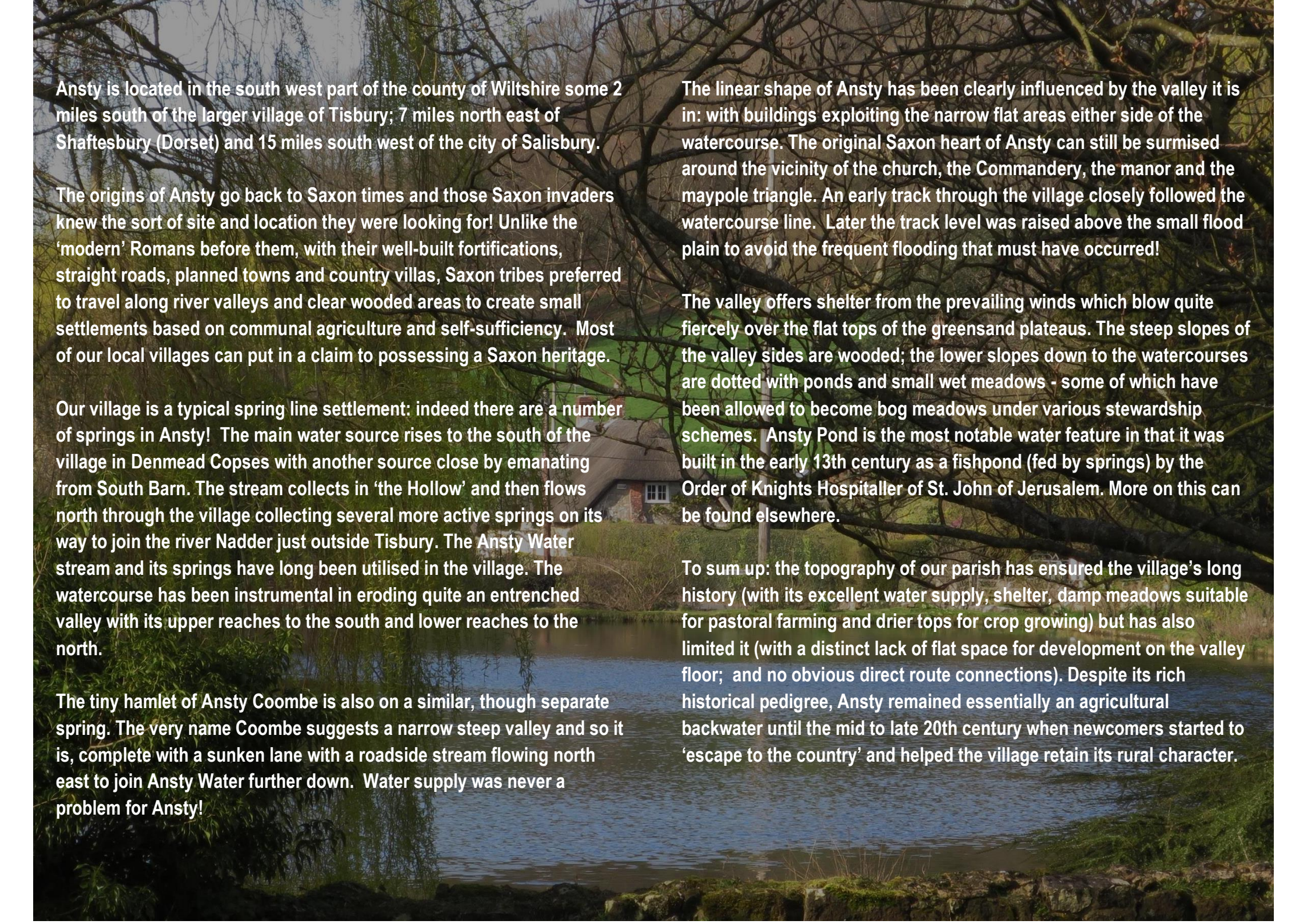


# Ansty and its setting







Ansty is located in the south west part of the county of Wiltshire some 2 miles south of the larger village of Tisbury; 7 miles north east of Shaftesbury (Dorset) and 15 miles south west of the city of Salisbury.

The origins of Ansty go back to Saxon times and those Saxon invaders knew the sort of site and location they were looking for! Unlike the 'modern' Romans before them, with their well-built fortifications, straight roads, planned towns and country villas, Saxon tribes preferred to travel along river valleys and clear wooded areas to create small settlements based on communal agriculture and self-sufficiency. Most of our local villages can put in a claim to possessing a Saxon heritage.

Our village is a typical spring line settlement: indeed there are a number of springs in Ansty! The main water source rises to the south of the village in Denmead Copses with another source close by emanating from South Barn. The stream collects in 'the Hollow' and then flows north through the village collecting several more active springs on its way to join the river Nadder just outside Tisbury. The Ansty Water stream and its springs have long been utilised in the village. The watercourse has been instrumental in eroding quite an entrenched valley with its upper reaches to the south and lower reaches to the north.

The tiny hamlet of Ansty Coombe is also on a similar, though separate spring. The very name Coombe suggests a narrow steep valley and so it is, complete with a sunken lane with a roadside stream flowing north east to join Ansty Water further down. Water supply was never a problem for Ansty!

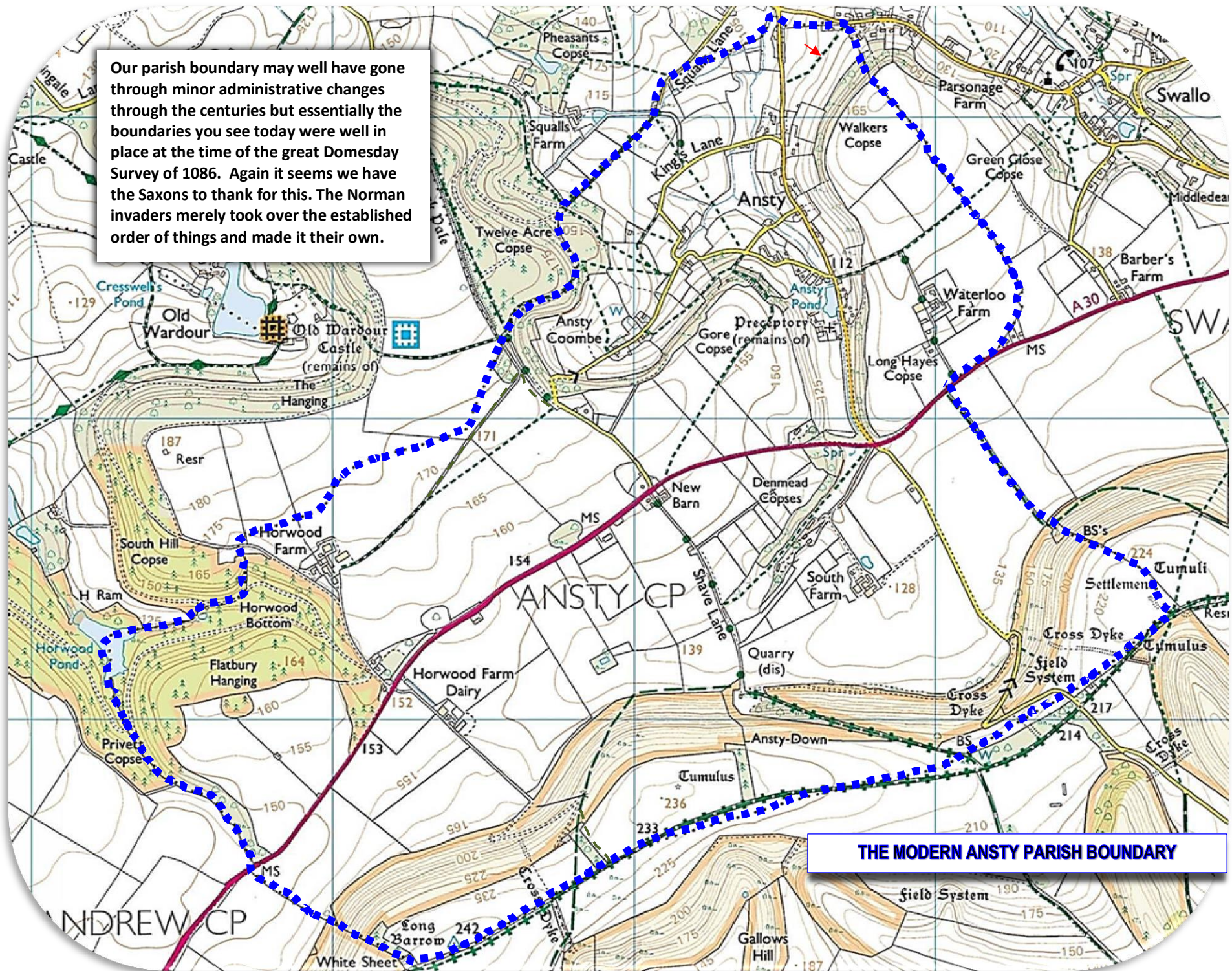
The linear shape of Ansty has been clearly influenced by the valley it is in: with buildings exploiting the narrow flat areas either side of the watercourse. The original Saxon heart of Ansty can still be surmised around the vicinity of the church, the Commandery, the manor and the maypole triangle. An early track through the village closely followed the watercourse line. Later the track level was raised above the small flood plain to avoid the frequent flooding that must have occurred!

The valley offers shelter from the prevailing winds which blow quite fiercely over the flat tops of the greensand plateaus. The steep slopes of the valley sides are wooded; the lower slopes down to the watercourses are dotted with ponds and small wet meadows - some of which have been allowed to become bog meadows under various stewardship schemes. Ansty Pond is the most notable water feature in that it was built in the early 13th century as a fishpond (fed by springs) by the Order of Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem. More on this can be found elsewhere.

To sum up: the topography of our parish has ensured the village's long history (with its excellent water supply, shelter, damp meadows suitable for pastoral farming and drier tops for crop growing) but has also limited it (with a distinct lack of flat space for development on the valley floor; and no obvious direct route connections). Despite its rich historical pedigree, Ansty remained essentially an agricultural backwater until the mid to late 20th century when newcomers started to 'escape to the country' and helped the village retain its rural character.



Our parish boundary may well have gone through minor administrative changes through the centuries but essentially the boundaries you see today were well in place at the time of the great Domesday Survey of 1086. Again it seems we have the Saxons to thank for this. The Norman invaders merely took over the established order of things and made it their own.



**THE MODERN ANSTY PARISH BOUNDARY**



At the end of WW2 the Britain was bankrupt; our Empire was crumbling and many of our markets were disappearing; we were short of food, provisions and building materials. Our once world renowned industry was out of date and inefficient. We were in a mess. The mend and make do of wartime was to hang on for almost another decade, well into the 1950s. Although the war caused unbelievable hardship it also accelerated change from which we were able to slowly recover.

The biggest changes folk would see around the Ansty Parish landscape were the stands of conifers that were planted (to supplement wood supply) and a wholesale ploughing up of the land encouraged by government to make us more self-sufficient in food supply. Farming became a very successful model for modernisation and efficiency. Too good in fact: many farm workers had to leave farming and move elsewhere to find work.

Even from this 1945 aerial photo one can see arable fields that have increased in size and are seen on all but the steepest of slopes. The countryside was much more 'open' with cropped hedgerows and far less 'scrub'.



# Ansty and its landscape



Sixty years on and our local landscape area has fortunately escaped the worst excesses of 'change'. This has probably been helped by the fact that the whole area has been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) since 1981 and it remains a deeply rural landscape.

Ansty itself has become much more 'wooded' as tree growth has regenerated; some hedgerow lines have grown into tree lines. The woodland stands have been managed and have grown somewhat and three notable windbreaks/pheasant cover copses have matured on the tops of Ansty Down and White Sheet Hill. In recent years the small meadow fields located in the main valleys have become noticeably wetter.

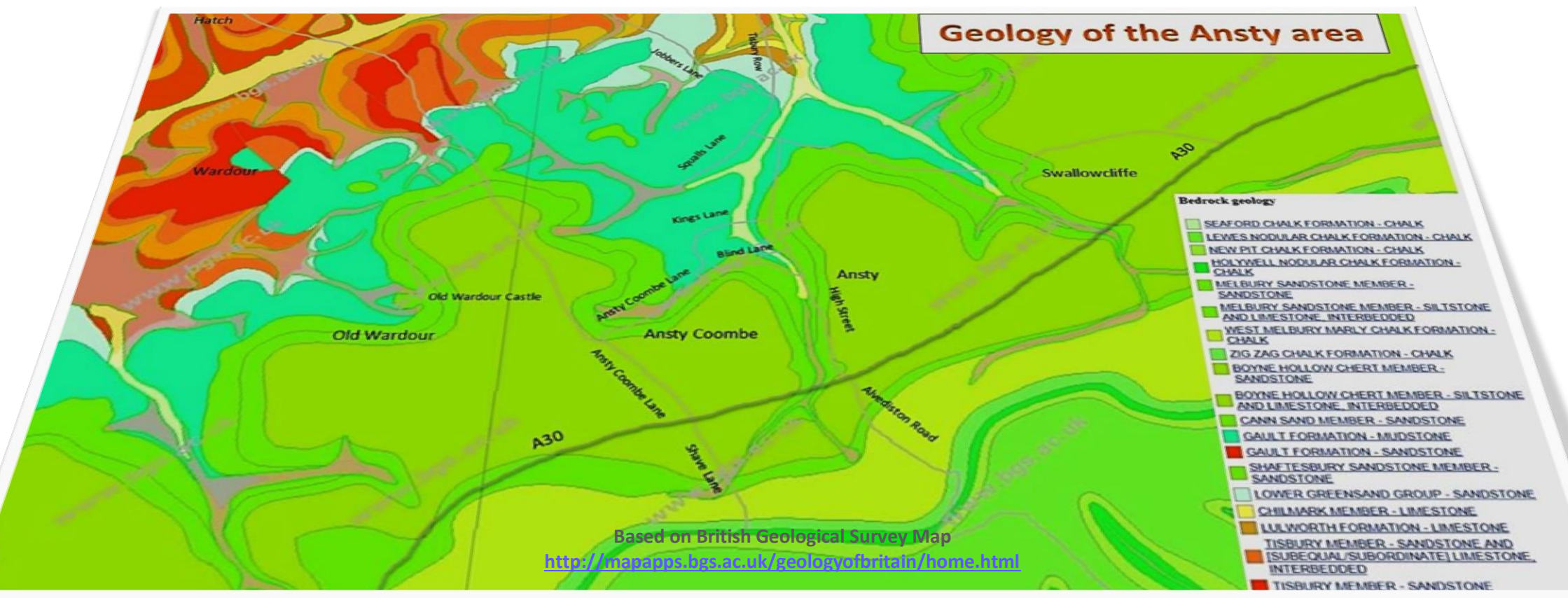
The landscape is still being farmed very efficiently by mostly local farmers relying on a high degree of mechanisation and technology and very few farmworkers.

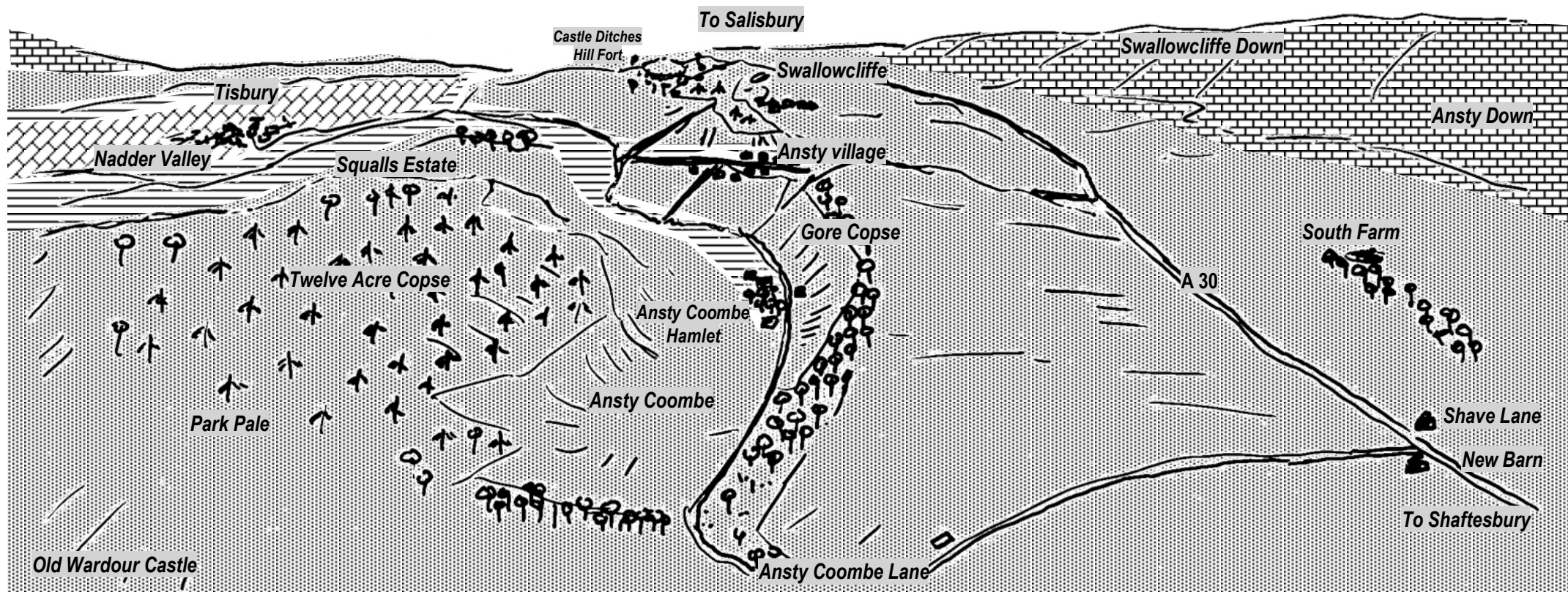


# Ansty and its landscape



# Ansty and its geology









## Sketch to show location and simple geology of the Ansty area in South Wiltshire. View looking north east

This sketch, looking north east down Ansty Coombe towards Ansty and beyond, gives one the opportunity to 'pin' the geology of the area to familiar landscapes.

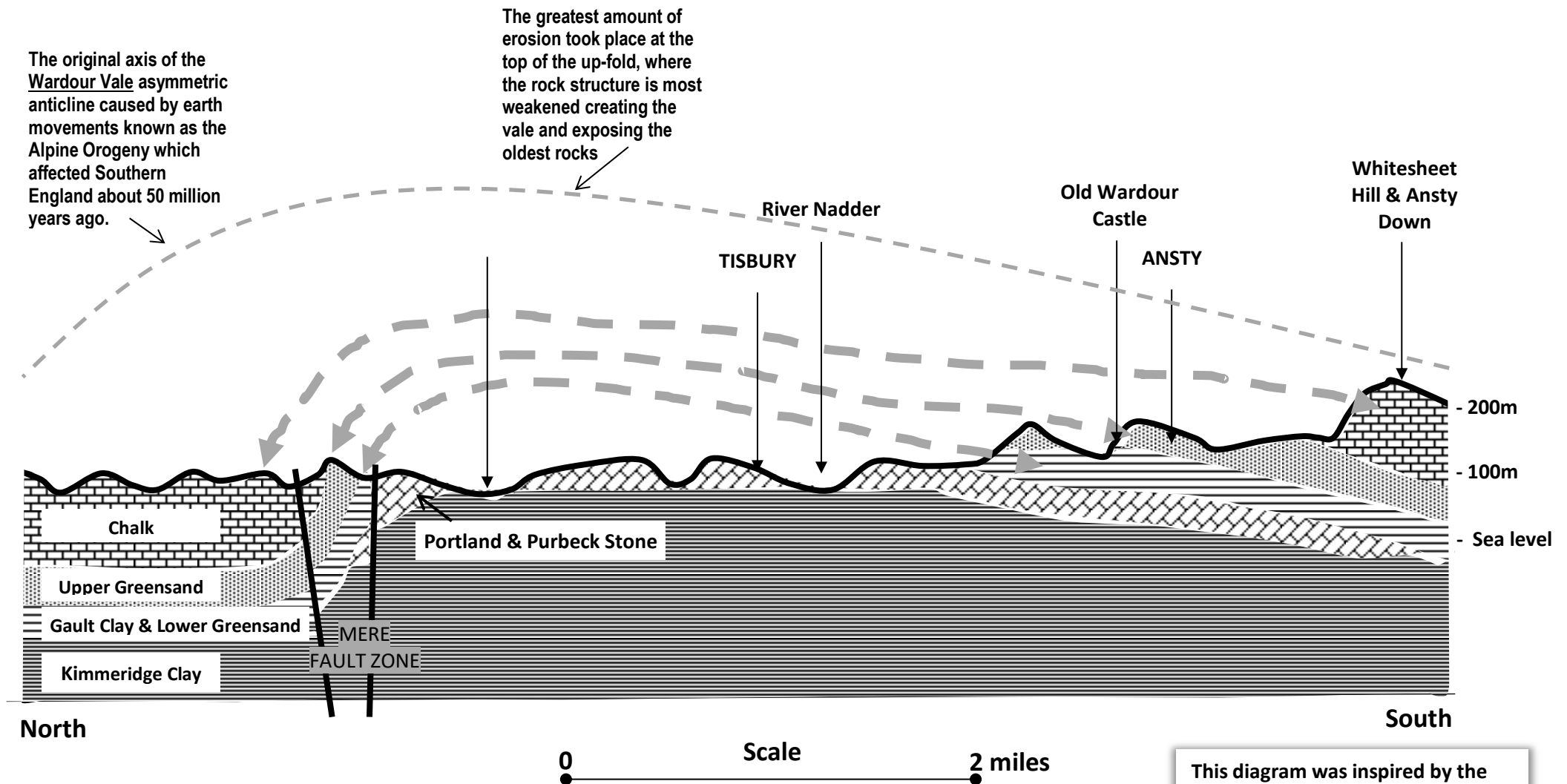
### Key

	Chalk
	U Greensand
	Gault Clay/Lower Greensand
	Purbeck/Portland Series

To the far right of the A30 are the steep grassy slopes of the Chalk downs escarpment that face North West overlooking the Vale of Wardour in the distance and exploited by the River Nadder. From the foot of these **chalk** scarps a long gently sloping bench (a dip slope, which the A30 has capitalised) of **upper greensand** can be observed. This too has a kind of scarp slope heavily sculptured along its Nadder valley edge by sunken valleys leading towards the river Nadder and the Vale of Wardour. Such valleys (often called 'coombes') were carved out by much bigger streams and rivers very much boosted by fast running meltwater at the end of the last ice age. The edge of this greensand bench is often marked by strips of forest (including stands of conifers planted just after the war and since). The base and lower slopes of these valleys are damp and often marshy; the streams and springs mostly appear where the **gault clay** is at or just below the surface. Tisbury is in a deeper valley and the river Nadder has eroded the landscape down further to expose more clays but also **Purbeck and Portland Stone**. To the north of Tisbury the greensand reappears followed by more chalk downs. This time the scarp slopes face south east but they are not as distinct or as high as the downs to the south of Ansty.

This whole landscape is known to geologists as a **denuded asymmetric anticline**.

# Cross Section from Fonthill Down to White Sheet Hill showing the basic geology of the Vale of Wardour



Book: Hidden Depths Wiltshire's Geology & Landscapes. Isobel Geddes EX LIBRIS PRESS £9.95

<http://www.wiltshiregeologygroup.org.uk/publications/trails/>

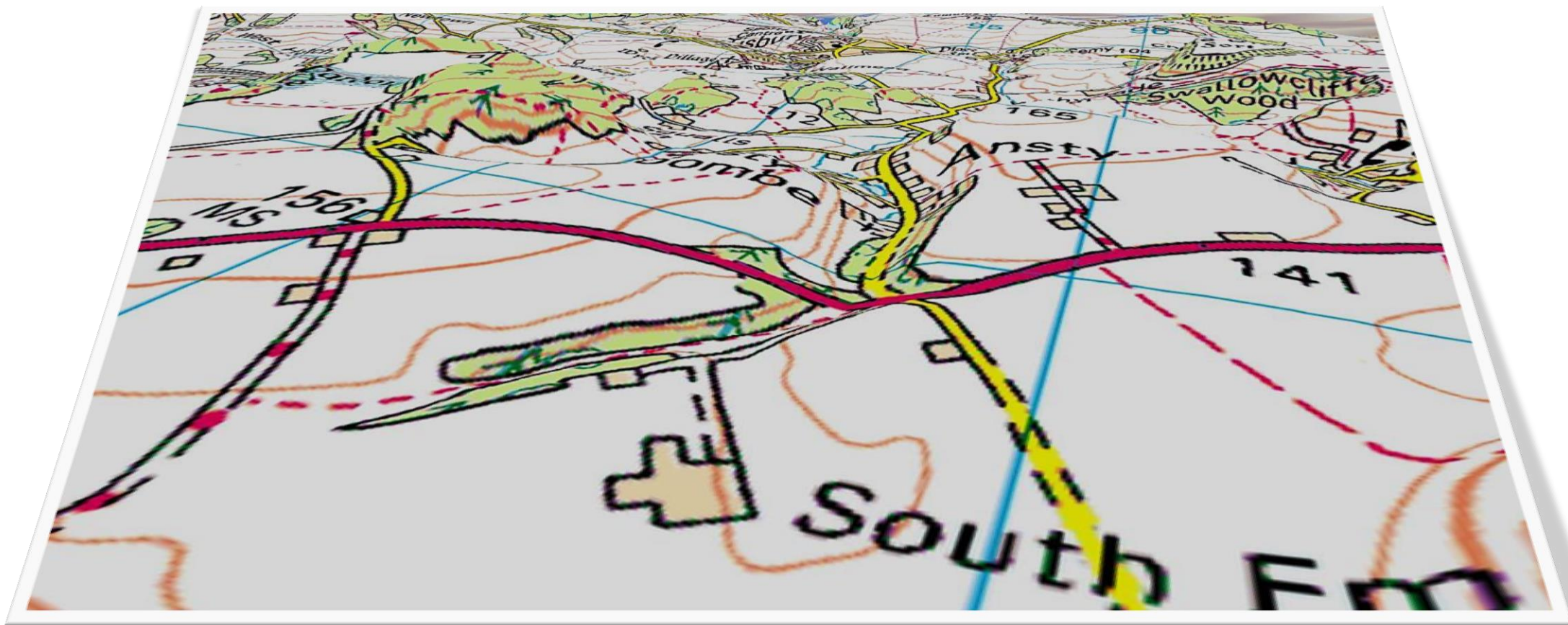
<https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/Plate-Tectonics/Chap4-Plate-Tectonics-of-the-UK/Caledonian-Orogeny>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology\\_of\\_England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geology_of_England)

<http://nora.nerc.ac.uk/7175/1/IR06011.pdf>

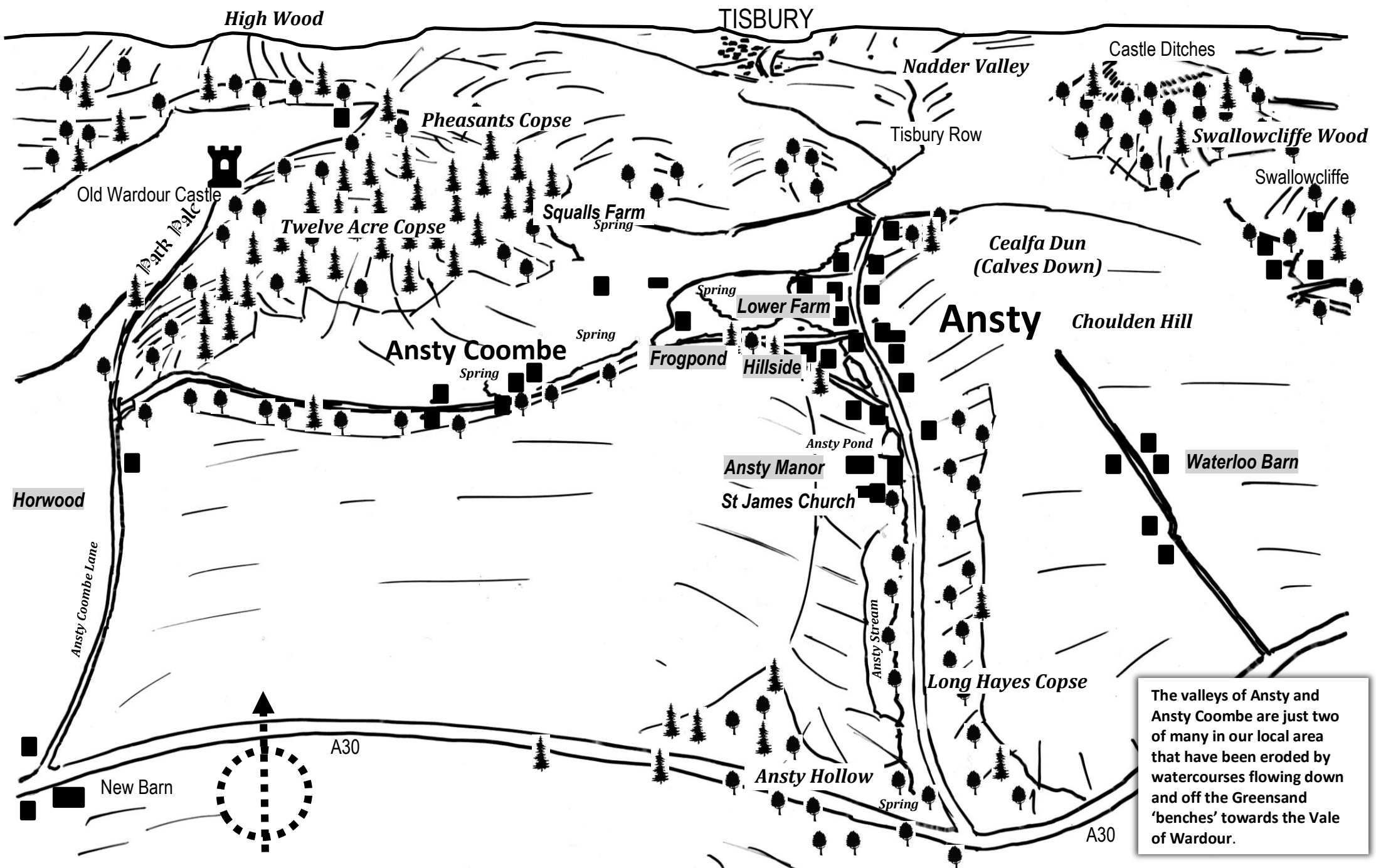
This diagram was inspired by the Wiltshire Geology Group's 'Explore the Landscape of the Vale of Wardour' trail guide that can be bought at the National Trust, Stourhead shop or ordered online. See the appropriate link.





Ansty site sketch maps

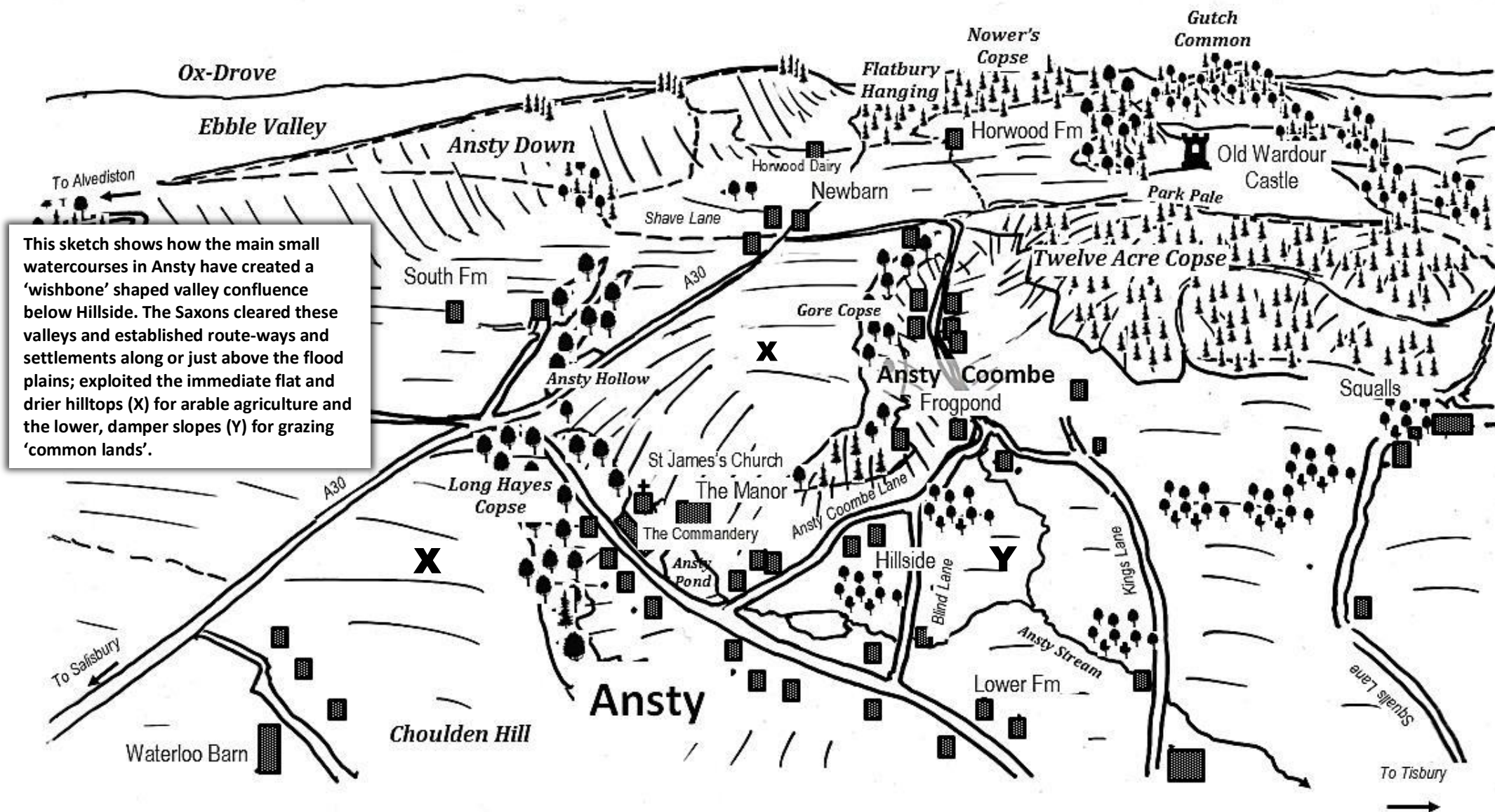




The valleys of Ansty and Ansty Coombe are just two of many in our local area that have been eroded by watercourses flowing down and off the Greensand 'benches' towards the Vale of Wardour.

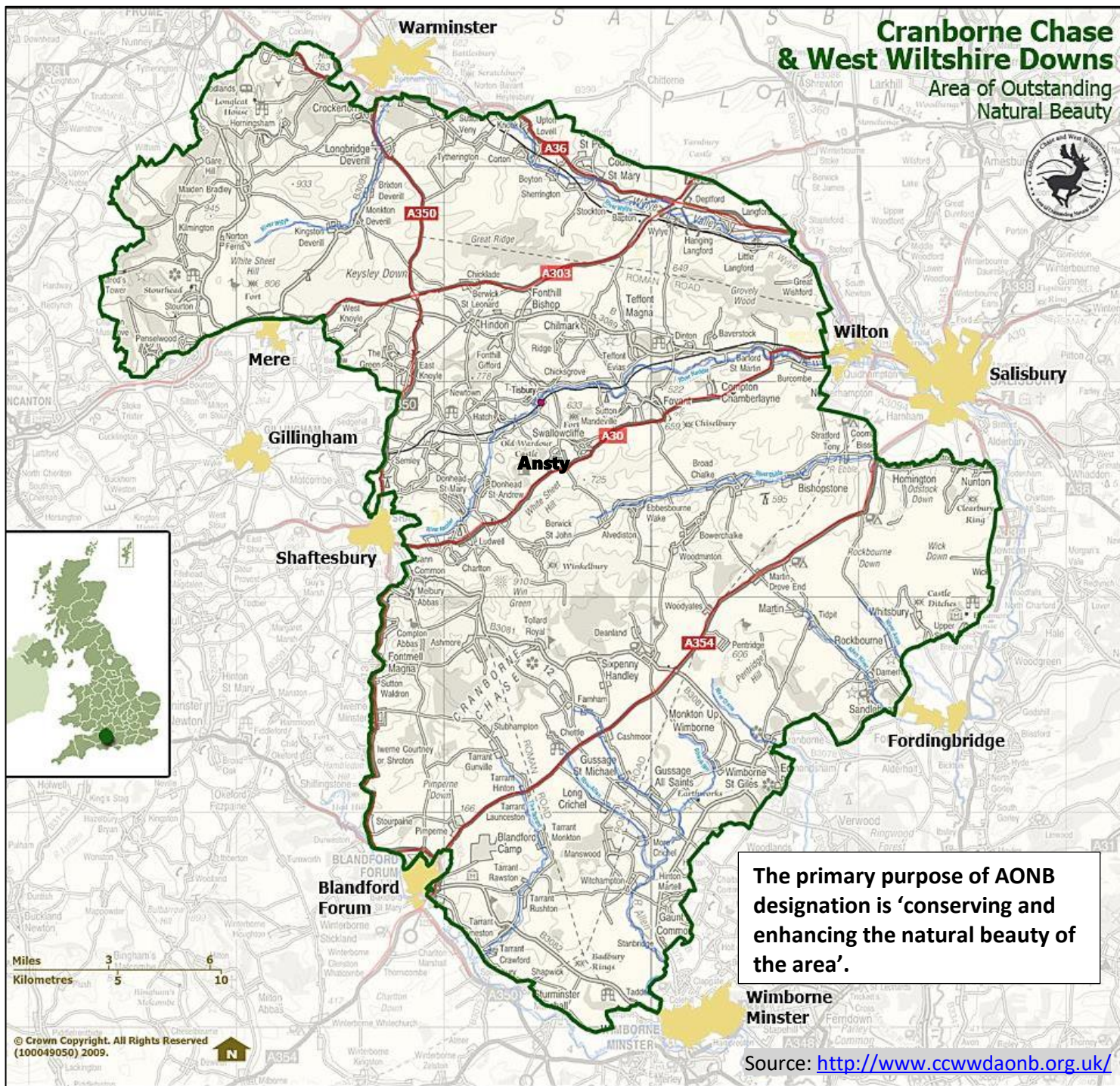
Sketch looking north, showing the site of Ansty and Ansty Coombe and the surrounding landscape today





Sketch looking south west showing the site of Ansty and Ansty Coombe and the surrounding landscape





## LOCATION OF ANSTY IN CRANBORNE CHASE & WEST WILTSHIRE DOWNS

This nationally designated AONB covers 380 sq. miles of countryside overlapping the boundaries of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset.

It is a diverse landscape offering areas of chalk grassland, ancient woodlands, steep chalk escarpments, rolling hillsides and chalk and clay river valleys each with a distinct and recognisable character. The landscapes of the AONB today, as they were in the past, are extraordinarily rich.

Straddling the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Nadder Valley stretches from Wilton in Wiltshire to the east across to Shaftesbury, Dorset in the west. It is a beautiful and largely undiscovered area with over 30 picturesque villages along or near the River Nadder - including our own village of Ansty.

### The significance of AONB designation

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1981, under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Following the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the government confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent. The protection given to both types of area by the land use planning system should therefore be equivalent.

The AONB landscape is also of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is an evolved cultural landscape, managed and nurtured by people over thousands of years. Those who manage the land are central to the future quality of this landscape. It is inevitable and appropriate that this cultural landscape will continue to develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its special qualities.

There are 41 AONBs nationally, covering 15.6% of the land in England and Wales. Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs is the 6th largest and is one of twelve AONBs in the South West region.

The main part of Ansty itself was designated a conservation area in 1975 and in the 1990s a 'Special Restraint Area' designation was implemented to cover the main part of the High Street and the area including the Manor, Church, Commandery and Maypole.