashlar dressings.

Monument Types and Dates: FOLLY (C19 - 1801 AD to 1900 AD). Evidence: EXTANT BUILDING

HER 2764

Appley Brickyard: Monument

Brickyard shown on 1866 OS map

Monument Types and Dates: BRICKWORKS (C19 - 1801 AD to 1900 AD).

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

HER 3577

Appley: Monument

Plaque set into retaining wall adjacent to walkway: 'The Appley Towers Estate extends from the Appley slipway to a point 166 feet to the eastward thereof and bounded on the north by the line of the high water at medium tides'

Monument Types and Dates: PLAQUE (Modern - 1901 AD to 2050 AD). Evidence: STRUCTURE

HER 3578

Appley: Monument

Boathouse constructed mainly of Bembridge limestone and greensand hewn blocks and rubble with quoins and 4 regularly spaced piers of yellow brick along sides.

Monument Types and Dates: BOAT HOUSE (Late C19 - 1867 AD to 1900 AD).

Evidence: EXTANT BUILDING

HER 8338

Appley Park, Ryde: Monument

Monument Types and Dates: PUBLIC PARK (C20 - 1901 AD to 2000 AD)

HER 13860

Middle Lodge, Appley Lane, Ryde: Building

Monument Types and Dates: LODGE (Early C19 to Late C19 - 1801 AD to 1870 AD)

Evidence: EXTANT BUILDING

ASSESSMENT OF DOCUMENTARY, CARTOGRAPHIC AND FIELD EVIDENCE

The evolving woodland of Little Appley Wood and the Apley Tower Estate

Documentary and cartographic sources clearly demonstrate that woodland existed within both areas by the mid-eighteenth century. Whilst Taylor's map of 1759 (Figure 3) gives only a schematic impression of woodland, legal documents of 1771 and 1773 provide very specific references to 'East Appley Wood' and the unpublished Ordnance Survey drawing of 1793-4 (Figure 4) delineates this woodland accurately. Although no specific references to East Appley Wood have been identified that predate the mid-eighteenth century, the marginal, coastal location of the site makes it quite likely that woodland existed there in 1600. The 1793-4 Ordnance Survey drawing indicates how fields had encroached on this woodland and the 1803 survey plan of the St John's estate (Figure 5) names three fields taken out of the woodland as 'Apley Wood Arable' (plot 10), 'Apley Wood Arable' (plot 11) and 'Apley Wood Meadow' (plot 12).

Given that Appley Park and Little Appley Wood represent an ancient woodland site, it is important to establish how far the existing woodland has been affected by its incorporation within a designed landscape from the early nineteenth century. It has been suggested above that the landscaping of the St John's estate by Humphry Repton from about 1799 may not have had much effect on East Appley Wood (see Figures 5 and 6). By 1839 this wood had been divided into two parcels named 'Marine Wood' and 'Marine Coppice' as indicated on the tithe map. The two parcels developed separately from this time, Marine Wood being later incorporated within the Apley Tower estate and evolving into a public park in the twentieth century whilst Marine Copse became the small landscape park of St Clare and eventually, in the later twentieth century, part of the Harcourt Sands Holiday Centre.

By 1862 Marine Wood had acquired the new name of 'St John's Wood' on the Ordnance Survey of that date (Figure 8) The western end of the wood had become industrialised, 'Appley Brick Yard' being marked on the map. The central part of the wood had been incorporated within the grounds of the new property of Apley Tower, built in the 1850s. At that date the eastern half of the wood was apparently not part of the Apley Tower estate but at some time before 1887 the estate had been extended to incorporate this part of the wood as indicated on a sketch of 1887 (Figure 10). This sketch also indicates variation in the density of tree cover within the Apley Tower grounds and shows that the band of woodland surviving at that date on the northern and eastern edges of the site was narrower than in 1862. The extent of woodland shown on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1897 (Figure 11) is similar to that shown on the 1887 sketch except that no woodland is indicated in the former area of Appley Brick Works. An aerial photograph of the 1940s shows open parkland with mature trees to the north of Middle Walk, giving way to a denser woodland strip along the coast.

The character of Appley Park, Little Appley Wood and other woodland in the 21st Century (see Figure 2)

Appley Park is a public park formed from an area of designed landscape formerly associated with the Apley Tower estate. However, the more heavily wooded area within the park is a remnant of St John's Wood, recorded as such on the Ordnance Survey of 1862 but marked on earlier maps as 'East Appley Wood', 'Apley Wood' and 'Marine Wood'. The area of the golf course in the southern half of the park corresponds to the two fields shown on the OS 25 inch maps of 1898, 1909 and 1946 but also contains scattered trees.

Brownscombe (2012) has assessed the trees within Appley Park as follows;

The trees within Appley Park are a mixture of fairly mature trees, younger trees and self-sown trees. It is possible that some of the mature specimens may be remnants of [the]original St John's Wood, may be associated with the Humphry Repton designed landscape or later changes by Sir William Hutt. Further research is required, however a comparison between the 1947 aerial photograph and the present day Google Map indicates a number of mature trees associated with the Appley Tower Estate which may be from the original Repton landscaping for the St John's Estate.¹

To the south-east of the park two small areas of woodland have been identified by Brownscombe (2012) as containing veteran trees (see Figure 2). One of these wooded areas lies at the south-west corner of the Harcourt Sands site and appears to have originated as part of East Appley Wood before becoming incorporated within the landscape grounds of St Clare during the 19th century. The other area, now known as 'Little Appley Wood', lies to the north of a public playing field and was also formerly within East Appley Wood/St John's Wood but from the later 19th century it lay within the grounds of 'Little Appley' (now Appley Manor Hotel). This area of woodland is shown on the 25 inch OS map of 1862 but, curiously, is not shown on the OS maps of 1898 (Figure 11) or later maps. This would appear to be an error but the area may not have been perceived as woodland. Both areas of woodland were studied by Karl Dyson whilst he was employed by the Ryde Development Trust and in 2003 he organised a 'Veteran Tree Training Event' attended by Ted Green, the noted veteran tree expert. Writing of Little Appley Wood, Brownscombe (2012) has stated 'at the present day there are six ancient oaks on the site but other trees are much younger and may have grown up since 1946'.

¹ NB The trees which Brownscombe (2012) identifies on the 1947 aerial photograph and the present day Google Map as possibly being from the original Repton landscaping for the St John's Estate lie in the area of the former golf course to the south of the more thickly wooded area.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISED INVENTORY OF ANCIENT WOODLAND

Three ancient woodland sites have been identified in this report and the approximate positions of these sites are indicated on Figure 2 as Areas A, B and C.

Area A: Appley Park

Despite the current status of Area A as a public park it has been demonstrated that the more heavily wooded part of the park represents a remnant of East Appley Wood which is clearly delineated on the Ordnance Survey drawing of 1793-4 (Figure 4), is known to have existed in the mid-eighteenth century and is quite likely to have existed in 1600. The trees within Appley Park today are a mixture of fairly mature trees, younger planted trees and self-sown trees. However, the site appears to meet the definition of Ancient Woodland as 'an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD' (Kirby and Goldberg 2006). Benstead-Hume *et al* (2011) observe that:

The trees and shrubs in ancient woodlands may have been felled or cut for coppice at various times since 1600, but as long as the area has remained as woodland, i.e. the coppice stools have regrown or the stand has been replanted soon after felling, then it still counts as ancient woodland. Because it may have been cut over many times in the past, ancient woodland does not necessarily contain old trees.

Area B: Little Appley Wood

As in the case of Appley Park, Little Appley Wood appears to be a remnant of the formerly much larger East Appley Wood. However, unlike Appley Park, Little Appley Wood retains six veteran oaks.

Area C: Harcourt Sands Site

This small woodland site also represents a remnant of the original East Appley Wood and contains veteran trees.

It is recommended that the Revised Inventory of Ancient Woodland incorporates Areas A, B and C.

Figure 12 has been prepared by the Isle of Wight Council from information supplied by Vicky Basford. It delineates the boundaries of the three pieces of woodland as identified from Google Earth and checked against the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of 1947 to ensure that the mapped area of woodland does not extend beyond that shown in 1947. Within Area A, the sites of the former Appley Brick Yard and the present-day children's playground) have been excluded from the proposed Ancient Woodland Inventory site. The site of the former golf course in the southern half of Appley Park has also been excluded because, although it contains parkland trees, part of the site lies to the south of East Appley Wood as delineated on the Ordnance Survey drawing of 1793-4, most of the site had become ornamental 'parkland' fields by 1863 and woodland had been lost from the eastern part of the site by 1897 (compare Figures 8 and 11).

REFERENCES

- Benstead-Hume, V, Davies, R and Grose, M 2011 *A Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Surrey*. Natural England
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- Temple, N 1988 'Pages from an Architect's Notebook – John Nash; some minor buildings in the Isle of Wight Part 1'. *Proceedings of the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society* 8, 81-103

Acknowledgements

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Figure 1: Map of HER Data supplied by Isle of Wight Council Archaeology and Historic Environment Service

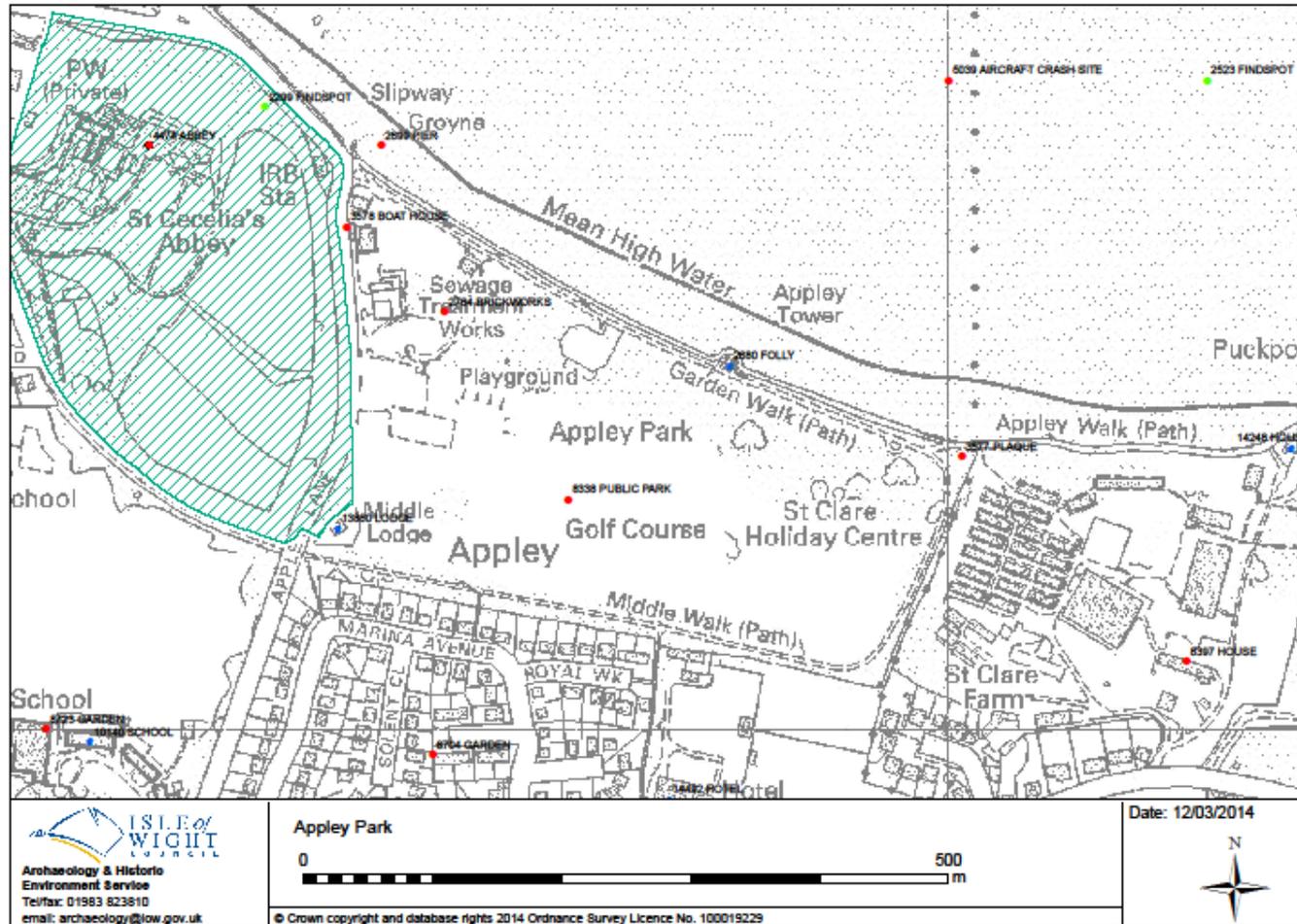


Figure 2: Current Extent of Woodland (not to scale)

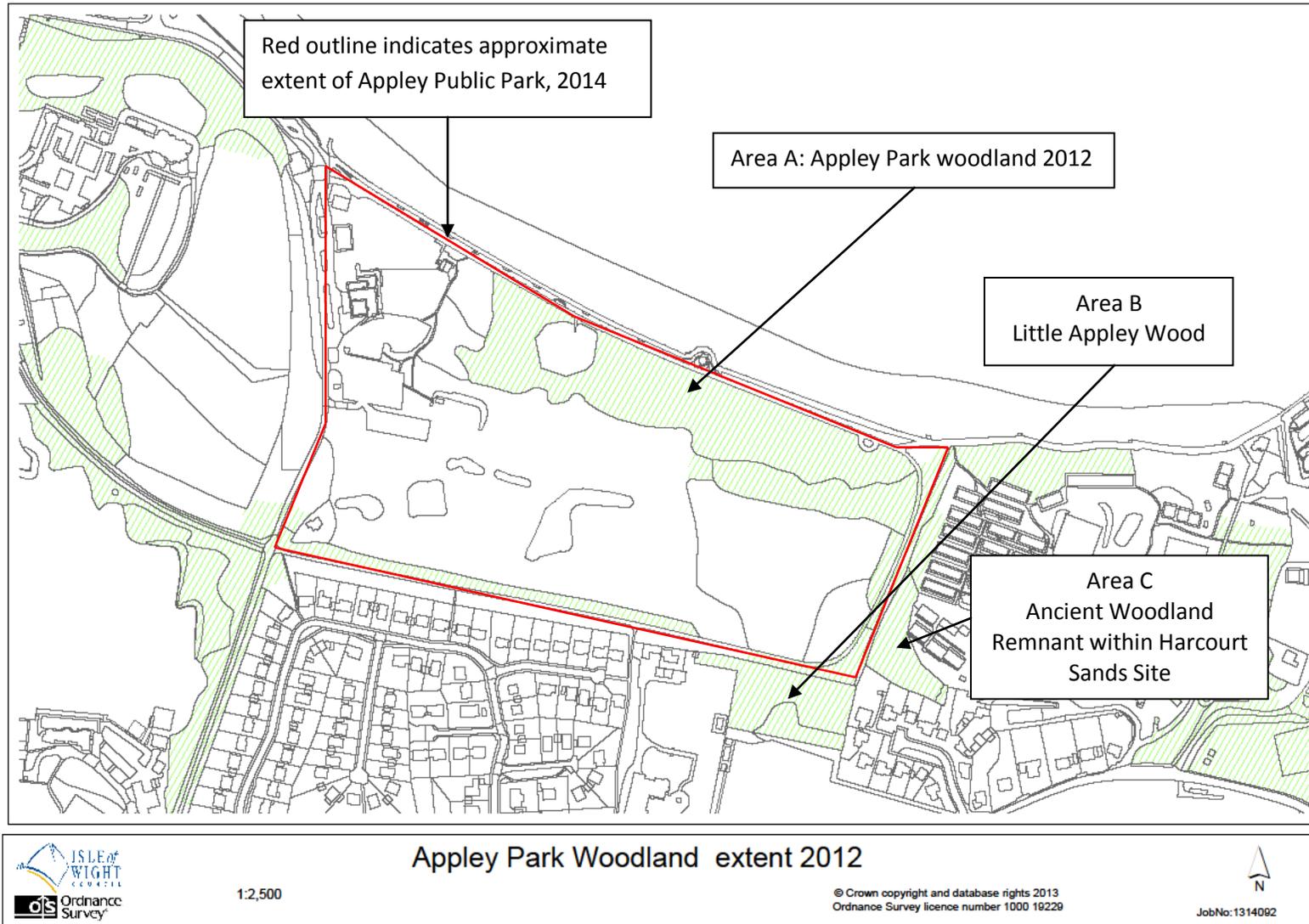


Figure 3: Extract from Isaac Taylor's *Map of Hampshire including the Isle of Wight*, 1759
(not to scale)



Figure 4: Extract from 1793-4 Ordnance Survey Drawing (not to scale)



Figure 5: St John's Estate 1803 (Brownscombe, 2102)

Outline of the St John's Estate in 1803 taken from the plan of the estate surveyed that year and plotted on the unpublished OS Map of 1793. Blue outline is St John's Land, green outline is Appley House land used by St John's and orange outline is St John's land used by Appley House.

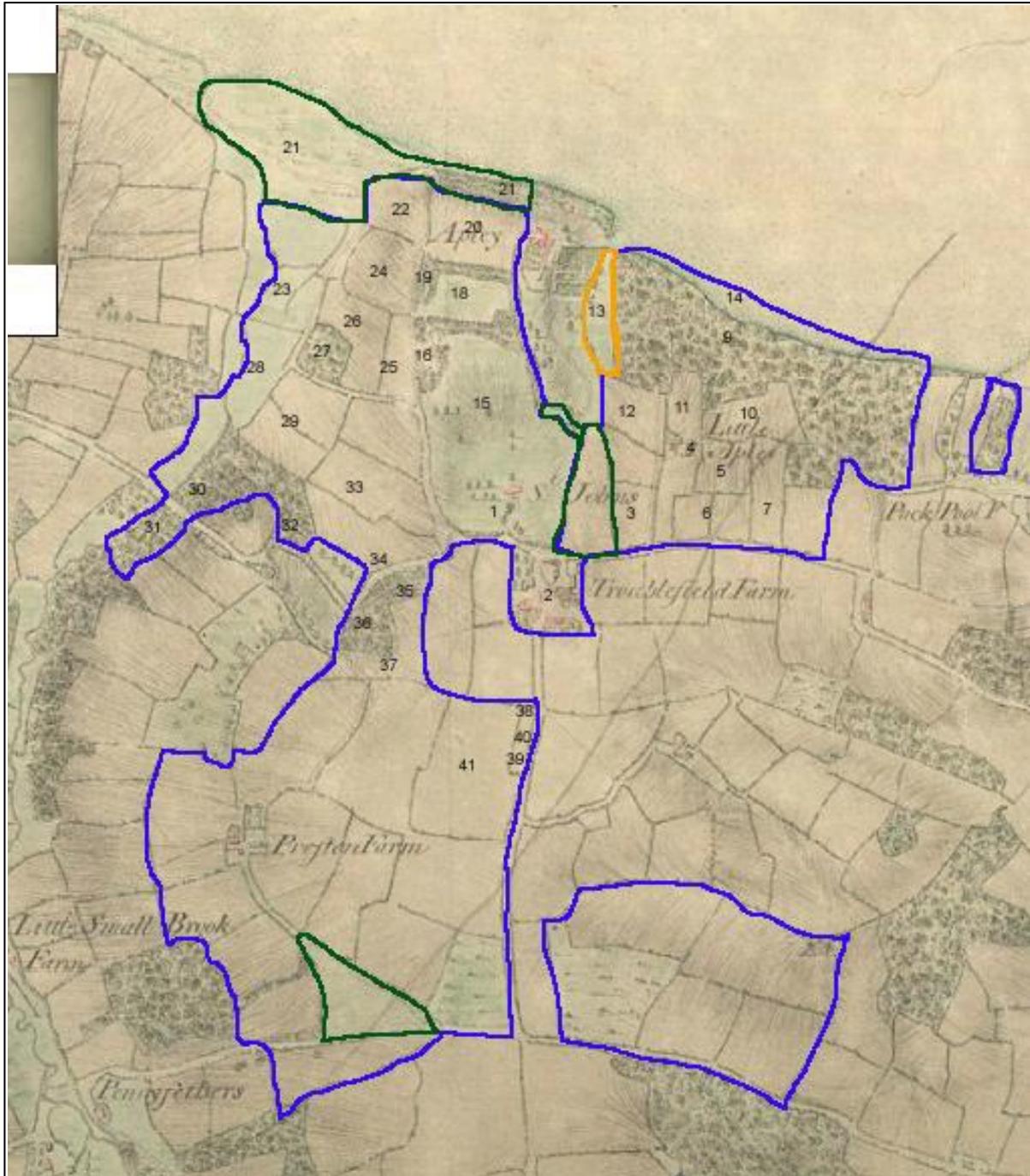


Figure 6: Extract from *Map of the County of Southampton* by C & J Greenwood, 1826
(not to scale)



Figure 7: Extract from copy of St Helens Tithe Map, 1839
(Transcribed by Isle of Wight Archaeology & Historic Environment Service)

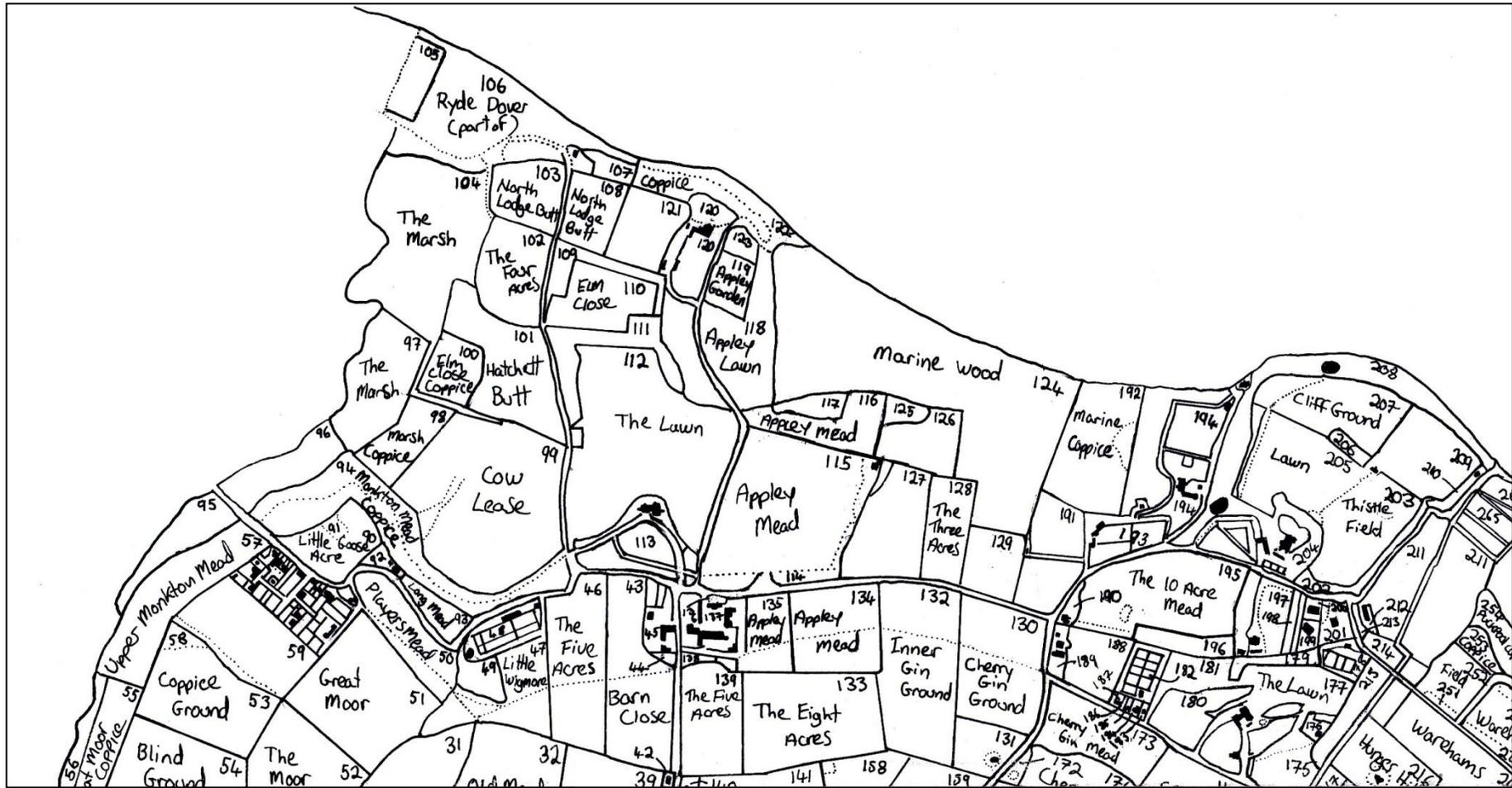


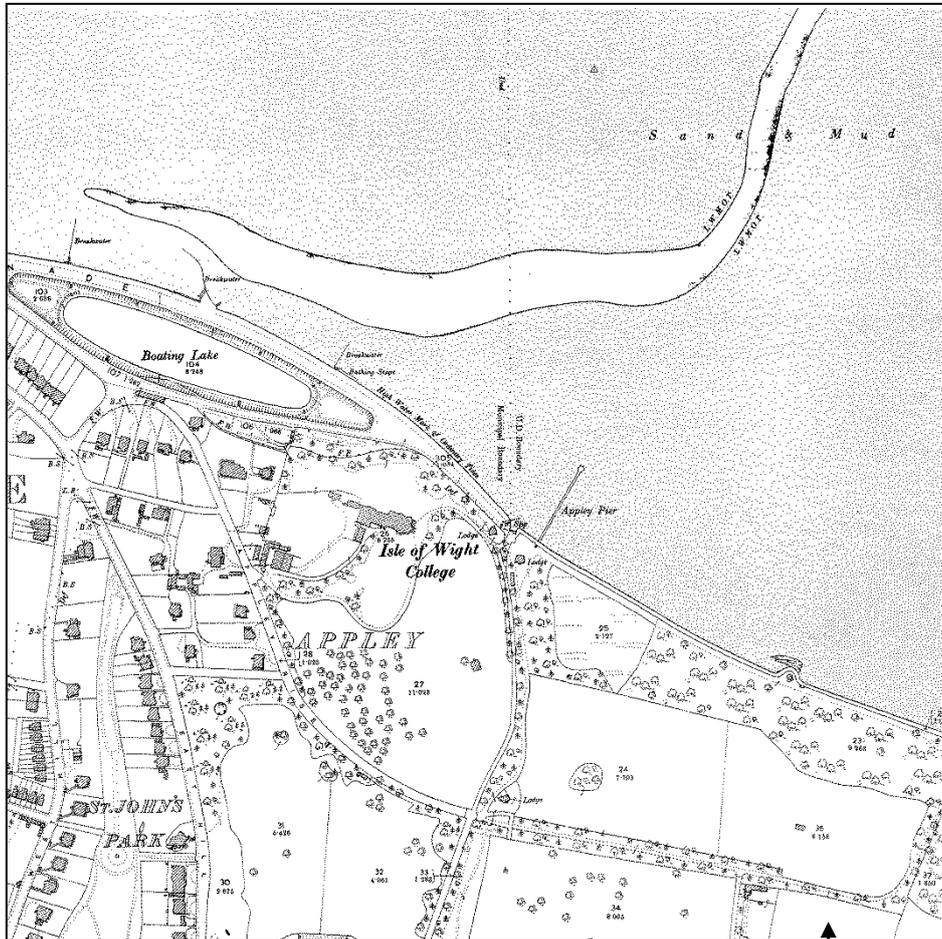
Figure 8: Epoch 1 Historical Ordnance Survey Mapping. Tile SZ 6092 and Part of tile SZ 6192 (not to scale)

N.B. This image has been scanned from digital data supplied by Landmark Information Group to the Isle of Wight Council. The data was digitised from paper copies of the 1st edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey published between 1862 and 1893 but based on an original survey of 1862.



Figure 11: Epoch 2 Historical Ordnance Survey Mapping. Tile SZ 6092 (not to scale)

N.B. This digital map has been supplied by Landmark Information Group to the Isle of Wight Council. The map was digitised from the 1st revision 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1897.



Position of Little Appley Wood

Figure 12: Recommended Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory Areas 2014
Areas proposed by Vicky Basford and mapped by the Isle of Wight Council
(map not to scale)

