

English Nature Research Report 559

**The status and distribution of ancient woodland in Dorset. Part 2: An analysis of land use changes resulting in the loss of ancient woodland in Dorset (1988 to 2000)**

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### *Introduction*

This report makes a detailed analysis of changes to the status and distribution of ancient woodland in Dorset and follows on from a previous report (Forrest, 2003). When the first part of the project had been completed, investigation was made into replanting of ancient woodland and land use change, with particular emphasis on dating when loss of ancient woodland occurred. It attempts to date changes more accurately and identifies losses of over 224 hectares of ancient woodland in the county since 1988.

The report estimates that losses to the semi-natural area due to replanting within ancient woodland sites accounts for 65% of the total losses, and that the remaining losses are due to clearance and subsequent land use change. The report makes recommendations aimed not only at improving the accuracy and accessibility of information, but also at contributing to the future protection and sustainable management of Dorset's ancient woodlands.

### *What was done*

This report relied on the data from part 1 of the Status and Distribution of Ancient Woodland in Dorset, and analysed all the data that was not simply a digital error in the inventory. The following information sources were used:

- Dorset Environmental Record Centre
- Aerial Photography (Dorset Photographic Atlas, 1997) available on CD
- Dorset Inventory of Ancient Woodland (Provisional). Nature Conservancy Council 1988
- [www.getmapping.com](http://www.getmapping.com)
- [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)
- Files and GIS information from Forestry Commission SW Regional office, Mamhead Castle, Exeter.
- Forest Enterprise New Forest and Peninsula Districts
- Files and GIS information available at North Dorset District Council, West Dorset
- District Council, East Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council and Poole Borough Council.
- Dorset County Council Planning Department.
- Personal communications with woodland officers and agents (R. Preston and A. Poore).

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## Results and conclusions

Dorset's ancient woodland resource has experienced recent losses and changes in status from semi-natural to replanted.

Table 1 gives a summary of information concerning losses.

### Part 1 Report Areas (hectares)

	Loss to agriculture	Loss to development	Loss to forestry (re-planting)
Loss to ancient woodland	65.03	17.91	205.74

### Areas Confirmed by Part 2 Investigations (hectares)

	Loss to agriculture	Loss to development	Loss to forestry (re-planting)
Loss dated before 1988		4.45	60
Loss dated 1988 to 2001	65.03	13.46	146

The majority of ancient woodland clearance in Dorset since 1988 is to agriculture (81%); however, this type of change is difficult to date, monitor or prevent, as it does not come under the jurisdiction of development control.

Table 2 gives a summary of information concerning forestry conversion to replanted sites.

	Total Number of sites	Total Area (ha) (Part 1-DERC 2001)	Total Area (ha) (Part 2 - 2003)
Sites with increased re-planted area	40	205.74	146
Sites with cleared ancient Woodland	52	85.18	78.49
Total Ancient Woodland Sites/Area Affected	92	290.92	224.49

## English Nature's viewpoint

This report makes a number of recommendations to improve the accuracy and accessibility of information on changes in status of ancient woodlands and to their protection and sustainable management. Part of this refers to the maintenance of the ancient woodland inventory, which English Nature is currently considering in line with a project to update the inventory nationally.

## Selected references

FORREST, A. 2001. *The status and distribution of ancient woodland in Dorset Part 1: details of the methods used in updating the status and distribution of Ancient Woodland.*

### Further information

For the full report or other publications on this subject, please contact the Enquiry Service on 01733 455100/101/102 or email [enquiries@english-nature.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@english-nature.org.uk)

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