



## Historic Environment Action Plan: Branscombe

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### What is the Historic Environment?

The past is all around us. The Historic Environment is all the aspects of our parish which have come about through the interaction between people and places through time. It therefore includes, not just archaeological sites, earthworks and monuments and historic buildings, but the historic aspects of our Medieval and Post Medieval fields, winding lanes, hatchworks and woodlands.

### Why does the Historic Environment in Branscombe matter?

Branscombe parish is unique. All of its character including the dispersed layout of the buildings, the material that buildings have been built from, the sinuous shape of the fields, the make up of the woodlands, the direction of the tracks and lanes, look the way they do because of choices that our ancestors, relatives and predecessors made in the past. The parish will continue to change and evolve but in order to help shape this future evolution effectively and celebrate what makes Branscombe so special we need to understand how it has come to look the way it does. The HEAP framework is one way which will help us gain this understanding. It is a voyage of discovery which will shed new light on the parish and look at well-known stories and information in different ways.





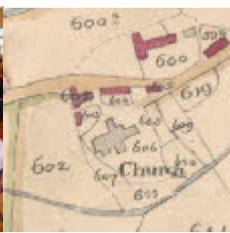
## Why have the Branscombe Project has chosen to complete an HEAP?

A HEAP is one way to gather evidence about the historic features in the parish. As you will know the Branscombe Project over the last 20 years has already collected a myriad of information either as memories of the past, old photographs, maps and documents, family history research, local history research and archaeological research. This tool provides a way of gathering this information together in a new way and of sharing it with others, of undertaking new research by asking questions about the landscape, and of identifying what is special to local people, what is under threat and what further work we would like to do.

It will also provide a very useful evidence base which could help inform future parish/neighbourhood plans, and village design statements.

But it is not about telling people what to do with their property or land but celebrating what makes that special sense of place in Branscombe.

*“We weren’t sure what we were letting ourselves in for; weren’t sure whether people in Branscombe would be interested; were pretty sure that the careful time-tabling and orderly progression envisaged for HEAPs Strand 2 wouldn’t work. It takes time for local people to think their way into a project (with hindsight, we’d say the better part of a year for this one); events and ‘happenings’ have to fit with other things going on; and, more often than not, things develop in unexpected ways. That’s the beauty of this sort of on-the-ground work.”* Barbara F, Branscombe Project



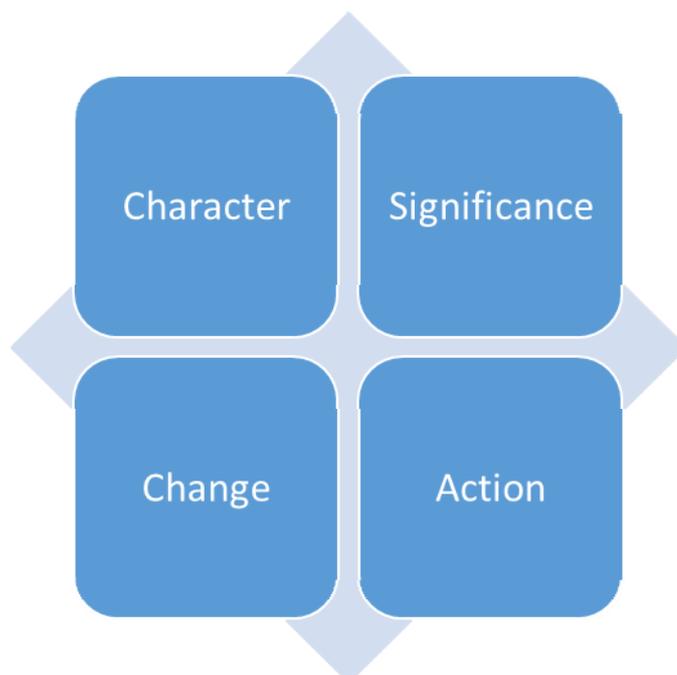
There are four elements in an Historic Environment Action Plan –  
which can be undertaken in any order

**Character** – What are the key historic environment features in Branscombe?

**Significance** – What Heritage matters to us most?

**Change** – How has Branscombe parish changed? How might it change in the future?

**Action** – What do we want to do next?



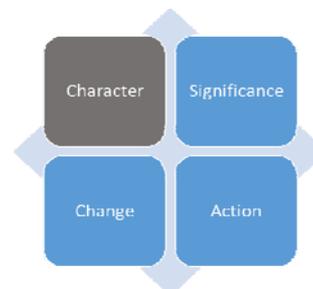


## Thinking about Character

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### What are the key historic environment features in Branscombe?

Draws together information both new and/or existing on the archaeological and historic features present in the parish.



### Audit of Work already undertaken

**The Branscombe Project** has been working within the community for over twenty years. It's about trying to understand the local landscape, how it has been created by people's activities over time, and the interplay between topography, geology and people's engagement with the land. It started as a project in oral history, but has fanned out to include archival work, archaeology and studies of material culture. The Project puts on regular exhibitions, publishes small books and booklets under its own imprint, and has a very active website.

**The Branscombe Project website** [www.branscombeproject.org.uk](http://www.branscombeproject.org.uk) is constantly updated. It has an extensive Research facility, transcribed Census returns and Parish Registers, the Tithe Map, estate maps etc. It houses the Branscombe Postcard Archive; many of the winter talks are available on line, and up-to-date news, requests for information, and material sent in by viewers are posted.

#### Books and articles in print

*Branscombe Shops, Trades and Getting By* (ed. Barbara Farquharson & Joan Doern, **DATE**, The Branscombe Project) uses mainly oral history to chart a dramatic change in village self-sufficiency. 'People say that before the Second World War you didn't need to go beyond the village'. There were not only the village shops and small industries, but carts and vans brought in goods from further away. Today all that remains are a Post Office under threat, a National Trust forge and bakery, and a part-time shop at the Sea Shanty.

*The Branscombe Lace-Makers* (ed. Barbara Farquharson & Joan Doern, **DATE**, The Branscombe Project) uses oral/archival history to chart the rise and fall of an important local cottage industry. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century women and children were able to make a significant contribution to the household economy, and this despite the exploitation by the local lace entrepreneur, John Tucker.



*William Ford's Branscombe, from the diary of an eighteenth-century farmer* (John Torrance, 2007, The Branscombe Project). William Ford was a farmer, lime-burner, importer of Welsh coal, and dogs-body to John Stuckey, village Squire.

*The Shooting at Branscombe Old Pits* (Barbara Farquharson & John Torrance, 2009, The Branscombe Project) Draws a picture of a late nineteenth century village torn apart by a local killing.

*Branscombe's War 1939 – 1945* (Sue Dymond, **DATE**, The Branscombe Project) [as on Emma's grid]

*Working the Cliffs* (Barbara Farquharson & Sue Dymond, *in press*, The Branscombe Project) uses archival and oral history to show how the shoreline has been worked from prehistoric times through to the present, with emphasis on nineteenth/early twentieth century cliff farming, including maps of the old cliff plats. It ends with a discussion of conflicting views of what should be done in the aftermath of the great storms of 2014.

John Torrance has published several articles on the history and landscape of what is now the A3052, Branscombe's parish boundary, and on Medieval Branscombe:

'Raddis Lane: what's in a name?' *The Devon Historian*, vol. 77, 2008; 'Raddis Lane: Politics and Landscape', *Rep. Trans. Dev. Ass. Advmt Sci.*, vol. 141, 2009, 'Branscombe 1280-1340: An East Devon Manor before the Black Death', *The Devon Historian*, vol. 81, 2012; 'Branscombe 1280-1340: A Medieval Landscape', *The Devon Historian*, vol. 82, 2013; 'The Landscape of Branscombe in the Early Fourteenth Century', in J. Bliss, C. Jago & E. Maycock (eds) *Aspects of Devon History* (Devon History Society, 2012).

**On Line** [www.branscombeproject.org.uk](http://www.branscombeproject.org.uk)

*A Postcard Archive of Branscombe*. Based primarily on the postcard collection of Geoff Squire, this archive is a wonderful record of a changing landscape and changing ways of life from the late nineteenth century.

*Studying the Churchyard*. Surveying the churchyard and plotting all graves with tombstones, deciphering tombstone inscriptions, using the Parish Registers, newspaper archives, and a plan of the churchyard which shows both marked and unmarked graves, has created a greater understanding of how the churchyard grew, changing social relations and religious understandings, distinctions between Anglican and Nonconformist burials, changing aesthetics etc. A sobering understanding of how few people could afford tombstones.

**C.D.**

*Napoli and the Wreck of the Napoli*. *Talking Heads*. Following the beaching of the container ship *Napoli* on Branscombe Beach in 2007, many of the huge containers slipped overboard



and were swept onto the beach. A media frenzy and a free-for-all by both locals and people from away resulted. The Project talked with and recorded many of the people involved. The stories were turned into a Talking Heads Video (out of stock)

### **Work In Progress**

*Disappeared Houses.* Dave Rockey has used the Tithe map and 1889 O.S. map to locate and map disappeared farms and cottages. **He is now working with Phil Planel of HEAPS to create a data base.**

*Hydraulics.* Sue Dymond has used old maps, and archival and oral history to discover a pattern of shutes and springs, wells and pumps, hydraulic rams and catch meadows. **She is continuing to work on this with Phil Planel of HEAPS.**

*Farmstead Footprints.* Mapping, examining fabric, archival and oral work on Branscombe farmsteads to get a better idea of changes through time, in conjunction with using maps, field-walking etc to set them within their landscapes of fields, tracks and gateways. **Proposal for a future HEAPS/Branscombe Project community-based project.**

## Mapping Historic Branscombe

This documents the mapping and interpretation work we undertook during 2013/2014 [ add web link]

- **Branscombe Map Detectives** - A series of three historic mapping workshops were held in Branscombe during 2013/2014. Local people from Branscombe and surrounding parishes attended each workshop and worked with historic maps to help answer a central question:

We want to know what elements of the landscape today in Branscombe date from the 20th century, which date from the 19th century, and which are older than the 19th century?

- **Branscombe Routeway Detectives** - One historic mapping workshops was held in Branscombe in November 2014. Local people from Branscombe and surrounding parishes attended each w and worked with historic maps to help answer a central question:

We wanted to know what which routeways people in 1880 used to travel across Branscombe and why?

- **Historic Hydraulic Branscombe** – mapping shutes, pumps, wells, springs and meads
- **Historic Farmsteads in Branscombe** – mapping historic farmsteads



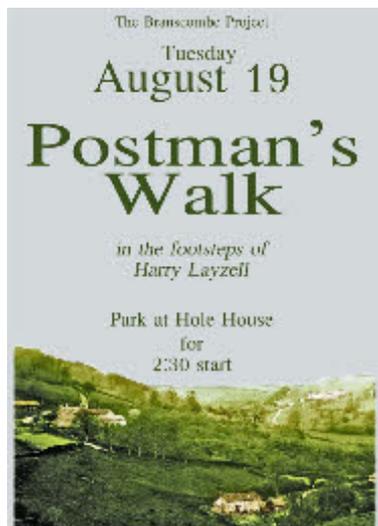
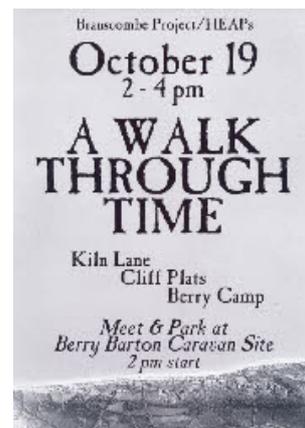
- **Disappeared houses in Branscombe** – mapping disappeared houses

## Walking Historic Branscombe



We walked round the churchyard and looked at the layout and various sections that were added over time. We also explored the history of some of those buried. Ralph Cox then explained the history of the war memorial. After the churchyard we moved on to Manor Mill where we enjoyed a guided tour. As we moved around this area of the village we discussed the changes in housing and buildings over the years. Finally we all retired to the village hall for cream teas and a talk about HEAPS. About 60 people took part in this enjoyable afternoon.

Between 20 and 30 people enjoyed this walk. It was muddy in places but the sun shone on us, and the day ended with tea in the village hall. We looked at prehistoric features in the landscape, the old cultivated plots(plats) on the cliff face (now home to holiday huts) and remains of lime kilns. Local man Sid Sweetland and several others shared their memories of the plats as we walked along.



In Branscombe the postman in the post-war years often carried either of two young sisters on his shoulders on his daily round. The postman's route and the memories of the two sisters provided the vehicle for putting the clock back over a half century and retracing the postman's steps over part of the round. A route was chosen which included three 'disappeared houses', as revealed by early maps. The focus on two time periods: the post-war postman's landscape and the earlier Victorian period, as represented by the disappeared houses, prompted reflection on both changing land use (culture) and biodiversity (nature).

**Read a Report with photos of the day**

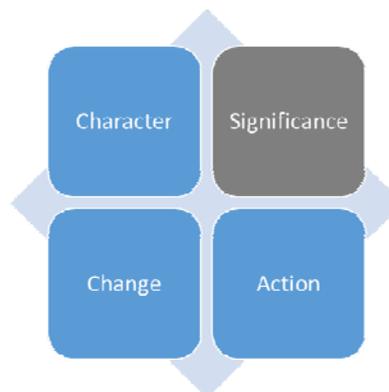
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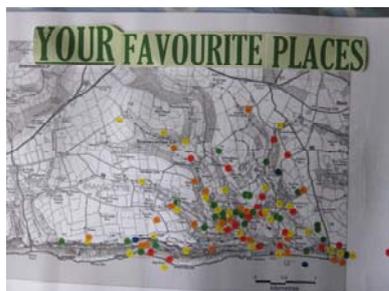
## THINKING ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE

### What are the Special historic features in Branscombe?

This is the part where we have started to think about what features matter to people in Branscombe



### Looking at important views in the Landscape – Memory Places



At the 2014 Branscombe exhibition and at subsequent events local people were asked to stick on dots onto their favourite ‘memory place or landscape on a map of Branscombe. They were also asked to give their names and the reasons for their choice. In this way, over a hundred memory places were fixed on the map, producing both ‘memory’ hotspots and also very interesting and discrete (in all senses of the word) outliers, which in many cases

referenced a very personal memory rather than a particular view or special place in the landscape. For some, the final approach to home was their important, for others it was the view out to sea or the view inland, or even the unobstructed view upwards to the stars.

Most of the outputs will be ‘Après HEAP’, but an initial meeting had already taken place to bring together several artists and two local IT specialists, to see how their combined talents could be used to produce a Google map-based living archive of point data which, when clicked on, will open up the full memory of the place – using photographs, art, and talking-head video experts to construct a human dimension of the physical and historical landscape.

Using the AONB and Branscombe websites, the memory map can be expanded to include, for example, the places which visitors to Branscombe regard as important – using the precedent of the South Devon AONB’s ‘Rate my View’ project:

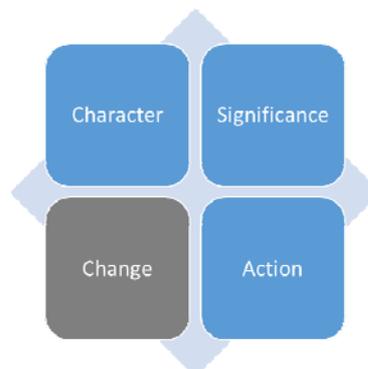
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.threeequals.ratemyview&hl=en>



## THINKING ABOUT CHANGE

How is our heritage changing?

How is Branscombe changing? How might it change in the future?



### Our Changing Coastline

Following on from the winter storms we decided to look at how the beach and surrounding cliffs are changing – in particular Barbara captured local peoples response to this at the Branscombe exhibition and the challenges presented by the Natural England and National Trust approach

Barbara Farquharson and Sue Dymond were coming to the end of writing their book *on Working the Cliffs*, when the great storms of early 2014 wreaked havoc along the Branscombe Shoreline. When a stand-off occurred between people with property on the beach and Natural England, it seemed important to discover what was happening. Many of the local stake-holders were interviewed, and during an exhibition put up in April 2014, local people were asked their opinion of what should happen. About 30 people responded:

*Make do and mend – it might never happen again.*

*The sea will always win, let it.*

*Preservation? Conservation? Sustainability? Branscombe has unique qualities, natural and otherwise. We should do what we can to maintain it.*

*When they [the chalets] are gone, they are gone, but while they are here, I'll rent one!*

*Without a doubt the damage should be repaired. It is essential to the livelihood of the village.*

*Can we ask Natural England to 'manage' the retreat until the point when we really must 'retreat'. Let's not give up yet, let's enjoy it as long as possible. Let us manage it!*

*Natural England is run by bean counters and admin people who all live in London. What do they know about what is 'natural' at the seaside!*



The strategic HEAPS (Historic Environment Action Plan) has come an opportune moment since it offers a way of understanding the coastal landscape as an interweaving of nature and historical culture. The description is:

*LCT 4H Coastal Cliffs -- Ensure historic features particularly sensitive to coastal erosion and relating to the historic exploitation of coastal area, including prehistoric features, historic boundaries, plats, kilns, quarries and military site have been identified and recorded*

## Branscombe HEAP Fixed point photography

Fixed point photography as a means of recording landscape change has been successfully installed in South West England in the North Devon AONB and has been used more extensively in protected landscapes on the other side of the channel in the PNRs (Parc Naturel Regional), where subjective and selective memory of landscape change has been checked against the evidence of fixed point images in decision-making processes (see the Cordiale Project – 2013).

**Finding the photographer, finding the sites** - Chris Bass, a keen amateur photographer, born in Branscombe and also possessing IT skills, has come forward to lead this initiative. Working together with John Torrance (Branscombe Project) and Phil Planel (Associate consultant with Wyvern consultants), five sites have been selected at which to install fixed points. The points were selected on the basis of landscape position and vistas but also, where possible, at locations from which historic photographs of Branscombe, including post cards, had already been taken, in order to regress the sequence of landscape change images as far back as possible. Chris Bass sought permission from the private landowners concerned and Phil from the National Trust.

**Installing the fixed points** - In Branscombe it was decided to use the innovative and less obtrusive method of driving a conventional fence post spike into the ground. Instead of a fence post, the square section post holder can receive a square section of fence post to which the camera pole and camera is attached each time a picture is taken.

**The photography** - Chris has gone to considerable lengths to replicate the focal length of older cameras to produce the same views as the older photographs of Branscombe. Using advanced camera software he has also been able to stitch panoramas together. In addition to the quarterly sets of photographs, the fixed points can also foreground local residents, school children, etc. to produce photographic memories of people in the landscape. The images are kept by Chris, with back up images held by the Branscombe Project.

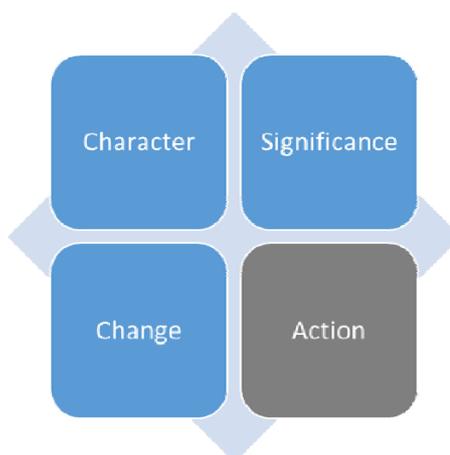


## THINKING ABOUT ACTION

### What would we like to do in the future?

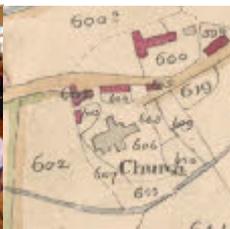
This is the part where we have thought about our next steps and how might we share our findings?

If you have an idea for exploring, understanding or sharing the history and archaeology of the parish then get in touch.



### LAST UPDATED JANUARY 2015 - ONGOING ACTIONS ARE IN BOLD

Action?	What?	When?
Recording Disappeared Farmsteads	Fill in recording sheet <i>Locations of Disappeared Houses mapped</i> Originally compiled by Dave Rockey; annotated and digitised by Phil Planel. <b>Phil to present at April winter talk.</b>	Ongoing Complete Ongoing
Branscombe Map Detectives	Emma produced packs for us, showing the maps that she has created from the workshop, and the way in which she has incorporated people's comments. Emma will produce a digitised 'master' map of the parish to show at the April Winter Talk, and will use this to discuss what the mapping project was all about, the results, and the open-endedness of the mapping project. <b>Need a further meeting to check through details on maps (discuss at Committee meeting)</b>	Ongoing
Routeways Mapping	Emma has created a paper/ digitised map. Rather difficult to read in places. Barbara to talk about it at the April Winter Talk. <b>Need a a further meeting to check details</b> <b>Need further research to compare 1880s map with contemporary map to bring out footpath closures.</b>	



Action?	What?	When?
	<p><b>(Emma can add a key to 1880s map to denote present-day status)</b>  <b>Need research on gate-ways mapped in 1793 and their present-day status.</b>  <b>(Discuss all this at Committee meeting)</b></p>	
Law Maps and Gateways	Walk planned	2015
Disappeared Farms	<p>Compiled by Phil from Project material.            John to present at April Winter talk.  <b>Need to take the disappeared farms map further into the present (?2005).</b></p>	Ongoing
Presenting Impressions of the Coast	<p>Listening Posts in the landscape            Investigate opportunities</p>	2015/2016
Hydraulics	<p>Map Hydraulics in the Landscape e based on research by Sue and Phil.            Sue to present at the April Winter talk.  <b>Need a further meeting to discuss/annotate distinctions between shutes, springs and wells.</b>  <b>(Discuss at Committee meeting)</b></p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Favourite Places	<p>Digitise the Favourite Places/landscape map            With the help of HEAPs, digitise the map of the parish so that people can click onto favourite places on the map, discover why they were important to people, and find a photograph or picture of each place. <b>(see if we can get some funding from NT or AONB to help with transcribing/editing video footage)</b></p>	Ongoing
Sharing with others	<p><b>Late spring talk on HEAPs:</b> home in on different parts of the project: coastal erosion, footpaths, tracks, hydraulics, fixed point photography, and future plans for farmsteads  <b>Keep feeding material to website</b></p>	Spring 2015