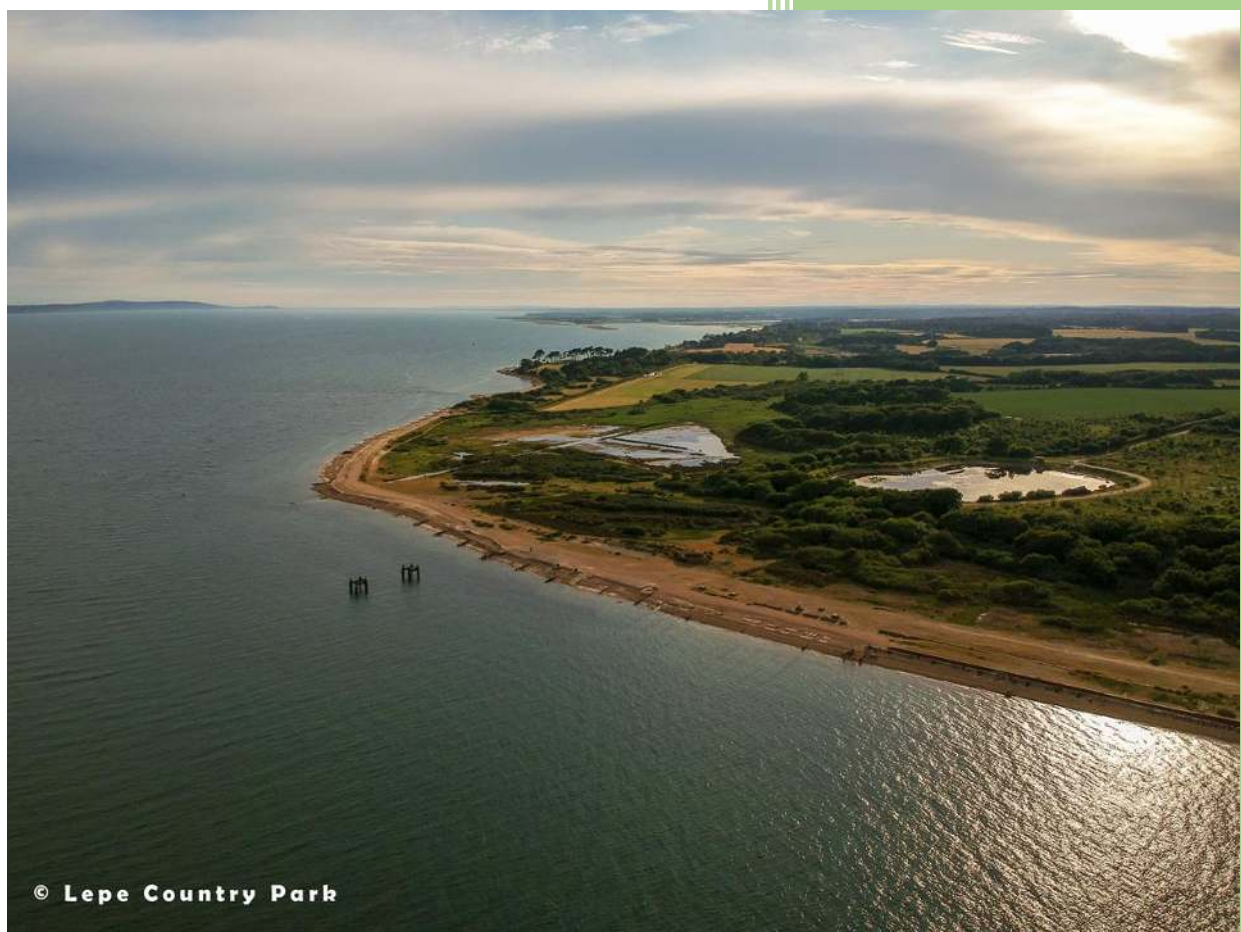


2021

Historical Character Report



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Hampshire County Council

1/14/2021

Document Control Information

Document Information

Document Name	Lepe Country Park Historical Character Report
Document Author	Mandy Smith
Document Version	2.0
Document Status	Released
Date Released	7 th July 21

Document Edit History

Version	Date	Addition/Modifications	Prepared/ Revised By
0.1	27.01.21	First Draft	
0.2	30.01.21	Second draft, added Lepe House, Inchmery	
0.3	17.02.21	MS. Smugglers Run. Updated place name from Sprats down to Nelson's Place. MS. Add Old Maps to appendix section. HL. Add Roman Road by Clarke. GP. Add Exbury to Domesday Book written as Teocreberie. GP. Add detail for Calshot Castle. GP. Add Lutrells map for ship-building. GP. Add to Smugglers, NA detail from Coastguard records, 1819 start date of Lepe Preventative Station. Include 2 books for reference. MS. Lidar link by NFNPA PHG. grammatical updates. MS. 1 st aerial photograph of Lepe 1909 MS. Millenium Beacon AS. Grammatical updates AS. Cadland updates AS. 1965-2006 gap - Meadows/Park managers house. Ongoing. AS. Strip out superfluous storytelling on Solent Cottage, Roc, Salt making, Brick making SF. Add WW2 coastal battery	
1.0	04.05.21	Released	
2.0	07.07.21	Changed front cover picture	

Document Peer Review History

Date	Name	Job Title	Comments
17.02.21	Laura Cox	Visitor Services Officer	
11.03.21	Alison Steele	Lepe Heritage Group/FoL	
24.02.21	Heather Lowe	Lepe Heritage Group	
16.02.21	Patricia Hedly-Goddard	Lepe Heritage Group	
10.02.21	Graham Parkes	Waterside Heritage Group	
08.03.21	Stephen Fisher	Naval Historian & Archaeologist	

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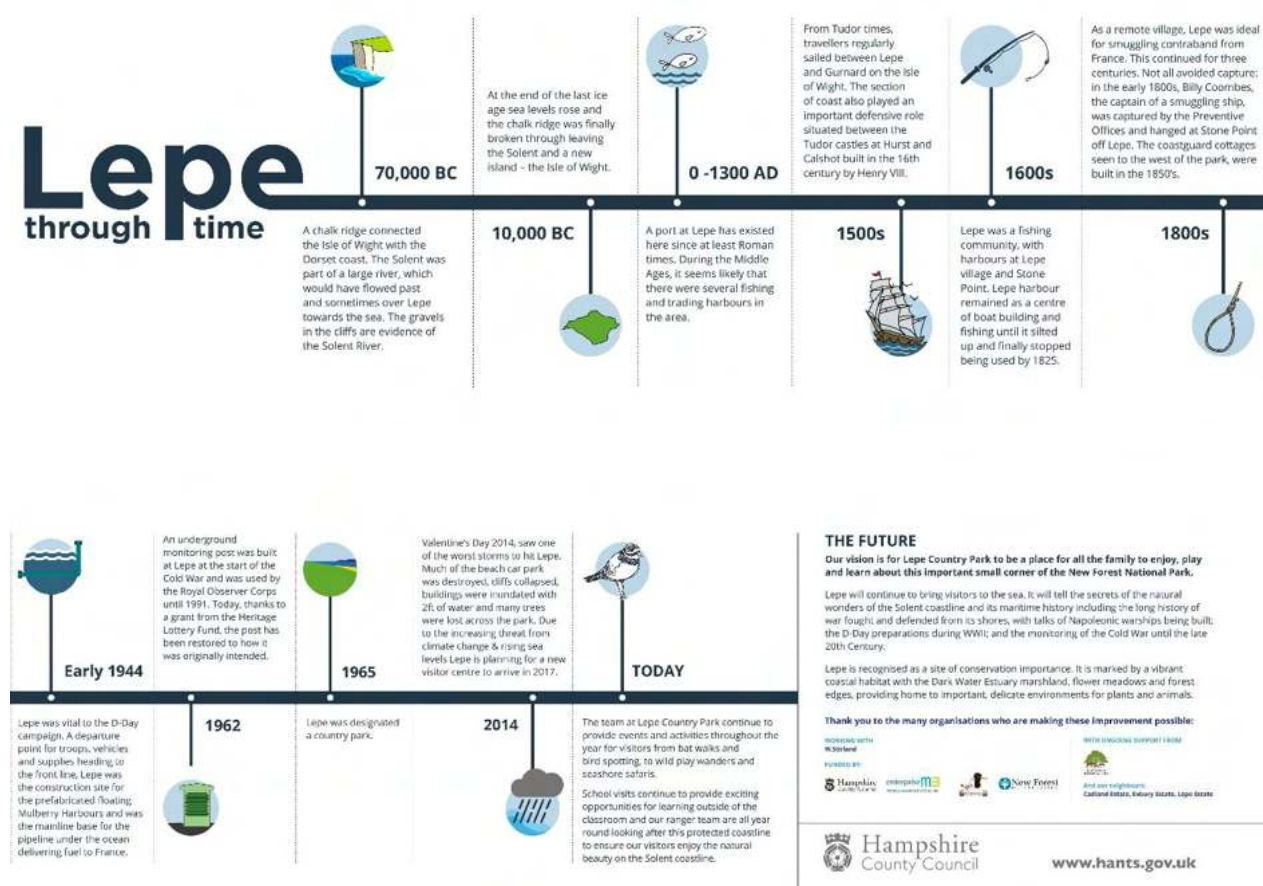
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SUMMARY

This document is a summary of historical knowledge known about Lepe and the immediate surrounding area (from Lower Exbury in the west to Stanswood Bay/Bourne Gap in the east), that will be publicly accessible and updated on an ongoing basis as and when new information comes to light through new research. The primary focus of the document is to be a factual base for Lepe staff to use the historical information or references contained within in it for future projects, social media interactions or factual website history updates. As a secondary purpose for the public to be able to access information for education and general interest. The document is primarily for written reference and does not include many visual references.

The subject areas were initially gathered from heritage group meetings during early stages of the transformation project, highlighting major known events along the Lepe timeline:



Subsequent research has increased the number of *headline* events and the information in this document reflects this ongoing research.

INTRODUCTION

Lepe Country Park is a unique coastal Country Park close to the mouth of the Beaulieu River with exceptional views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight. A 52-hectare site, it is located on the western side of Southampton Water, south of the waterside settlements of Blackfield, Langley and Fawley. Lepe is located within a 10km stretch of coastline which runs from Beaulieu River to Southampton Water which holds a wealth of historical information and heritage sites including Calshot Castle, the original hangar from the World War II flying boats at Calshot Activity Centre, and at Lepe Country Park itself there are a huge variety of structures from World War II (Lepe played an important part in D-Day preparations) also an Underground Monitoring Post from the Cold War era.

The Park is recognised as a key recreational site, with the ability to relieve some of the pressure on the New Forest National Park, an area of high biodiversity and of national significance as a heritage site. It is also one of the few public access points to the Solent in the New Forest where much of the coastline is privately owned. Lepe offers an important recreation and education resource, generating some 480,000 visits per annum (updated 2019 park figures).

The Park is primarily made up of two levels; an upper level 'cliff top', affording access to a car park, education facility, and nature reserve "Lepe Point" with a lower 'beach' level where the main visitor facilities are based, including a café, toilets, and visitor information point. The Park offices, an outdoor interpretation area, and further public car park is also available at this lower level. Whilst a third area 'Western' is used in the summer months as an overflow car park.

AIMS

The aim of this document is to pull together summary level of information about Lepe in a timeline with links to further reading and references rather than repeating information that is stored at external locations. Research by Lepe volunteers will be either detailed in full in this document or created as separate external documents, referenced, and uploaded to the New Forest Knowledge website which has a wealth of expert and community generated research and readily available to the public. The document is designed to be continually updated as and when new historic information comes to light.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Geology

The coastline is rural in character, with vegetated cliff slopes and geologically important cliffs dominating the shoreline between the Beaulieu River mouth and Calshot. The frontages at Dark Water, Stansore Point, Stanswood Valley and Calshot Spit are low lying and constrained by the surrounding hinterland topography. The area is largely free from urban development with scattered properties at Inchmery House, Lepe House, Coastguard cottages, Cadland, Eaglehurst and Hillhead (CCATCH, 2011).

The Site sits to the front of the cliff on the line of the Dark Water river and has been built up noticeably from the river level by gravel (naturally deposited by storm or by human intervention). The west end associated with the existing café has been levelled and a concrete hard standing has been laid (Hampshire County Council, 2016, 8).

The general geology of the site is indicated to comprise the superficial River Terrace Deposits (undifferentiated) overlying the bedrock Headon Beds and Osborne Beds in the south western section of the site and of the Becton Sand Formation and Chama Sand Formation of the Barton Group in the eastern section of the site.

The River Terrace Deposits are indicated to comprise medium and coarse flint gravel becoming cobble sized and silty with depth. The Headon and Osborne Beds are described as clay, sand and silt. The Chama Sand Formation is described as clay, silt and sand (Hampshire County Council, 2016, 8).

Lepe is a notable geological locality at the south-eastern end of the New Forest. It has (rare) fossil elephant remains, a dinosaur footprint, palaeoliths and interesting features of coastal erosion and spit development (West, 2017). It is not obviously fossiliferous to the casual visitor, but it has good geomorphological and erosional features (West, 2017).

Natural Heritage

The whole park is within the New Forest National Park. The National Park designation ensures that the natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the Park is protected, opportunities for understanding and enjoyment are promoted, and the social and economic well-being of local communities are fostered (CCATCH, 2011). National Park designation confers the strongest possible level of protection for the landscape and its special qualities but does not make it immune from coastal change (CCATCH, 2011).

The stretch of coast has series of designations protecting its vulnerable habitats and species, these include:

- Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which includes the Beaulieu Estuary, the intertidal mudflats and gravel and sand substrates and the saltmarsh of Calshot Spit.
- Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site covering the intertidal shoreline for wetlands and waterfowl habitats.

- Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) which covers the intertidal habitats for birds.
- North Solent National Nature Reserve (NNR) which covers the Beaulieu Estuary and Lepe and possess a range of terrestrial and coastal habitats.
- North Solent Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Hythe to Calshot SSSI,
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) – a number of SINCs are within the area.

The New Forest National Park have created a lidar map of the New Forest which is online. A lidar map is a detailed 3D model of the earth's surface which removes tree cover to reveal topographical changes:

<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/conservation/preserving-history-and-culture/heritage-mapping/explore-laser-map/>

Social and Cultural Context

Land ownership is complex; some nine bodies and individuals are involved (from Beaulieu to Calshot). The majority of the land under consideration is in private ownership from the Cadland, Exbury and Lepe estates. A sizeable proportion is not accessible to the public resulting in extra pressure on the key areas of Calshot & Lepe where public access is available (CCATCH, 2011). As well as the main landowners the communities involved include dispersed rural communities, urban-edge settlements, the general public and specialist interest groups.

Other attractions in the wider area include Calshot Activities Centre (also managed by Hampshire County Council), Exbury Gardens, Beaulieu Motor Museum and the remainder of the New Forest National Park which as a whole, attracts an estimated 13.5 million visitor days annually.

There is industrial use in and around Fawley including the oil refinery, a major local employer.

LEPE TIMELINE

UP TO 10,000 BC

Palaeolithic, meaning Palaeo = ancient, lithic = stone (approx. 2.5 m BC - 10,000 BC). This is the period of earliest flint tool making but little other evidence of human occupation. Palaeolithic may also be referred to as Early or Old Stone age. This period almost coincides with the Pleistocene epoch of geologic time (2.6 m years ago to 12,000 years ago) (See [Appendix 1 for Time Chart](#)).

Lepe is located on a Low Pleistocene Gravel Terrace with a former cliff face made up of Lepe Gravel immediately to the north. Both deposits were laid down by the former Solent river and have the potential to contain Palaeolithic material. The cliff at Lepe is particularly notable as a low terrace of Pleistocene gravel is exposed and has allowed the dating and stratigraphic relationships to be studied by visiting geologists Rebecca Briant, Francis Wenban Smith and Martin Bates. This work (Briant, Rebecca M. and Bates, M.R. and Boreham, S. and Cameron, N.G. and Coupe, G.R., 2009) sheds light onto the geological contexts and sequences relating to the period of the earliest occupation of southern England. However, it is the exposure and study of the sequence rather than the expectation of direct human evidence that gives Lepe its significance.

Dr Becky Briant compiled 'A Visitors Guide to the Geology at Lepe Country Park, Hampshire', the following is an extract:

Preserved in the cliffs and foreshore at Lepe Country Park, Hampshire is a record of past environments spanning c.200,000 to 30,000 years ago.[] Over the last two million years (the 'Ice Age'), large ice-sheets have expanded and contracted across the northern Hemisphere, causing sea levels to fluctuate by 150-200 m worldwide, and huge shifts in plants and animals. Climate during the last 2 million years is separated into 'warm stages' with high sea levels like that at the present day; and 'cold stages' with low sea levels, when the landscape was very different.

In early parts of the Ice Age, there was a chalk ridge (the 'Wight-Purbeck ridge') that connected the Isle of Wight to the mainland and made the Solent a river system at times of low sea level and a sheltered estuary when sea level was high. More recently (in the last 100,000 years or so when sea level was low), this ridge was breached, and the Solent has been an inland seaway since sea level rose approximately 10,000 years ago.

The Palaeolithic era saw the landscape of Britain change considerably as ice ages and continental shift changed the continent of Europe. In warmer periods, early tool-using humans inhabited the warmer southern regions of Britain which was then still connected to Europe. The River Solent with many tributaries would be have been populated with early humans, foraging, and hunting in the grasslands and marsh areas.

Dr Becky Briant, R.M. A Visitors Guide to the Geology at Lepe Country Park, Hampshire mentions:

The Solent seaway was once the route of a large river system similar in size to the Thames. During 'cold stages', the Solent was a river, flowing southeast past the Isle of Wight to a large river system in the English Channel. This river was similar to rivers found in Arctic Canada at the present day. It transported large amounts of gravel in lots of shallow (braided)

channels. This gravel is found in the current cliffs at Lepe Country, Barton on Sea, near Lee-on-the-Solent and at many other locations in the New Forest and along Southampton Water. The ground would have been frozen for most of year, and the river would only have flowed in the spring. During 'warm stages', the Solent would have been an estuary rather than the inland seaway it is at the present day. Otherwise, the landscape would have been similar to the present day.

Studies and samples taken from the shore in this area tells us that at 8.5m below the present day sea level there was evidence of Freshwater fen and regional grasses, at 8.2m below the area became an intertidal mudflat with some freshwater influence with grasses and pine trees. The top level at 8m below sea level shows tidal creek and development of saltmarsh habitats, with grasses, pine, birch, to mixed oak with hazel. (Briant)

The low cliffs at the back of the car park area are about 5m high of gravel from the Pleistocene geologic time dating from approx. 2.6 million years ago to 11,700 BC). These cliffs are not currently undergoing erosion as they are protected by the car park but the cliffs to the east of the car park, however, are rapidly eroding. This area is sometimes referred to as Stone Point. It is important area because of its interglacial sequence of deposits, which is rare within the Solent area. The oldest deposits date back to 200,000 to 30,000 years. The interglacial deposit can be seen occasionally exposed on the shore and looks like dark mud. Samples taken have found Elephant tusks and Flora of the *Acer Monspeessulanum* (South European maple which indicate a warm period) along with Oak and tall reeds of marshes and swamps of England however the area is not known to be greatly populated with fossils.



On the beach at Lepe are various rocks which have been brought in for sea-defences, as ballast, from shipwrecks, or transported for building purposes. These include much Bembridge Limestone, Purbeck Stone and Carboniferous Limestone.

A dinosaur footprint thought to be from a Tridactyl was found on one of the Purbeck Stones on the shore in 2004 by Dr Ian West:



The Story Beneath the Solent by Maritime Archaeology Trust:

Island Britain and Solent Flooding

Low sea level during the Devensian Glacial left Britain joined with Europe. Yet for much of the time the area was uninhabitable for humans because the extreme cold limited the numbers of animals and plants. About 12,000 BC the climate in the Solent region warmed and the hunters returned to a changing landscape. The thick icesheets were melting. Relieved from the great weight of ice, land in northern Britain began rising. This had the effect of bending the earth's surface and forcing downwards the lowlands between the south coast and the Netherlands. At the same time, the melting ice was raising sea levels, which had flooded vast lowland areas by about 9,000 BC.

During this period, the Solent was a river with many tributaries where groups of people hunted in the grassland and marsh. The Solent seabed has begun to reveal the story of these people by showing how their landscape changed as sea level rose eventually to sever Britain from Europe and, by about 6,000 BC, leave Wight an island.

For years flint tools and animal bones have been trawled up by Solent fishermen. Recently divers have explored peat exposed on the seabed. The peat, some of which is in distinct layers, is the remains of ancient land surfaces and it holds the secrets of the environment experienced by people in prehistory. Divers have already found flint tools in the peat.

The following is a list of the Palaeolithic records in the Historic Environment Record (HER's) database from Inchmery to Stanswood Bay:

Ref: 21985

Grid Ref: SU47000 00000

Date found: 1950-1969

Description. A Palaeolithic flint knife was found and in 2004 a Palaeolithic handaxe was recovered. Location described as 1.5 NE of Stone was recovered from an undisturbed gravel bed 15ft deep

Ref: 50200

Grid Ref: SZ46870 99600

Date found: 1959

Description. A Palaeolithic hand axe was found at this location, at about high-water mark at Stanswood Bay in June 1959 by David Ride

Ref: 58171

Grid Ref: approx. SZ45042 98588

Date found: 2008

Description. A scatter of 21 flints was recovered by the 2008 watching brief. 19 of these came from the topsoil and 2 came from the subsoil. 18 were unretouched waste flakes, 1 was a pebble core and 2 were retouched flakes. These lithics were considered to Bronze Age although excavators suggested that the pebble core may be earlier in date, possibly Mesolithic, or Palaeolithic.

Ref: 21976

Date found: 1963

Description. Fragments of a Palaeolithic hand axe found just above high-water mark at Inchmery beach.

Ref: 55493

Grid Ref: approx. SU47500 00500

Description. Middle Palaeolithic Acheulian hand axe in orange flint found on the beach at Stanswood Bay following a cliff fall. Exact location of artefact unknown.

References materials for Palaeolithic details at Lepe:

The following animation by SCOPAC visualises the flooding of the landscape between the mainland and Isle of Wight:

<https://vimeo.com/97745375>

Dr Rebecca Briant has written 'A visitors guide to geology at Lepe' which is concise and informative:

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/11896835/a-visitors-guide-to-the-geology-at-lepe-country-park-hampshire>

Dr Ian West has written a vast amount of information on Lepe and surrounding area, old maps, photographs about some of the history and geology of the area from Inchmery to Stanswood:

<http://www.southampton.ac.uk/~imw/Lepe-Beach.htm>

10,000 BC- 43 AD

Details from Archaeologist Frank Green BA MPhil MSc MCIfA IHBC regarding burnt flints found at Lepe Point Conservation Area in 2009 (HER 600106/7). Examples of these burnt flints have been left at Lepe Country Park for educational purposes:

Burnt Flint at Lepe Country Park

The burnt flints and the burnt flint layer are typical of the type of deposits that we encounter across the New Forest. There are over 350 such known sites and there are two of these sites at Lepe located on the Nature Reserve.

Burnt flint mounds where they have been excavated are usually associated with a trough that originally would have been wooden lined to hold water. The sites are all close to a source of water. The evidence indicates that the flints were heated in a fire and then placed in the water filled trough. The flints would then shatter in the water and at the same time would quickly raise the water temperature to boiling point. The burnt flint mounds are the waster products as the material could not be re-used.

It is not known what the significance of these sites is and what the need for hot water might have been. Every suggestion from sites representing saunas or for beer production or for wool and cloth processing have been suggested. Detailed paleoenvironmental and chemical analysis of on sites that have been excavated have not so far provided information that could aid reliable interpretation. The sites do not produce domestic refuse such as pottery and animal bones, so clearly not domestic and probably not ritual.

There sites are to be found throughout the UK and northern Europe and invariably date from the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age.

The following is a list of the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze & Iron Age records in the Historic Environment Record (HER's) database from Inchmery to Stanswood Bay:

Ref: 58171

Grid Ref: approx. SZ45042 98588

Date found: 2008

Description. A scatter of 21 flints was recovered by the 2008 watching brief. 19 of these came from the topsoil and 2 came from the subsoil. 18 were unretouched waste flakes, 1 was a pebble core and 2 were retouched flakes. These lithics were considered to Bronze Age although excavators suggested that the pebble core may be earlier in date, possibly Mesolithic, or Palaeolithic.

Ref: 62037

Grid Ref: approx.

Date found: 2008

Description. A watching brief carried out by SCC archaeology unit on preliminary grounds associated with Scotia Gas Network Solent Pipeline project. Charcoal retrieved from pit dated BC 2910-2760.

Ref: 42587

Grid Ref: SZ 45800 98800

Date found: 1997

Description. Variety of finds whilst metal detecting. Two Neolithic flakes.

Ref: 600106/7

Grid Ref:

Date found: 2009

Description. Probable Boiling Mound associated with the extraction of salt from sea water. Boiling flints are spread along the face of the old meter-high river 'cliff'. They seem to come from a large low mound directly below. This is the only mound noted in the area and is raised about half a metre above the level of the marsh. 6m wide and 15m long 500m in height. -2200 - -801

Ref: 22338

Grid Ref: SZ 45700 99240

Date found: 1971

Description. Midden, SW of Stone Farm. A large pit containing Iron Age pottery and shell was found at this location during the laying of a gas pipeline.

Ref: 30185

Grid Ref: SZ 46720 00150 (typo 99150?)

Date found: 1989

Description. Gold Stater. Westerham Type. 65-96BC.

Ref: 22337

Grid Ref:

Date found: 1985

Description. Iron Age gold stater, Westerham type. Found on the foreshore at Lepe. Reported to HCMS but retained in private hands.

Ref: 21974

Grid Ref:

Date found: article in PHFC 1999

Description. 2) An univallate hillfort with an area of 2.4ha 1) A promontory fort on the E bank of the Beaulieu River. The W side is bounded by the river and the E by a bank with outer ditch. The defences survive best at the N end where the low, spread bank is 22m wide and up to 1m high, it reduces in height and width towards the S end. The S end finished abruptly, probably destroyed by salterns. The ditch cannot be traced throughout the length of the defences (1969). There is no independent evidence for an Iron age date. (MKO 1986)(3) HCC AP RefL run42W131.

Cadland Causeway

Discovered in 2015 off the shore near the Cadland Estate, this wooden causeway/structure was rebuilt or enlarged over a long period of time, with samples taken dating between 1447 cal BC – 242 AD. For more information on this relatively recent discovery visit:

https://maritimearchaeologytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Western_Solent_SARCC_case_study_for_WP2.pdf

<https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/cadland-causeway-2k-yr-old-underwater-structure-d536520b55f0478286f1e8628355c67e>

There are no other recorded events or geological information for this period.

43 AD -1300 AD

It is thought that a port at Lepe has existed here since at least Roman times. During the Middle Ages, it seems likely that there were several fishing and trading harbours in the area however there is no archaeological evidence of a port at Lepe. Further along the coast, Roman and later Bronze Age wooden posts have been found, an ongoing project called the Cadland Causeway is being undertaken by the Maritime Archaeology Trust to interpret the objects before they are washed away from shore erosion. More information on the Cadland Causeway can be found here:

<https://www.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/the-western-solent-causeway>

There was much doubt over the years as to whether the straight road (aptly named Roman Road) near Applemore Hill running down to Stone Point was Roman or not. However, after Clarke's study published in 2003 by the Hampshire Field Club it is generally agreed that it is. For more information on A Clarke's study:

<http://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk/publications/hampshirstudies/digital/2000s/vol58/Clarke.pdf>

Sketch Plan Showing portion of Roman Road – Purlieu to Lepe by Sanders, I 1927.

<https://wessexcoastgeology.soton.ac.uk/jpg-Lepe/4LP-Roman-Road.jpg>

Book: Roman Roads of Hampshire, Vincent Alex, 2005

Archaeological excavations in recent years north east of Lepe have discovered remains of a Roman settlement near the end of the Roman road at what is now known as Stansore Point (this area was referred to as Stone Point until the mid-20th century). The finds show evidence of Roman activity from the first to the fourth century with some 8 kilns found along a narrow strip of land in fields running parallel to Lepe Road. The finds provide evidence of coastal trade in stone, pottery, and ceramic building material along with local pottery such as Vectis ware and New Forest Ware but also that of imported Gaulish ware. Any evidence of a Roman port would now be in the sea but would likely have been situated at the end of the Roman road.

For further information on the archaeological excavation at Lepe by J I Russel MIFA click here:

<https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/roman-lepe-report-on-a-watching-brief-and-archaeological-excavation-at-lepe>

There are many Roman and early medieval records in the Historic Environment Record (HER's) database along this stretch of the coast, many of which come from metal detecting finds:

Ref: 29933
Grid Ref: SZ 45700 99200
Date found: 1992
Description. Roman Bronze phallic amulet from Stone Farm, recovered from ploughed field.

Ref: 29936
Grid Ref: SZ 45800 99000
Date found: 1984
Description. Line of Roman Road.

Ref: 29937
Grid Ref:
Date found: 1981
Description. 1st/2nd century pottery found at Lepe Beach, Very abraded. In Southampton City Museum. No. THM 284 E453

Ref: 29940
Grid Ref: SZ 45720 99100
Date found: 1994
Description. 2nd/3rd century Roman ring. Moulded glass intaglio.

Ref: 29941
Grid Ref: SZ 45720 99050
Date found: 1994
Description. Silver Faustina Roman coin.

Ref: 29942
Grid Ref: SZ 45620 99280
Date found: 1994
Description. Bronze Roman coins, 2nd/3rd century.

Ref: 29943
Grid Ref: SZ 45680 99340
Date found: 1994
Description. Roman coins.

Ref: 29944
Grid Ref: SZ 45740 99300.
Date found: 1994

Description. Roman fibula brooch.

Ref: 42577

Grid Ref: SU 46750 00330.

Date found: 1988

Description. Hoard of 15 Roman coins discovered during a metal detector survey by S.Dearing.

Ref: 42587

Grid Ref: SZ 45800 98800

Date found: 1997

Description. Variety of finds whilst metal detecting by S Dearing. medieval seal.

Ref: 57682/42816

Grid Ref: SZ 45800 98800

Date found: 1997

Description. Pitts Copse/Ballast Pits which could previously be Roman ship's docks.

Ref: 22334

Grid Ref:

Date found: 1954

Description. Site of medieval wreck. Fragments of wood, part of a wrecked boat, and flint ballast material, caught in fisher net and washed ashore in the area. The site of the wreck has been local knowledge for most of 20th century. From fragments recovered it appears to have been a clinker-built vessel.

TIN FROM CORNWALL – LEAD FROM THE MENDIPS

Not on the Historic Environment Records but on other history notes of the area, are the finds of tin along this Roman road near Lepe. Not only was tin brought here from Cornwall but also lead from the Mendip Hills. Lead 'pigs' have been picked up in a branch of the same Roman road running from Uphill on the Severn to Salisbury and from here joining the Lepe Road. One of them stamped with the name Hadrian is now in the Bath museum, connecting Lepe with a famous passage of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus.

Ref: Wise J.R, 1971, New Forest and its scenery, P49-59

Saxon Wessex

There is literary evidence of Bede (about AD 686) the two Princes escaping from the Isle of Wight crossed to Ad Lapidem (lapis - stoney – lepe), and the general acceptance of the identification of Stone as Ad lapidem.

The Historic Environment Record (HER's):

Ref: 42820

Grid Ref: SU 47350 00390

Date found: 1994

Description. Postulated landing point of Cerdic and Cynric in AD 495. Two Saxon princes, came to Britain in **495**, and fought with the Britons the very day they landed. In 508, they slew a British king Natanleod. In 514, the subjects of the princes arrived in Britain at what became Wessex.

Domesday Book

There is no mention of Exbury or Lepe in Domesday 1066 for the Bishops Waltham Hundred, Only Stone (see below). Court roll entries in 1316 show that 'Holbury, Hardley, Butsash, and Langley (all in the Fawley parish) were attached to the New Forest at this date, as were Exbury and Leap'.

Ref: Victoria County History.

However, more recently (since the writing of the VCH), it is now widely accepted that the entry written as 'Teocreberie' was copied incorrectly 'at Eocreburie', the place of Eocre, possibly a Jutish or Saxon family chief who came to the area in the post-Roman settlements.

Ref: Waterside Heritage Society.

The Historic Environment Record (HER's):

Ref: 22336

Grid Ref: SZ 45820 99390

Description. Stone is recorded in the Domesday Book, though it appears to be a fairly small holding; 2 halls are noted. AD 1066.

The Dauphin, afterwards Louis VIII (1187-1226)

A disputed report, probably folklore but mention in many places when researching the history of Exbury and Lepe, that the Dauphin, afterwards Louis VIII. of France, embarked after the defeat of his army at Lincoln, and his fleet off Dover.

Ref: New Forest and its scenery, Wise J.R, 1971. P49-59

1300 – 1500 AD

The following is a list of the late medieval records in the Historic Environment Record (HER's) database from Inchmery to Stanswood Bay:

Ref: 29945

Grid Ref: SZ 45690 99100

Date found: 1994

Description. Henry V silver groat.

Ref: 42587

Grid Ref: SZ 45800 98800

Date found: 1997

Description. Variety of finds whilst metal detecting by S Dearing. medieval seal. Seal matrices are described as one being 14th century and depicting St Katherine.

1500s – DEFENSIVE LEPE

Nearby Calshot and Hurst Castles were built as a consequence of the increasing international tensions between Henry VIII, France, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. The dissolution of the larger monasteries in 1539, left some of them, such as Beaulieu, to lay derelict and empty, a fate which seemed to have affected mainly the Cistercian houses, possibly because of their siting in the remote countryside.

In 1539, after several skirmishes off the southern coast from the French, Henry VIII set about fortifying the south coast, building a series of castles or Device forts (also known as Henrician Castles or artillery fortifications) to protect from potential invasion from French or Spanish forces. The Solent was regarded as vulnerable due to access of the rich town of Southampton which had seen many maritime raids in its past. Two of these fortifications were built near Lepe to protect the Solent; Calshot and Hurst. Calshot to the east of Lepe and to the west, Hurst Castle, which you can see on a clear sunny day from Lepe beach.

The construction of these fortifications seems to have started in the south-east, in 1539 and gradually worked its way to Hampshire. Fitzwilliam and Paulet identified the specific location for Calshot Castle early in 1539*. The king directing his builders to reuse the materials from the monasteries he had previously sold off, it is thought that the bulk of the 16th century masonry from Beaulieu Abbey went to Calshot, completed c.1540 and Hurst, completed c. 1544 (some stones have also been found at Stone Farm, originally a site of a manorial manor).

*Information supplied by the Waterside Heritage Centre.

The following is a list of the post medieval records in the Historic Environment Record (HER's) database from Inchmery to Stanswood Bay:

Ref: 52538
Grid Ref: SZ 46950 99870
Date found: 1982
Description. Icehouse at Stanswood Bay.

References:

Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society (PHFC) Volume 19 Part 1 1955, Robins, F.W.

Hampshire Treasures, Vol 5. 1981.

New Forest and its scenery, Wise J.R, 1971. P49-59

Admiralty Courts

Admiralty Courts were held at Lepe from as early as 1493. In 1536 Henry VIII introduced a new maritime court because of dissatisfaction with the way in which the Lord High Admiral dealt with 'Traytors, Pirates, Thieves, Murtherers and Confederates upon the Sea'. As well as dealing with these outlaws, the king was entitled to every wreck and every piece of flotsam cast up on the shore, to every whale, porpoise and other royal fish caught off the coast and every royal bird. He was responsible for regulating the fishing, collecting port dues, removing obstructions to navigation, and providing justice for seafarers. However, many of these rights were from the beginning in the hands of private individuals and corporate bodies under colour of a grant, actual or implied, from the Crown. As was the case in Southampton, there was money to be made by regulating the coast!

Because of the large area covered by the admiralty jurisdiction it was divided into five sections: Southampton, Lepe, Lymington, Keyhaven and Hamble Le Rice. Lepe alone had 12 'creeks', stretching from Cadland on the west bank of Southampton Water to Exbury at the mouth of the

Beaulieu River. Some of the courts were held on the seashore which is likely case at Lepe. However, these courts were sporadic and sometimes did not run for many years.

The most profitable part of the jurisdiction was the sale of wrecks and flotsam found on the shore or floating within the jurisdiction. This could range from ships and boats down to short lengths of cable and the money in a drowned man's purse. The jury were expected to value the goods and if the finder had informed the admiral, then he was entitled to a share of the money. There were frequent disputes about ownership with the local landowner, the captains of Calshot and Hurst Castles and the owners themselves. It is clear from the Exbury Estate Book, that local landowner Mitford would ignore the Admiralty:

There was a boat wrecked which the mayor of Southampton claimed as Admiral of the Sea from Hurst to Southsea castle but I carried it off & used it. Mitford, 1750.

Reference:

Admiralty Court Book of Southampton 1566 - 1585, Welch, Edwin, 1968

Victoria County History, P519.

Exbury Estate Book, Page, Emma, 2018, P59

1600s LEPE HARBOUR

Summary information from local history groups can be found relating to Lepe Harbour however the exact location of the harbour is unknown, as it is not detailed on any maps that have been found to date.

What we do know is that the course of the River Dark Water originally flowed to the east of where it does currently, the river flowing out into the Solent from the end of the eastern end of the beach carpark. The parish boundaries between Fawley and Exbury follow the line of the old course of the

river and consequently the land was and still is owned by different landowners.

If there was a port at the River Dark Water, it had gone long before 1640 as a Stone Manor Estate map from Cadland shows a large sand bar already in place leaving a narrow channel at its entrance.

The 1791 Milne map shows a 'Leap Wharf' on the coast.



Reference to Lepe hard by Mitford c 1719-1750s in the Exbury Estate Book, p 59.

It is also thought that the other harbour, nearby at Stone was destroyed in the Great Storm of 1703 when the shingle moved, blocking up the harbour mouth. Daniel Defoe's book *The Storm* does not detail any information on Lepe, further research is needed to look for information of the whereabouts of the harbour. By 1825 maps of the area show the new altered course of the River Dark Water.

Throughout the 19th century, advertising for buildings for sale or let near Lepe boast of 'a particular advantage is moreover to be found in the Harbour at Lepe, in which a vessel of any size may be moored in-shore belonging to Exbury Estate with a ferry service from Lepe to the Isle of Wight.'

The probable harbour this refers to is the quay, previously built for the export of bricks near Inchmery, at the Exbury brick kiln site.

Ref: A guide to the industrial archaeology of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight by Pamela Moore. P90

River Dark Water

So called because of the dark peaty soil. Its source is from Beaulieu Heath and it empties into the Solent at Lepe. The Parish boundaries between Exbury and Fawley follow the old path of the River Dark Water with its old river mouth exit towards the eastern end of what is now the beach car park. The land on each side of the old river path is owned by different Estates.

Following the Dark Water course through Langley where there used to be a water mill (Iron mill on Taylors map of 1759). Just further south it is still possible to cross the river using steppingstones (weather conditions dependent, you may sometimes get wet feet).

On maps made around 1800's the lower end of the Dark Water, near Lepe was sometimes referred to as 'The Brooks'. In 1825 the old river mouth silted up and the course of the river was changed to how you find it today. This is generally thought to be due to the long shore drift which moves the sediment and gravel towards the east, and which has dammed up other nearby river mouths in times of great storms, along this stretch of coast. All these river mouths are now connected to the sea by tidal sluices.

The bridge over the Dark Water has been widened twice, once during the war to improve access for tanks, and again post war. The Sluice has also changed from a barrier gate to a tidal sluice allowing the sea water to flow in and out.

In the Exbury Estate Book, 1725, Mitford writes 'In a great storm in October 1725 once acre of ground was washed away from Reads farm next to the cliff.' Reads was a tenant on Stone Manor estate.

The following is a list of the post medieval records in the Historic Environment Record (HER's) database from Inchmery to Stanswood Bay:

Ref: 55276

Grid Ref:

Date found: 1980-1995

Description. Site of a Tide Mill found on an estate map of 1640 situated at the mouth of the Dark Water.

The Mitford Exbury Estate Book, p 21:

Vancouver's survey of Hampshire in 1810 referred to the 'great success' of Elkington's drainage techniques at the Drummonds' 'much improved' Cadland estate next door. In contrast, Vancouver described the remains of a tidal pond for Stone Mill near Lepe as that 'highly improvable morass' which had 'lain so long in its present condition'.

The tidal pond referred to above is Leap Pond (Vancouver, Agriculture in Hampshire, p 26).

Charles I

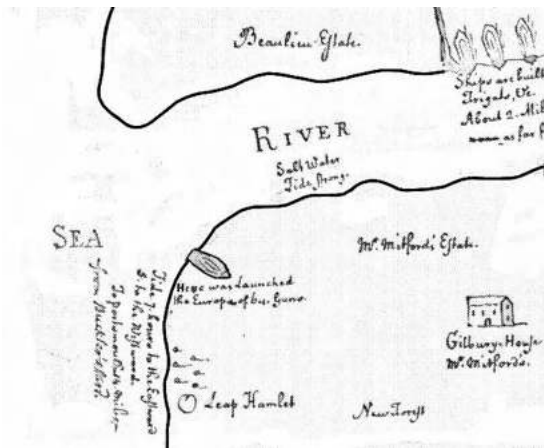
Reported in several places but somewhat doubtful that Lepe was the departing point for an unhappy Charles I., on the 13th of November 1647, outwitted by his enemies and deceived by his friends, entrusted himself, after his flight from Hampton Court, to Colonel Hammond, and, embarking here, returned by Hurst to atone for the past by his life.

Ref: New Forest and its scenery, Wise J.R, 1971. P49-59

1700s – BOAT BUILDING

During the 1700s with the expansion of overseas trading meant a greater naval presence was needed. The demand for ships was great and there was a lack of ship building locations. In 1744 Lepe was surveyed by the Naval board and was found to be 'very commodious for building Ships of war at any rates (size)'. The exact location of the shipbuilding enterprise is unknown but thought to be somewhere between Gypsy Lane (west of Lepe House) and the Watch House. Two ships were built by Moody Janverin, a ship builder from Hamble, who set about building a shipyard with stores blacksmiths and a sawpit. The first ship, the Greenwich a 50-gun ship, was launched in March 1748. The second, the 'Fowley', a much smaller 24-gun ship. After this Moody appears to have moved to Hamble and the area lay dormant until 1763.

In 1763, nearby Bucklers Hard resident and ship builder Henry Adams took over the site to build the largest of the 3 ships built at Lepe, the 64-gun ship Europa.



A hand drawn map of the time by Simon Lutrell exists which shows the Europa being built at the mouth of the Beaulieu River at Exbury Point however Lutrell was not known for his cartography skills and this could be incorrect.

This ship was the last man-of-war to be launched in Hampshire during the Seven Years War. The Europa (later renamed Europe) had difficulties in launching from the shore at Lepe and this is possibly the reason that this was the last ship to be built here. Originally

to be launched in the October of 1764, she stopped on her launch, breaking one of her tackles and started to sink. Europa did not actually leave Lepe until the April of the following year 1765 when there was sufficiently high enough tide and lots of help on hand to get her off the shore. After leaving Lepe she went to Portsmouth for fitting.

Building the hulls of these ships took a huge amount of timber, approximately 2000 trees would have gone into a 64-gun ship like Europa.

The ships built at Lepe would have been empty hulls, launched from the beach and towed to the Royal Dockyard at Portsmouth for *fitting out* with masts, sails and guns.

References include:

Bucklers Hard Ship Building by AJ Holland, TNA online (written up and exported here)
<https://nfknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TNA-shipbuilding4.pdf>

Waterside Newsletter 39 2008.

1700s MITFORDS EXBURY ESTATE

William Mitford moved to the area circa 1718 and gradually purchased pockets of the land to create the Exbury Estate. In the 1700s timber was very valuable, used in new buildings and an expanding ship building industry. Wood in the New Forest was property of the crown, but Mitford went to great lengths to research the manor's claims to forest rights and concluded that the manors of Exbury and Lepe were 'within the New Forest but not of the New Forest'. Mitford was very entrepreneurial, he purchased many coppices and left them to 'grow to wood' which would bring in larger returns, he also took into account that 'timber land' paid no 'land tax, church or poor, nor tithe' therefore increasing his return on revenue.

Exbury and Lepe were one of the few places in south-west Hampshire where strip-farming survived into the eighteenth century. Strip-farming was where a field was split into strips, each strip owned or leased by different people. Strips were exchanged regularly, and it was hard to keep track of the ownership of the strips, especially when multiple strips were owned across many different fields. 'Haxland Strips' is mentioned on many early maps of the area.

Many of the 'pits' in the area are the result of marling, the extraction of a mixture of clay and chalk which was then spread onto the fields. It was a farming technique that was widely used and believed to reduce acidity and improve the soil structure of heathy, sandy, acidic soils. Mitfords tenants in the

1700s were frequently given monetary allowances to 'improve' the soil by this technique. The other unsavoury technique used was the importation of Portsmouth dung, transported by boat. William Mitford noted 'two loads of Portsmouth dung is as good and rich as three loads of our best dung', perhaps reflecting the belief that human waste was 'richer' than animal dung.

Two other industries that Mitford dabbled in were salt making and brick making:

Salt

Mitford created salt houses at Lower Exbury and he also briefly purchased some at Stone in the late 18th century. The following is an extract from The Exbury Estate Book, by Emma Page (P25):

The other local industry was salt-boiling and there had been salterns near Lymington since 1147. At the turn of the 18th century, Celia Fiennes described how, for four or five months a year, salt water was drawn at high tide 'into trenches and so into several ponds', from which it was piped to a salt house 'full of large square iron and copper pans', under which a coal fired furnace kept the brine boiling. When the salt crystallised round the edges of the pans, it was shovelled into baskets and this process continued throughout the summer from Monday morning until Saturday evening, when the fire was extinguished for a day.

This was a better choice for Mitford; it used freehold land on the coast which had proved unsuitable for sheep grazing and he had his own timber for construction. In September 1722, he built salt works with four pans covering over 11 acres along the Beaulieu River at Exbury. He used his own oak timber for this but had to buy fir timber and other materials,

Mitford spent £250 building houses so that he could have two salt officers on site rather than waiting for them travelling from Southampton. He extended the salt works to a fifth iron pan in 1730, bringing his total investment by 1733 up to £625.

In this area the evaporation of sea water was made from drawing the sea through the construction of walls to ponds lined with clay & gravel. Windpumps were then used to draw the water to the boiling houses.

Salt making was extremely profitable industry until salt was found in the ground of the Cheshire countryside. The sea salt industry along the south coast went into steep decline, due to vast quantities of rock salt being mined in the Cheshire quarries, circa 1865.

Brick Making

Lepe Road was originally called Brick Lane on OS maps until the 1970s, probably due to the Whitefield brick kiln further up the road towards Langley. The first brick kilns in the area (on the 1791 Milne map) were situated on the bank of the Beaulieu river with a quay built especially for loading and transporting bricks. The bricks made here were made from local clay from the Headon Hill formation and were green in colour. Once fired it turned a lovely pale yellow, the bricks can be found used in buildings around Exbury area. Maps from the 1860s show a second kiln called Solent Brick works built on the opposite side of the road but by 1897, it is shown as disused. By 1908, both Exbury and Solent Brick kilns are shown as disused. The Whitefield brick kiln in Langley first appears on census data in 1841 and shows as unused from 1940s.

Historical Environment Record:
Ref: 55269
Grid Ref: SU 44767 00396
Date found: 1868 maps
Description. Whitefield Brick Kiln

Manors of Exbury and Lepe

Today there are relatively few houses in Exbury and Lepe, compared to this time nearly two centuries ago, no doubt in part due to the entrepreneurial efforts of the Mitford's, alongside traditional farming methods and the building of the coastguard cottages. The population increased to 406 in its heyday in 1841. However, the fortunes of the area seem to rise and fall, in the late 18th century Gilpin described Lepe as a 'port town' but by 1866, the author John R. Wise described Lepe as a 'fishing village', 'with a scattered agricultural population; some few, however, maintaining themselves by fishing in the summer'. The Victoria County History comments on the remarks of Wise as 'possibly he was referring to the oyster trade, large heaps of oysters being formerly stacked here to purify'.

No written accounts of the fishing/oyster trade or references to the port at Lepe have been found to date.

Population counts from Victoria County History:

1801 – 286; 1811 – 265; 1821 - 311; 1831 – 325; 1841 – 406; 1851 – 384; 1861 – 373; 1871 – 360;
1881 – 344; 1891 – 329; 1901 - 293

The following is from the Victoria County History of Hampshire:

No record of land MANORS in EXBURY previous to the thirteenth century, when there are various traces of the family of Foliot (Faflet, Fallet, or Follet). In 1244, a minor, was holding land in Exbury in chief of the crown, and at the end of the century Walter Foliot held two carucates there by knights service. On the death of Robert Foliot his lands were divided between his two daughters and co-heirs: Maud, who was possessed of one messuage and one curacate in Exbury and Lepe, which she conveyed in 1304 to Andrew de Grymstead; and Mabel, who apparently married Robert le Gras. Andrew de Grymstead died in 1324, his son John settled it on his wife Eleanor. When she died in 1363 a dispute arose. With no heirs she bequeathed to a minor, but the king and the crown took custody of the lands and committed it to Robert de Beverley. John de Besttesthorne, however, claimed that the reversion of this moiety of the manor had been sold to him before the death of John de Grymstead and he made good his claim.

Mabel's moiety was eventually purchased by John de Bettesthorne in 1381, reuniting the two holdings.

On the death of John de Bettesthorne in 1399 his inheritance passed to his daughter Elizabeth and her husband Sir John de Berkeley. The estate stayed with the Berkeley family for most of the 15th century but when Sir William Berkeley died in 1484 the entire estate was handed over by the crown to John Hoton 'for his good service against the rebels'. The manor was later recovered by Sir Williams sister Katherine and husband John Brewerton, and thence descended to the Comptons of Compton Wynyates, Warwickshire who held it for the next two hundred years. In 1718 Henry Compton and his wife Eleanor conveyed the manor

to William Mitford, whence it descended to his grandson William Mitford. On his death in 1827, his grandson Henry Revely Mitford succeeded to the property. He sold it, in the early 1880's to Major Forster. Ref: VCH, P290.

Advert for the sale of Exbury Estate in 1855:

The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, Thursday August 9, 1855. Vol XL No. 2064

The Exbury Estate,

Hampshire, on the borders of the New Forest.

An exceedingly valuable and important Freehold property (land-tax redeemed) comprising the entire parish, with capital.

Mansion House, Requisite offices, kitchen and pleasure gardens, park & grounds, marine residence called Inchmery, brick and pottery grounds, quays, manor, woods, several good farms, agricultural buildings, two inns, and cottages, the whole comprising above 2430 acres, producing nearly £2500 per annum. The Estate affords every facility for yachting, and sporting of every variety. There is excellent harbourage at Sepe (Lepe).

Messrs. Driver have been favoured with instructions from the proprietor to offer to public sale, at the mart, on Tuesday September 11, in one lot, unless an acceptable offer be previously made by private contract (Messrs. Driver having special and full instructions to treat by private sale), that highly valuable important and exceedingly valuable Freehold domain (land-tax redeemed) known as the Exbury Estate (entire parish), most delightfully situate in a beautiful part of the county of Hants, bounded by the Beaulieu River, Southampton Water, the Solent, the Cadlands Estate, the Beaulieu Estate, and the New Forest – thus rendering its situation one of the grate and undeniable envy. Exbury is only 7 to 10 miles from Totton, Redbridge, and Beaulieu Road Stations on the Southampton and Dorchester Railway, also 9 to 12 miles from Southampton and Lymington.

The Mansion is a capital and substantial residence, well placed in its own park and grounds, the full description of which and Inchmery Villa residence has appeared in former advertisements.

The Estate is divided into compact desirable occupations, with farmhouses, agricultural buildings, in the occupations of responsible tenantry, at moderate rents; 2 good inns, and cottages.

The whole containing an area of above 2430 acres (within a ring fence), of productive arable, meadow, pasture, and wood land, producing nearly £2500 per annum.

A considerable portion of the purchase-money may remain on mortgage.

Exbury mansion and Inchmery villa to be viewed by cards only. The estate to be viewed on application to C. Shell, bailiff, residing in the village.

Printed particulars and plans may be had on application to Messrs Moberley & Goatee, solicitors, Southampton; of W Ross esq, land agent, the Grange, Alresford, Hants, of Messrs Bircham, Daletemple & Drake, solicitors 46 parliament street, Westminster; and of messrs, Driver surveyors, land agents and auctioneers 5, whitehall.

Inchmery House

Hand drawn maps of the Exbury Estate by Mitford in the mid-18th century show fields to the north of the road named Inchmery and Inchmery Copse. A building first named on the 1810 old series OS map as Inchmery Cottage, in the 19th century and was owned by the Mitford family. The house and estate were later acquired by Lord Foster (1879) sold the property to Lionel de Rothschild (1882-1942) in 1912. In May 1943 Inchmery was the base for the Bardsea operations. 20 acres of pasture were used to train 120 Polish paratroopers for D-Day. They were trained to drop behind enemy lines in 3-man teams to supervise local resistance and liaise with government and invasion forces. After the war, the house was returned to Lionel's son, Edmund de Rothschild, where he lived with his wife and family whilst Exbury House was renovated. The Rothschilds sold Inchmery House in 1997.

Lepe House

Lepe Estate has been in the ownership of the same family since it was acquired, together with Exbury Estate, from the Mitford family in 1879. Inchmery House was sold to Lionel de Rothschild in 1916. He bought the remainder of Exbury Estate, including Exbury House, in 1919. The Ship Inn, an ale-house in the mid 18th century, forms the basis of the current Lepe House and the house has been substantially added to over the years, particularly between 1895 and 1925.

Nearby Gardener's Cottage (Grade II listed) probably existed at that time as well.

The House was requisitioned by the Navy in 1943 and became the Headquarters of the J-Force Assault Group for the West Solent embarkations before the D-Day Normandy landings. The concrete hard and access ramps, which enabled tanks to be loaded onto landing craft, remain in evidence on the foreshore.

References:

The Exbury Estate Book, transcribed by Emma Page available at the

<https://www.newforestheritage.org.uk/>

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol3/pp290-291>

New Forest and its Scenery, Wise. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/54144/54144-h/54144-h.htm>

1700s DRUMMONDS CADLAND ESTATE

Robert Drummond (d1804) senior partner of Drummonds Bank acquired the manor of Cadland in 1772. In the 1770's Drummond asked Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and his son-in-law, Henry Holland to design a new house and park. The commission included Cadland House which overlooked the Solent towards Netley and the building known as 'The Sea Cottage' or Bourn Hill Cottage, a fishing lodge set 5km south with views overlooking the Solent and Isle of Wight. In the 1800's Eaglehurst estate was acquired. Cadland House was requisitioned by the army during the Second World War then acquired under the Defence of the Realm Act for an oil refinery and demolished in 1953. From 1953, the Cadland House name was transferred to Bourn Hill Cottage. The original garden design for

Bourn Hill Cottage was also created by Capability Brown, the plans were rediscovered in the late 20th century and the gardens have been restored to align with the original Capability Brown designs.

The Domesday book mentions Stone in Fawley among the lands of the king's thegns although it is not described as a manor until the 16th century. In the 17th century Stone was in the hands of Thomas Fashion, then passed to Samuel Mason and sometime between 1704 and 1740 it was purchased by William Mitford of Exbury. During the 1800's it was purchased by the Drummonds of Cadland.

1790s REVEREND WILLIAM GILPIN (1724-1804)

Reverend William Gilpin was an artist, a headmaster and an author. He developed and wrote about his ideas on the 'picturesque' in relation to landscapes in a popular *1768 Essay on Prints* as "that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture". He travelled extensively drawing and creating watercolours and writing notes about the landscapes he visited which were subsequently made into etchings by his nephew and which were printed alongside his written observations.

He moved to the New Forest and became the vicar of Boldre c.1777. In 1791 the following book was published, there are several copies at the Christopher Tower reference library in the New Forest Heritage Centre, Lyndhurst.

Remarks On Forest Scenery, And Other Woodland Views : (Relative Chiefly To Picturesque Beauty) Illustrated By The Scenes Of New-Forest In Hampshire; In Three Books. Vol. 2

The following is an extract on his observations of Lepe and nearby area from the book:

At Leap we met the sea, where the coast of the isle of Wight, as far as to Spithead on the left, makes nearly the same unpicturesque appearance, which it does from the other shores of the forest. It extends into length, and exhibits neither grandeur, nor variety. When it is seen, as we saw it from Mr. Mitford's, broken into parts, as it should [Page 190](#) always be, when seen to picturesque advantage*, it afforded several beautiful distances. But here, when the whole coast was displayed at once, it lost it's picturesque form.— Near Leap however we had one very beautiful coast-view. A rising copse on the left, adorned with a road winding through it, makes a good fore-ground. From thence a promontory, in the second distance, with an easy, sweeping shore, shoots into the sea; and is opposed, on the opposite side, by a point of the island, leaving a proper proportion of water to occupy the middle space.

Leap is one of the port-towns of the forest: and as it lies opposite to Cowes, it is the common place of embarkation, in these parts, to the island. It consists of about half a dozen houses: and shelters perhaps as many fishing-boats. All the coast indeed from St. Helen's to the Needles, and around the island is in peaceable times, a scene of fishing. In the whiting-season especially, fleets of twenty or thirty boats are often seen lying at anchor on the banks; or a little out at sea.



For more information on this section which includes Lepe:

<https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/reverend-william-gilpin-describing-leap-in-1790s/#map=10/-1.37/50.79/0/24:0:0.6|39:1:1|40:1:1>

1800S – SMUGGLER’S RUN

The Isle of Wight and the south coast were easy destinations to import goods by smuggling, Isle of Wight’s coast was only lightly guarded and the distance from IoW to Lepe is only 2 miles and could be easily navigated by lantern and short row across the Solent.

There is a possible reference to a customs officer in the Mitford Estate book, circa 1725, a house and garden ‘long since let to the customhouse officer’ however it could be that this arrangement wasn’t very effective at combatting smuggling as there are no recorded incidents of smuggling operations found at Lepe before the 1820’s.

The Preventative Water Guard was established in England in the early 1800’s with the primary objective to prevent smuggling, but also to assist with shipwrecks. By 1822 this is replaced by ‘HM Coastguard’.

Before 1825, there was no accommodation available for the many Coast Guards and their families and they either had to find lodging with local families or live-in tents. In many places, locals were reluctant to take in Coast Guards, who were generally disliked by a populace largely committed to smuggling, and it may well be that only tents were available at Lepe, thus giving rise to the need for the cottages to be built. *

In July 1825 a notice went in Hampshire Telegraph newspaper:

Any Persons willing to contract for the Erection of Buildings at Lepe, intended for the Service of the Coastguards within the limits of the Port of Southampton. By Order of the Hon. The Commissioners of His Majesty’s Customs. S Lefevre, Collector.

The building of 5 cottages began in late 1825, by December 1825, they were roofed, and the builder requested payment of half the cost of construction i.e. £843 15s 10d. At that point, the landowner complained that more than half an acre had been taken, so 5 privies had to be removed to reduce the size of the plot. *

There were issues with the standard of the buildings which had to be repointed and dried out, they were finally signed off as completed on 15 April 1826. *

By 1828, Lepe had its own Preventive coastguard station comprising of 5 terraced cottages for the boatmen, one larger attached cottage for the officer in charge and Watch house on the beach under the cliff, all of which still exist relatively unchanged today.

The Lepe Watch House famous for its photographic opportunities in all weather conditions was built primarily as a look out. It had excellent views of the entrance to Southampton Water, the Solent across to Portsmouth, Beaulieu River, along the coast to the west, Hurst, Lymington and Yarmouth. Down below a boat was stored along with arms, ammunition, observation, and rescue equipment. There was a flagpole just above the Watch House on the cliff. This was used to signal to boats on the Solent or to the Coastguard cottages situated on the opposite side of Beaulieu River at Needs Ore.

Once a day a *Coastguardsperson* would walk towards Calshot and make a report to their opposite number. The job descriptions varied from Chief Officer, Chief Boatman, Coastguards man, Boatman and Mounted Guard.

The earliest newspaper reports of smuggling start in 1821 however Lepe Preventative Station was created in 1819 with the first two boatmen, transferred from Hurst Castle on 22nd July 1819. The first officer-in-Chief was David Henry Watson who arrived on 26th October 1819. Watson is followed by Lieutenant Hodge who is known as the first Chief Officer employed by HM Coastguard at Lepe in April 1825. From 1821 to 1869 reports of smuggling activities captured by the Preventative Coastguard at Lepe and Stanswood are found in regular intervals in the Hampshire Chronicle, Hampshire Advertiser and Hampshire Times newspapers.

Link to transcribed newspaper articles:

<https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/transcribed-newspaper-reports-of-smuggling-at-lepe-and-stanswood/#map=10/-1.58/50.82/0/24:0:0.6|39:1:1|40:1:1>

This sea chart by Sherringham 1851 - <https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/photograph-of-part-of-sherringham-sea-chart-of-1851-lazy-town/#map=10/-1.37/50.79/0/24:0:0.6|39:1:1|40:1:1> , just a few miles away to the east of Lepe shows the hamlet of Nelson's Place renamed as 'Lazy Town' a name that it gained from its smuggling activities of running goods all night and sleeping all day!

The following newspaper article from 1888 describes a smuggling story of a large-scale standoff in 1784 at Christchurch harbour:

Transcribe from 1888 22 Dec Hampshire Advertiser:

LARGE SMUGGLING CUTTER – The port of Cowes was conspicuous for building large cutters in the last century. I have heard both my father and grandfather speak of a Mr. Jelly building cutters side by side here, in the latter part of the last century, both for the Excise and the smugglers, the smuggling business being most extensively carried on at this port. The largest cutter was 400 tons. Built for the Excise. This vessel made but one trip to sea as a cutter. Having fallen in with a French brig (privateer), she beat her off, but was unable to give chase, as she was disabled by the loss of main gaff. The brig having made off, the cutter returned to Cowes. She was afterwards ship-rigged, and fitted out as a 'letter of marque'. A celebrated smuggler was named John Susannah, with fourteen guns, well known to my father as being a very smart and efficient cutter, and well manned in every respect. This vessel, having committed some depredation, was reported by the Government to be "outlawed". The end of

it was, H.M.S. gun brig Osprey (Capt Allen), was despatched with the object of capturing her. The two vessels met off Christchurch Head, and the crew of the smuggler, knowing what it meant, immediately cleared for action. The first broadside, Capt. Allen was killed, and. After a most desperate struggle, the smuggler was taken and brought to Cowes. There was one man hung, named Coombs, belonging to Hamble; he was hung upon a gibbet at Stony Point, near Lepe, the body hanging for many months. Coombs was picked out for having fired after the colours were struck. Capt. Allen was buried in Cowes churchyard, the tombstone recording the circumstances of his death.

This story was quite possibly used and adapted by the popular boys' short stories writer W.H.G Kingston (1814-80) and called **Billy Coombs Last Fight** [1870s]. It became the stuff of local smuggling legend via adaptations as a local pageant play.

Select the link below for more information Billy Coombs story:

<http://www.south-coast-central.co.uk/nq2/1784/1784.htm>.

No evidence has been found that Billy Coombs existed, but it is not entirely out of the bounds of possibility that a smuggler could have hanged on the shore at Lepe, as Lepe did have an Admiralty Court from 1550s until the late 1700's. The Admiralty Court in Southampton held its court on the foreshore with its gallows nearby.

After the Coastguard Cottages came to the end of their occupational life (circa 1922), the properties reverted to Lepe Estate. In the mid 20th century, the Officers house was home to Mrs Pitt-Rivers, daughter of Lord Forster. She was a renowned actress and went under the name of Mary Hinton, there is a plaque to her in Exbury Church. These iconic cottages and the Watch house are almost two centuries old, they have seen many occupants over time and have weathered many storms such as the 2014 Valentine's storm when the waves ripped open the Watch House and dragged everything out to sea. This also happened during Mrs Rachel Pitt-Rivers occupation in the mid 1950's when she lost boats and equipment from the lower floor of the Watch House during a severe storm.

Link to transcribed census information for coastguard cottages:

<https://nfknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Census-information-for-Lepe-Coast-Guard-Cottages.pdf>

References:

Smuggling Days, Chacksfield K Merle, Christchurch Times, 1996

Smuggling in Hampshire and Dorset 1700-1850, Morley, Geoffrey, Newbury Countryside, 1983.

History of Ashlett Creek, unknown?

Hampshire Machine Breakers, Chambers, Jill, J Chambers 1996

Admiralty Court Book of Southampton 1566 - 1585, Welch, Edwin, 1968

Sherringham Sea Chart, 1851, Southampton City Library, Local studies area

*Letter from J Wrake to Mr Bacon of Lepe Estate, 1997 using research from Letter Books from Southampton to the Board of Customs at the PRO Ref CUST 62// & 6.

Mitford Estate Book, Emma Page, P151.

National Archives, ADM 175/1

Fawley and the Southern Waterside, Murley Clare & Parkes, Graham, 2010

Waterside, A Pictorial Past, Murley, Fred & Clare, 1991

British Newspaper Archive, numerous transcribed newspaper reports.

Echo Letter-Box, 22/6/1974 Letter from Mrs A S Corke

Echo article 'Gales torment Lepe' by JLP 7/03/1961

1870S – LEPE TO THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Stone Point (now referred to as Stansore Point) is the closest land point to the IoW.

In the late 19th century there were plans for a trainline to terminate at new pier located at Stone Point with a new ferry crossing to the IoW. As early as 1930s there were proposals to build a Solent tunnel from Lepe to the IoW. An article written in the Hampshire Telegraph and Post, 7th Aug, 1931 said 'its completion would accelerate the journey between London and Ventnor, and obviate to a great extent the collisions of vessels in the Solent which so often occur. Some of the large and influential shareholders of the Didcot and South-Western Companies are said to be strongly in favour of the undertaking.'

[Link to the proposed trainline here>>](#)

1890S - SOLENT COTTAGE

Where our Classroom building now stands, was once an elegant cottage with a dozen or more bedrooms and a large attractive garden with approximately 40 acres of land.

In 1887 Hannah (nee Wheeler) and her husband David Newman had the house built for £1200 on a 99 year lease from the Drummonds of Cadland. The house was built as a hotel with the proposed railway to Lepe in mind as a hostelry for holidaying wealthy visitors. The Newmans had a very difficult time trying to obtain a drinks licence, every application was turned down by local magistrates as nearby pubs, and local landowners opposed it, particularly Lord Forster of Lepe who didn't want local working-class people drinking alcohol and getting drunk. By the time a licence was obtained David Newman 1840 - 1890 had died. The Dowager Countess of Scarborough, daughter of Andrew Robert Drummond of Cadland Estate was a regular visitor and formed the idea that she could make the house a holiday residence for herself.

The picture shows the original house on before it was extended around 1907.



The Dowager Countess of Scarborough had the cottage altered to add more bedrooms and below stairs, a new kitchen, butlers' room, servant's hall, scullery, everything necessary for entertaining her guests. The property also had a coach house, stables, gardener's cottage, and outhouses necessary for a house of considerable size that needed nine servants. The Dowager Countess died in 1907, her family appeared to carry on using the cottage as a summer holiday home with more plans submitted to extend the house adding the smoking room to the left side of the house with a bedroom above. They also modernised the plumbing, adding internal toilets and improved the drains. In 1916 her son Brigadier- General the Hon. Osbert Victor Lumley put the house up for auction describing it as a modern residence with 15 bedrooms, 4 reception rooms in 40 acres of land.



The next occupant of Solent Cottage was Colonel Fenwick Bulmer de Sale La Terriere (1856 – 1925) or Comte de Sales de St Salvy but he never used his title. He had a distinguished career; in 1902 – 1906 he was Exon to His Majesty's Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard. His wife was Agneta Hambro daughter of the Danish Banker. La Terriere was a first-class rider in cross country and polo he was also an author of several books. He enjoyed several years at Solent Cottage but appeared to have trouble keeping staff as there were several advertisements requesting maids and man servants. He was a Magistrate on the Hythe bench until his death at the cottage in 1925.

Around 1926 the house once again changed hands and Sir Fisher Dilke (1877 – 1944) and his wife Ethel (nee Clifford) 1876 – 1959 moved in. Sir Fisher travelled all over the world as a merchant and an investor, but his greatest love was sailing and the Americas Cup, where he once was the

Observer on the Vanderbilt yacht the Ranger. Ethel was an author in her own right, she wrote beautiful poetry, you can still view online her poetry volumes today <https://allpoetry.com/Ethel-Clifford>. They had three sons, John Fisher, Michael Clifford and Christopher. The family spent many happy times at Solent Cottage, enjoying the sailing in the Solent and spending time in the gardens that even had a wind pump to pump water up from the well. Sadly, in March 1944 Sir Fisher passed away and two days later his son Michael died of TB. Lady Dilke lived on in the cottage until she died in 1959.

Ethel's poems from Songs of dreams 1903 & Love's journey 1908 were made into a miniature book along with others as a gift to Queen Mary from the nation, c.1923. A showcase for contemporary craft and design, it preserved for history the ideal home of the 1920's. The miniature book is approx. 4.1cm by 0.9cm depth wide 100 pages. The dolls' house library contains, alongside standard works such as four tiny Bibles, miniature atlases and a complete works of Shakespeare, over 200 diminutive editions of contemporary British literature. Princess Marie Louise personally wrote to the most famous writers of the time to ask for either an original composition or a suitable passage from work already published, transcribed by hand or submitted for professional copying.

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/1171330/poems-from-songs-of-dreams-1903-loves-journey-1908>



As early as 1959 plans were submitted to turn Solent Cottage into a hotel development, but it was refused. In 1969, outline planning permission was given to change of use from residential to hotel and in July of the following year Solent Cottage and 11 ¾ acres were sold by auction to Star Hotels.

In July 1971 a Southern Evening Echo article headlined the following

‘Hotel Plan – Hampshire County Council are to be asked to agree with South West Hampshire Divisional Planning Committee’s decision to grant permission for a new 49 bedroomed hotel at Lepe Point, Lepe, Fawley’.

Permissions to build the hotel was granted but for some reason the hotel was never built. Between the late 1970's and 1980's Solent Cottage stood empty and was repeatedly vandalised and some of it was set on fire. Several changes and amendments to the plans were made over the years. In 1988 planning permission to increase the number of bedrooms of the proposed development was

refused. It is thought that the remainder of Solent Cottage stood until 1990's when the last of it was demolished. In 1996 further changes to the planning were submitted for a replacement dwelling but they were refused. Later that year, planning was submitted for a public car park but refused.

References:

with help of Clifford Wheeler, Heather Lowe, Cadland Estate, Hampshire Records Office, The British Newspaper Archive.

1909 AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF LEPE

The known earliest known (ariel) photo of Lepe beach taken from a hot air balloon by CS Rolls (of Rolls Royce fame), August 1909 which is held by the <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouth-museum/>. The event is detailed in the following booklet: History of Beaulieu Airfield, by Robert Coles, Page 7. The following link is currently available for scanned image of the booklet:

<https://fonfasite.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/hist-of-beaulieu-aerodrome.pdf>

Beken (photographer) of Cowes also recorded the event from the water 'Balloon ascent by the Hon. Rolls from the Solent'.

1914-1918 WWI

Old newspaper articles and a New Forest Magazine article from 1916 which detail a much larger than expected WWI military camp at Stone Point Battery.

5th Apr 1919 Hampshire Advertiser:

"PROTECTING THE SOLENT. – There was a net across the Solent from Stone Point to Egypt Point during the war. Now it has gone. The net had a steel wire head and base, the latter being loaded with iron and moored to buoys, for which over 1,000 fathoms of chain and nearly 200 anchors weighing from one to two tons were used. In the centre of the booms was a gateway for the passage of ships, opened and closed by hydraulic winches controlled from two steamers moored on either side. The gateway was only opened by a signal for the passage of ships allowed to go westward. At night it was illuminated by searchlights from Egypt Point and Stone Point. It was protected by a battery of artillery."

There was at least 27 military buildings and men from the Royal Garrison Artillery (R.G.A), Royal Engineers (R.E.), and 3rd Hampshire Regiment were stationed at Stone Point. A property at nearby Stanswood was turned into a hospital by Miss Cox and her sister, Mrs Rudston Read.

Transcribe of the newspaper report. 24th Jan 1920 HA:

Ministry of Munitions by direction of the disposal board.

(Huts and Building Materials section). IMPORTANT SALE by Auction of 27 HUTS and BUILDINGS, At STONE POINT, FAWLEY (3 miles from Blackfield, 5 miles from Beaulieu, and 8 miles from Hythe), On FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6th, at 12.30 for 1 o'clock precisely. Including: -

7 SECTIONAL HUTS, in excellent condition, varying in size from 20ft. a 10ft. 9in, to 80ft. x 15ft. 9in., being of weatherboard construction, lined, boarded floor, roof covered felt.

11 USEFUL BUILDINGS, timber-built, non-sectional, ranging from 4ft. 6in. x 3ft to 20ft x 10ft. 9in.

6 CORRUGATED IRON HUTS, measuring from 10ft. 9in. to 28ft. x 21ft. 10in. and

THREE SMALL BRICK BUILDINGS. 2 Large Galvanised Iron Water Cylinders, 4 ditto Water Tanks, 2 10ft. Iron Girders, Force Pump and Piping, large quantity Barbed Wire and Iron Standards.

On view day prior.

Catalogue may be obtained from Auctioneer, Messrs.

Jackman and Masters, at their offices, 107, High-street, Lymington...

New Forest Magazine, July 1916, P11:

Exbury, Church of St Katharine. Parish Offices. Rector – Rev. G. H. Trepte. Churchwardens – H W Forster, Esq., M.P. and C.H. Master Esq.

A memorial service to Lord Kitchener was held in the parish church on June 13th at noon, when a full congregation was present, including men of the R.G.A, R.E., and 3rd Hants stationed at Stone Point.

1940s WWII AND PREPARATIONS FOR D-DAY AT LEPE

Lepe played three important roles in the D-Day landing:

- As a major departure point for troops, vehicles, and supplies
- As a construction site for part of the prefabricated floating Mulberry Harbour
- As the mainland base for the P.L.U.T.O fuel pipeline.

Troops and vehicles left from Lepe. Vehicles were loaded onto ships after being driven onto temporary wharves leading to pierheads. The four-legged metal structures, that you can see today, were code named 'Dolphin'. They were part of the pierheads and were used as mooring points for ships and landing craft. Tanks and other heavy vehicles were loaded directly from the beach after concrete beach hardening mats had been placed over the foreshore to stop them sinking into the shingle.

Troops and vehicles loaded onto Landing Craft for several days before and after D-Day. Vehicles and equipment of the Hampshire, Dorset, Devonshire, East Yorkshire and Green Howards Regiments, and tanks of the Nottinghamshire Yeomanry (Sherwood Foresters), the 4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards, and Hobart's Funnies of the 79th Armoured Division all embarked from Lepe.

Lepe was involved in the construction of parts of the floating Mulberry Harbours that were towed over to Normandy in June 1944. The beach here at Stanswood Bay was used in the manufacture of six type B2 Phoenix concrete caissons. These caissons were huge, concrete boxes 62m long by 13.41m wide and 10.67m high, each weighing up to 6,000 tons.

Pluto

As D-Day preparations began, Lord Mountbatten needed an alternative means of supplying the Allied forces of liberation with oil and petrol to fuel their advance across Europe. As early as 1942, the germ of an idea to supply fuel via a submarine cable under the Channel had been sown.

This top-secret operation was given the Disneyesque code name of PLUTO, Pipeline Under The Ocean. This risky invention involved a combined operation by British engineers, oil companies and the British Armed Forces to construct pipelines under the English Channel between England and France to support Operation Overlord. With two main routes from Dungeness to Boulogne (code named Dumbo) and from Sandown and Shanklin, IOW (code named Bambi) across to Cherbourg.

Large cotton reel like drums were made to accommodate the steel pipeline. Floating steel drums resembling a gigantic cotton reel were made and towed across the Channel while the pipe was uncoiled onto the seabed. The cone-ended drum was named HMS Conundrum.

A hopper barge laid a series of HAMEL pipes across the Solent from Lepe, to Thorness Bay, near Cowes on the north-west coast of the Isle of Wight. Not only did this provide valuable training and experience, but the pipeline thus created beneath the Solent, code-named SOLO, formed a crucial link in the network of pipes leading to the cross-Channel pumping stations constructed on the south-east of the Island.

Second World War Coastal Battery at Lepe

A large base manned with 102 soldiers existed at Lepe with three fixed searchlights (Fortress Projectors Mk. V), one Barr and Stroud Rangefinder No.12 anti-aircraft gun and three 6" B.L. Mk.VII anti-aircraft guns. Records also detail many barrage balloons (flying at approx. 2000 feet) over the land and shore.

For more information: [Stone Point Battery – New Forest Knowledge \(nfknowledge.org\)](https://nfknowledge.org/StonePointBattery)

The following information has been taken from [Stone Point Searchlight Site – New Forest Knowledge \(nfknowledge.org\)](https://nfknowledge.org/StonePointSearchlightSite), written by Richard Reeves:

WWII searchlights formed part of a system of aircraft detection linking locator devices, searchlights, and anti-aircraft (AA) guns. The locators sent electronic information to the lights and guns, which in turn tracked the target. Once a locator had "locked on" to an enemy aerial target, the concept was for both lights and guns to be trained on the target so it could be nearly simultaneously illuminated and then destroyed. For this system to work successfully it required a whole network of searchlights and AA batteries across the country.

For more reading on D-Day at Lepe and to view 3D models of embarkation hard, visit:

<https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/d-day-at-lepe-beach>

<https://maritimearchaeologytrust.org/projects-research/solent-70/>

<https://www.ddaylepe.org.uk/>

<https://skfb.ly/6KLZw> - 3d Model - Phoenix caisson Launches at Stone Point, Lepe.

<https://skfb.ly/6LVyR> - Photogrammetry - Phoenix caisson launch remains at Stone Point.

<https://skfb.ly/6N7AR> - Photogrammetry - Section of caisson launch slip at Stone Point

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6qb-mB6Fsw> Stephen Fisher, Equipping the armada.

[PLUTO - Pipeline Under the Ocean \(combinedops.com\)](https://www.combinedops.com/)

1962 COLD WAR

The Stone Point Royal Observer Corps (ROC) post at Lepe Country Park, installed in 1962, was one of the underground monitoring posts built as part of the UK Warning & Monitoring Organisation (UKWMO), which was set up in 1957.

Aims:

1. Warn the public of air attack
2. Provide confirmation of nuclear strike
3. Warn the public of the approach of radioactive fallout
4. Supply the authorities in the UK and neighbouring countries in NATO with details of nuclear bursts and fallout
5. Provide a post-attack meteorological service.

Altogether there were 1,563 similar monitoring posts around the country (later reduced to 870), including a non-standard one in a coal cellar in Windsor Castle!

Each post was responsible for sending information to one of twenty-five Group Controls, reporting in turn to five Sector Controls. Stone Point sent information to Winchester and was in the same cluster as Lyndhurst and Marchwood.

The posts were installed by contractors from well outside the area to preserve secrecy and would be manned in exercises and emergencies by 3 ROC volunteers from the local area.

The post (after refurbishment in 2015) replicates the equipment of 1968. There was no mains power or water supply to the post, there was an elsan toilet behind a separate door and a sump at the foot of the ladder where they would throw cold water over themselves to wash off radioactive particles before re-entering the post. The only source of power would come from a 12-volt battery giving a dim light.

A Royal Observer Corps observation hut existed at Stone Point from 1955, positioned near to where the current coastguard huts are situated today (SZ457985). The following has been transcribed from a letter sent from the regional ROC HQ to the main ROC HQ:

R.O.C. Post 3/G4 – Exbury

11th August, 1952.

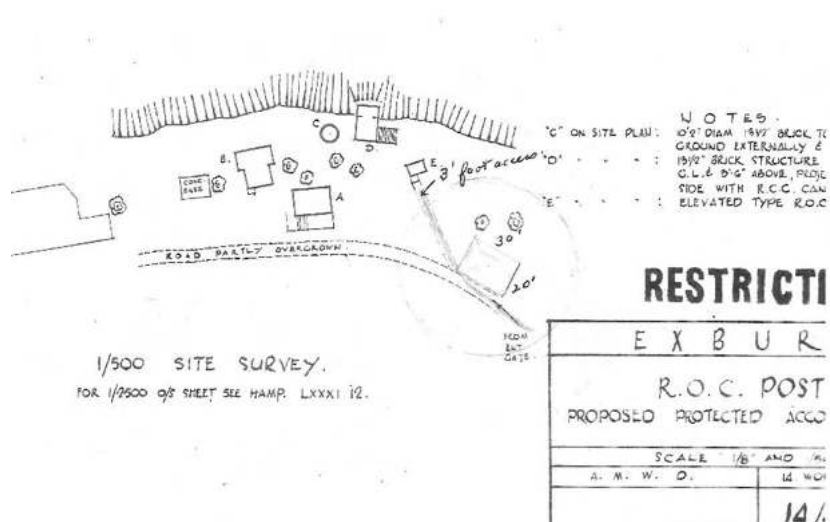
The Group Commandant states:

“Considerable time was spent in searching for a suitable new site for 3/G4 and the site at Stone Point is by far the most suitable. No other site would give adequate cover over the Solent and the Isle of Wight, which is at present completely dead ground below 800 to 1,000ft. During the last war low flying A/craft could only be sound plotted for some miles in this important area. A Post at Stone Point gives perfect views at water level over the Solent, the entrance to Southampton Water, Spithead and the North shore of the Isle of Wight from Cowes to the Needles Cliffs.

The site is in an abandoned and derelict gun site occupied by the Army during the last war and which was armed with Coastal defence type guns, plus some A.A. armament. We have been reliably informed that the site is to be de-requisitioned, but if re-occupied by Army units, it is felt that our Post could operate without mutual inconvenience.”

In November 1960, the Department for Air Ministry Directorate of Works enquired about constructing ‘a shelter in connection with the measurement of “radio-active fallout”’, to ‘be used for giving the public warning of harmful radio-activity in time of emergency’.

This plan from the early 1960’s shows a small section of the cliff top area of the park showing the WWII buildings still in place at Lepe some years after the end of the war:



In September 1961 work began to install the monitoring post and it became operational in the summer of 1962. The above ground post was removed in 1965 along with the redundant WWII army buildings and gun emplacements.

The operational call sign for the monitoring post changed many times over the years, with different ROC restructures. Originally Exbury 3/G4, it changed to Stone Point 14/S3 in 1962. In 1967 it changed to 14/76 Post and in 1968 it changed to 14/66 but later that year it changed again to 14/46, which it used until it closed.

In 1981, with the current lease expiring it was suggested that the post was moved as the area surrounding it was now part of Lepe Country Park run by Hampshire County Council (HCC), but it stayed put. In the early 1980's HCC leased the cliff top car park area and built a car park behind the monitoring post which was then fenced off.

In September 1992, the post was officially made redundant with the general stand down of the ROC. Consideration was given to demolishing the post but thankfully it is still here today. The monitoring post stayed locked (except with occasional visits to check conditions from the ROC) with original documentation, reports and posters from the mid 80's adorning the walls until it was restored in 2015 with the help of Royal Observer Corps museum, Cadland Estate and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Stone Point monitoring post was restored to its original 1960s condition as this was when members of the ROC were first stationed there to monitor the effects of a nuclear blast should Britain come under attack. Alongside the restoration, volunteers have worked hard to research and uncover the hidden secrets of the ROC and the work they did in Hampshire.

A new interactive periscope has been put in place so that visitors to the park can view the post, situated underground in the top car park. The inverted periscope allows the visitor to navigate the room below their feet, as well as select captions and images to find out about ROC equipment and routines. Visitors can access the periscope daily and it has become part of Lepe's school offer to help educate students on this local and national history of defence.

References:

The Royal Observer Corps Underground Monitoring Posts, 2011. Mark Dalton

Forewarned is Forearmed, A History of the Royal Observer Corps, 1948. TE Winslow

Cadland Estate documents.

Hampshire Archives, Post Diaries

1965 DESIGNATED COUNTRY PARK

The Parish boundaries between Exbury and Fawley follow the path of the River Dark Water with its old river mouth exit towards the eastern end of what is now the beach car park. The land on each side of the river owned by different Estates. The current beach car park area was first opened to the public (pre- WWI), as well as a campsite and car parking on the Western side, the field nearest the

Coastguard Cottages. However public access to much of the beach along this part of the coast was troublesome. The Cadland Estate owned the beach from the end of the beach car park to Calshot and in the early 20th century, wanted it to remain private. In 1931 Fawley parish council organised a march across the Drummond foreshore, and a costly court case ensued with found in favour of Cyril Drummond.

From as early as 1948, there has been a restaurant at Lepe Country Park on Exbury Estate land, utilising an old Nissen hut with serving hatches cut into the sides!

Later, with guidance from the Countryside Act of 1968 and the 1969 report on North West Solent Shore Estates, the New Forest District Council with Hampshire County Council put in plans to create a public space. In June 1969 Lepe Country Park was formed, amalgamating the previously separate operations run by the different estates. The remainder of the WWII army buildings on the cliff top and beach area were removed and public access from the Cadland Estate was granted to a section of beach from the east of the car park towards the D-Day remains.

C.1970s, a new restaurant, office and public convenience opened, managed by NFDC.



An advert for Lepe Country Park in a Fawley Parish leaflet during the 1980's.

Looking back at Lepe's restaurants over the years:

The Sea Shanty c.1948 – c.1968 Ran by Phyllis Somes on and off over many years until the plot was bought by the council and plans submitted for the new building in 1966/7.



The Helmsman c.1969 - ? The new building was opened.

Lepe Bay Restaurant and Tearooms - ? until refurbished and renamed in 2010.





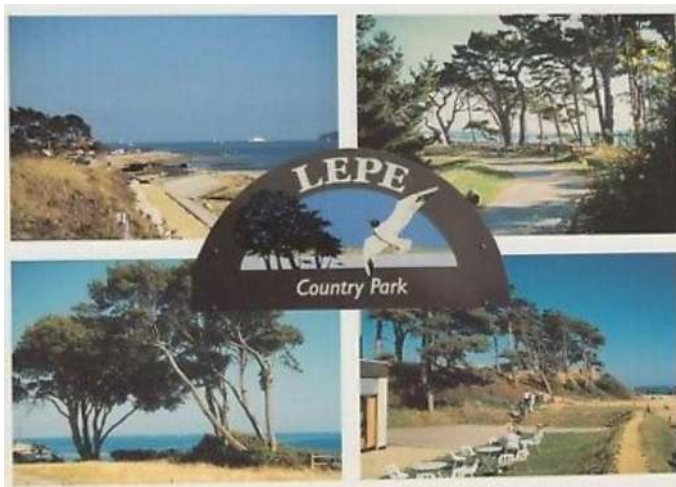
Lepe Beach Café and Shop - Newly refurbished it opened in late 2010 but was heavily damaged by the Valentine's Day storm in 2014. After this time plans were made for a new facility built on stilts.

The Lookout 2018 - Opened in 2018, The Lookout now.



And lastly, the Crow's Nest in what is now called our Western Car Park opened sometime during the 1950s until the 1960s, there are no known photographs of this building.

1980s LEPE COUNTRY PARK



During the 1980's the park saw some significant changes in ownership. Hampshire County Council bought the land which the Restaurant and toilet block stood on from the New Forest District Council in 1984 and they took over the running of the park. At the same time more land was leased from Cadland to enlarge the cliff top car park and public access to the meadows at the rear of the park.

1997 LEPE POINT CONSERVATION AREA

Towards the end of 1997 Hampshire County Council secured the land where Solent Cottage once stood from Star Hotels Ltd. The derelict remains had been for many years been destined to be replaced by a large 1970's concrete hotel but is now instead, a conservation area open to the public

with a temporary classroom, a sensory garden, a pond, a bird hide with views over the Dark Water River and an accessible boardwalk path.

This has been achieved by the Hampshire County Council with a lot of help from the Friends of Lepe voluntary group who have put in many hours of work and raised funds to help improve the area.

2000 BEAULIEU RIVER MILLENNIUM BEACON

The Beaulieu River Millennium Beacon, a 25ft land beacon and night light to guide boats safely into the Beaulieu River was opened 8th July 2000 by Mr Edward Fort OBE, Dame Mary Fagan, Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, and Lord Montagu.

2006 FRIENDS OF LEPE

The group began in 2006, a brainchild of the former Park Manager Alison Steele. The idea was so well supported that soon after, a formally constituted self-running organisation was in place with regular committee meetings and AGMs. Throughout the years the Friends have maintained a balance of activities both social and educational for members with a core function of offering huge amounts of volunteer time to assist the Park staff. Many large events and projects such as the D-Day commemorative weekends and the opening and designation of Lepe Point as a Local Nature Reserve would not have been possible without the Friends help. Other volunteering activities include conservation, litter picking, manning the front desk in the old office and now in the Lookout, helping with children's holiday events, carrying out wildlife surveys and help with numerous construction projects such as the boardwalk around Lepe Point.

The Friends of Lepe was never intended to be a fund-raising body but over the years has managed to support various projects financially by sourcing grants and awards that would not otherwise be accessible to the Park. Some of the many projects helped by the Friends of Lepe include a grant obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2009 to construct the pond. The Friends were involved in every stage of the project, including an archaeological dig on the site which was a planning requirement.

More recently the Friends have given more than £18,000 towards the development of the Sensory Cottage Garden at Lepe Point through grants and donations and continue to develop and maintain this wonderful site, which is enjoyed by education groups, special needs visitors and many others.

2014 VALENTINE'S DAY STORM

Hampshire County Council owns a small parcel of land in the beach carpark in which the old public toilets, offices and café were situated.

This happens to be the very lowest level of the beach carpark, an area that would have been right in the middle of the riverbed of the old route of the River Dark Water, therefore susceptible to flooding.

In a winter storm that flooded the area (pre-2006):



In 2014 a storm developed in the Atlantic and moved northeastwards across Ireland and northern England. During the afternoon, strong southwesterly winds were felt all along the south coast. Widespread gale force winds of up to 70 knots were recorded in England with gusts of up to 94 knots.

The Valentine's Day Storm caused even more damaged to the buildings at Lepe, the water rising further than previous times. After this event, plans were expediated to build a new building that would resist the future sea water levels, to be built within the HCC owned area.



2014 Lepe Country Park storm flooding

2018 PARK TRANSFORMATION

With the opening of The Lookout in 2018 we have seen an increase in visitors with around 440,000 visiting us in 2019, increasing to 480,000 during the pandemic in 2020.

We have also opened the sensory garden and created a new accessible boardwalk around our conservation area meaning more people are able to enjoy the beauty of the area.

A new rigging area has been put in the beach car park for sea sport activity.

With help from volunteers have also been able to set up seasonal surveys on our bumblebees, butterflies, reptiles and birds. With bat and wildflowers coming later this year, meaning we are better able to monitor the habitats at Lepe.

THE FUTURE

A link between the Isle of Wight and this part of the New Forest has been raised many times. In the 1800s plans were in place for a railway ending at Stone Point with a ferry connection to the island, more recently underground tunnels and bridges to the Island have been circulated such as this one in 2014 which was imagined leaving from the beach car park at Lepe:

<https://www.islandecho.co.uk/6billion-available-fixed-link/>

Appendix

Time Chart, with 'geological long periods' & 'epochs'

In geologic time, we are currently in the Holocene Epoch, both the Holocene and Pleistocene Epochs are a subset of the Quaternary Period, which is in turn is part of the longer Cenozoic Era.

Period Name	Date Range	Description	Geological epoch	Geological period
Modern	20 th century +	Includes Edwardian, First World War, Second World War, Cold War	Holocene	Quaternary
Post-medieval	AD 1540 - 1901	Begins with the dissolution of the monasteries and ends with the death of Queen Victoria. Use more specific period where known. Tudor, Elizabethan, Stuart, Jacobean, Hanoverian, Georgian, Victorian.		
Medieval	AD 1066 - 1540	The Medieval period or Middle Ages begins with the Norman invasion and ends with the dissolution of the monasteries.		
Early Medieval or Dark Ages, Saxon	AD 410 - 1066	This dates from the breakdown of Roman rule in Britain to the Norman invasion in 1066 and is to be used for monuments of post Roman, Saxon and Viking date.		
Roman	AD 43 – 410	A period of military occupation brings a more urban lifestyle after		

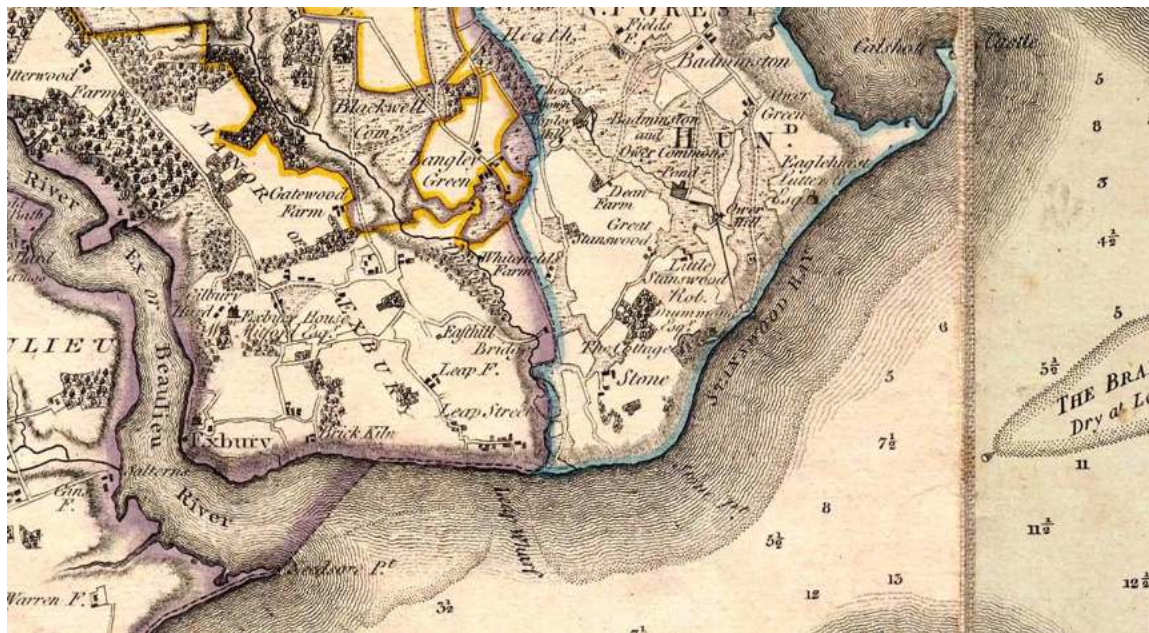
		contact developed through trade in the 1 st century BC.		
Iron Age	700 BC – AD43	Iron-working introduced to farming communities living in settlements which are sometimes enclosed by huge ditches and banks. Hill forts built as tribal kingdoms develop.		
Bronze Age	2000 – 700 BC	A period with copper alloy tools and mixed farming. Early period is characterised by Beaker pottery and building of round burial mounds or barrows.		
Neolithic	3500 – 2000 BC	A period with a lifestyle based on agriculture. Often with forest clearance then cultivation followed by desertion of exhausted land. Also referred to as New Stone Age. Also approx. start of the Ancient Age		
Mesolithic	10,000-3500 BC	A period with a lifestyle based on hunting and gathering using temporary and seasonal campsites. Also referred to as Middle Stone Age. This time period starts after the last major ice age which is known as the Holocene epoch (11,700 BC until this day)		
Palaeolithic	approx. 500,000 - 10,000 BC	The period of earliest flint tool making but little other evidence of human occupation. Also referred to as Early or Old Stone age. This time period almost coincides with the Pleistocene epoch of geologic time (2.6 m years ago to 12,000 years ago). Palaeo = ancient, lithic = stone	Pleistocene	

The above list was made using the timeline information in the heritage standards period list:

<http://heritage-standards.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Periods-List-HE-FISH-WP.pdf>

Origins of the name Lepe

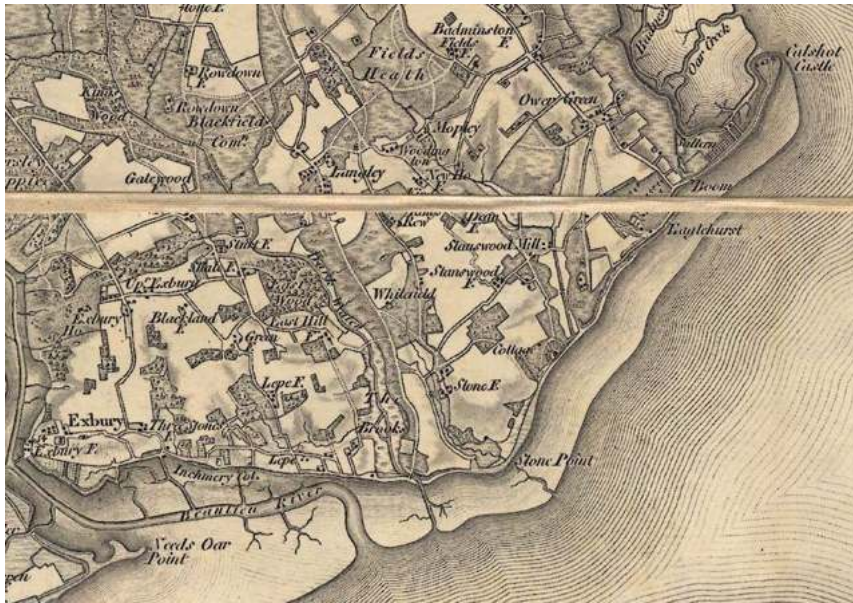
Through the centuries there have been many different spellings of Lepe and its origins have been disputed. In the 17th and 18th Century the spelling Leap or Leape was referred perhaps denoting a landing place where one could leap ashore. This is the supposed site of one of the causeways revealed at low tide which gave direct access to the Isle of Wight. The invading Saxons certainly chose it as a convenient landing place. Alternatively, it is suggested the name Lepe may come from



1798 Budgen Map



1810 OS Old Series 58



1826 Greenwoods 52



1894 Admiralty Map of Southampton Water by Capt. Vereker, Topography by OS.

OS Maps from 1860's onwards:

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/find/#zoom=13&lat=50.80270&lon=-1.40419&layers=102&b=1&z=1&point=50.78564,-1.36410>

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