



Kingston Neighbourhood Development Plan

*Kingston must maintain its character as a living village in an
area of outstanding natural beauty*

Kingston Neighbourhood Plan Area Character Assessment

January 2020

Introduction

Kingston is a small, coastal parish that sits within the heart of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The residents believe that Kingston is a special place because of its beautiful and peaceful setting, natural resources, history and strong community spirit.

In August 2016 the Parish Council initiated the process of developing a statutory Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is intended to give the community a proper voice in how the village of Kingston and the rest of the parish develop over the next twenty years.

The purpose of this document is to record the physical and historical features that contribute to the special qualities of the parish and to inform the Neighbourhood Plan Policies. It covers:

- Parish profile (Section 1)
- Geology and soils (Section 2)
- Landscape and recreation (Section 3)
- Habitats and wildlife (Section 4)
- Historical development (Section 5)

1. Parish profile

The parish of Kingston is located on the south coast of Devon between Plymouth and Kingsbridge, entirely within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The nearest town is Modbury, approximately 4 miles to the north (Fig 1.1).



Fig 1.1: Location of the parish of Kingston (The South Devon AONB is shaded green).

The parish is bounded on two sides by open coast and the estuary of the River Erme respectively, and on the other two sides by open farmland (Fig 1.2).

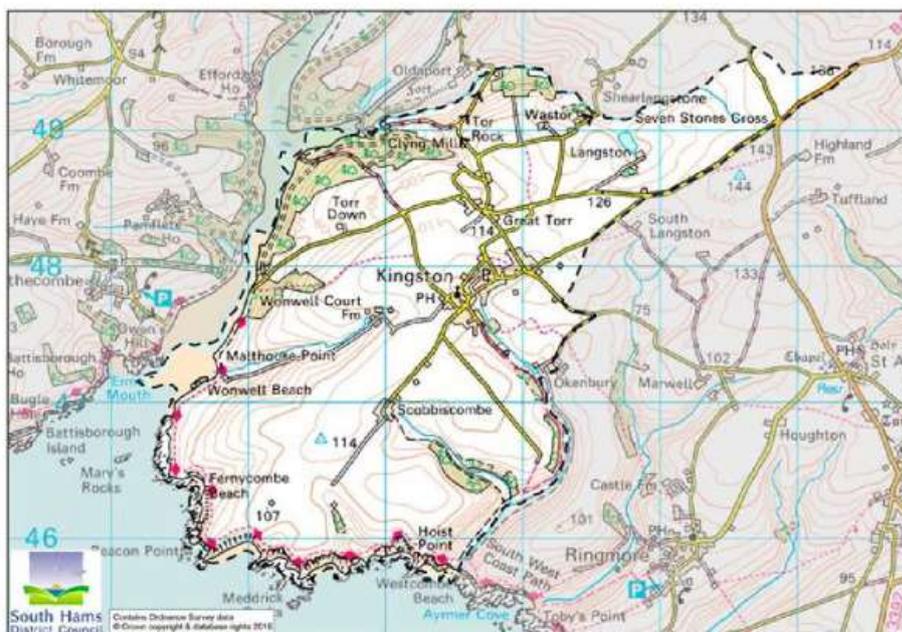


Fig. 1.2: The parish of Kingston

Kingston village

The ancient village of Kingston sits at the centre of the parish and is home to the majority of the population of around 330 adults and 50 children. Most of the outlying hamlets and the farms lie within a mile of the village centre. There are 213 homes in the parish, 21% are second homes/holiday lets and 16.5% are social housing properties.

The name Kingston ('King's Tun') has its origins in a royal charter enacted by the Saxon King Aethulwulf in AD 846 (Section 5). As would be expected from its ancient origins, the village contains many traditional Devon buildings. There are two conservation areas in the centre of the village and around 20 listed buildings and features across the parish.

The 14th century Parish Church of St James the Less and a well-known 16th century public house, the Dolphin, are located at one end of the village adjacent to the Reading Room, which is owned by the Parish Council and has charitable status. A Wesleyan Chapel was consecrated in 1873 but closed in 2006. *The village also, however, contains a number of modern buildings including small housing estates and around 65 new homes were built in the period 1945 – 2020.*

The village has a distinctive architectural character, which should inform any future development proposals. The village is essentially made up of two architectural typologies: the Vernacular and the Post War. The Vernacular is the cottage building type derived from the use of local materials (mud, rubble and straw in the case of Kingston) construction by local builders and/or home owners to accommodate local need (which were very modest in scale when the cottage architecture of Kingston was created). There was likely no aesthetic ambition at the outset although the Vernacular of Kingston has a distinct but unintentional appearance through the use of local materials and their limitations. Some farmhouses have aesthetic ambition such as the use of symmetry and higher floor to ceiling heights etc.

The Post War is derived from a different circumstance by using a palette of 'factory' produced modern materials (including in the case of Kingston mostly concrete blocks, cement render and concrete or clay roof tiles. Aesthetic ambition together with the use of recent materials presents a very different appearance. Also of note is that many of these buildings are bungalows although some are two storey dwellings of varying scales. Also of note is how buildings of different ages are positioned on their curtilage and address the street. For instance the vernacular usually addresses the street with limited if any front garden. Sometimes there are back gardens and in other circumstances ground for a kitchen garden/allotment is elsewhere in the parish. Post War buildings tend to be located in the centre of their plot immediately creating a very different characteristic to the vernacular.

Community

As in many rural communities, employment opportunities within the parish are limited. Many people commute to work outside the parish, but a significant proportion of residents are self-employed and agriculture continues to employ some people locally. Around 35% of the population is over retirement age.

Kingston has a strong community spirit, with a range of active clubs and societies; including Mums and Toddlers, Short Mat Bowls, Art Club, 'Flix in the Sticks' and the Kingston Local History Society. A

weekly Tuesday Morning Market is both a social networking opportunity and provides basic groceries and fresh produce. A summer Fun Day and a produce show are popular annual village events within a packed calendar of community activities.

The village also owns allotments and a large recreation ground, which includes: an all-weather playing surface; a very well equipped children's playground, a grass games pitch and a skate board park.

Kingston's Fire and Rescue Service was established in 1948 and operates a four-wheeled drive fire engine. This is one of only two remaining volunteer fire stations in Devon.

There is no longer a shop or Post Office in the parish: the nearest shop is at St Ann's Chapel (2m), with more shops and a health centre in Modbury (4m) and fuel (6m) at California Cross.

The heart of the village is 3.3 miles from the nearest trunk road (A379 Plymouth – Kingsbridge). Buses transport children to primary school in Modbury or secondary schools in Ivybridge and Kingsbridge. There is only a weekly shopping bus service to Plymouth and the County Fare Car service has been much reduced. It is not surprising that private road vehicle is the dominant means of transport in and out of the village.

2. Geology and soils

2.1 Overview of geology

The rocks that lie beneath the parish of Kingston are of very ancient origin. Around 400 million years ago, when southern England lay beneath the sea in tropical latitudes, mud and sand were slowly built up on the shallow sea floor and around its margins. Over a great period of time, pressure, heat and great movements of the earth have converted these deposits mostly to slates and sandstones ('grits'). This period of geological time is known internationally as the 'Devonian' Period because rocks of this type and age were first identified, studied and described in Devon in the first part of the 19th century.

The Devonian Period spanned approximately 20 million years from around 416 million to 400 million years before the present. Devonian rocks are broadly sub-divided and classified as 'Lower', 'Middle' and 'Upper', depending on their age. The parish of Kingston is situated on a broad, undulating plateau of coastal land, formed by a grouping of the older Lower Devonian rocks, known as the 'Dartmouth slates' (Durrance and Laming, 1997).

Dartmouth slates

The Dartmouth slates stretch east-west in a broad band across south Devon from Dartmouth to Plymouth Sound (Fig 2.1). The parish of Kingston sits entirely within this band. To the south of Kingston lie the so-called 'Meadfoot' slates (the Ringmore side of Westcombe beach marks the boundary). To the north of Kingston, beyond Orcheton, is a further band of Meadfoot slate together with a band of sandstone and slate known as the 'Staddon Grits'.

The Dartmouth slate is harder than the Meadfoot slate, but over great periods of time has become folded by the pressure of earth movements. These folds and the distinctive red, green and purple colours can easily be seen where the rock is exposed all along the coast of the parish. The slate is interbedded with thin layers of sandstone, siltstones and conglomerates composed mainly of pebbles. Distinctive veins of quartz also run through the rocky outcrops.

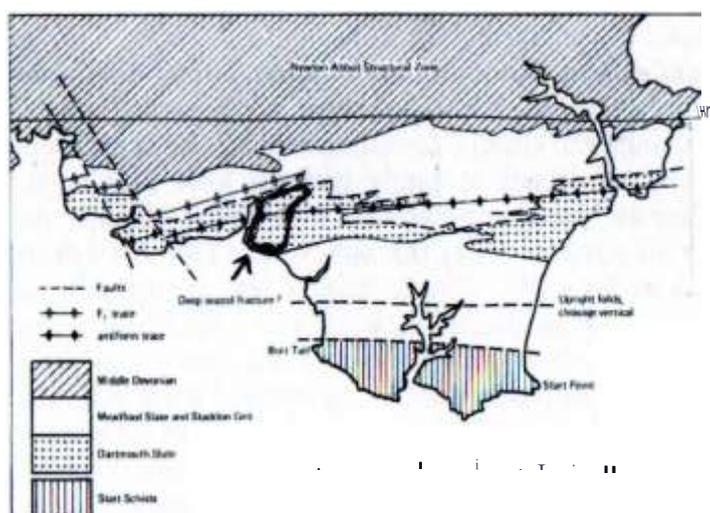


Fig 2.1: Parish of Kingston located within the 'Dartmouth slates' of the Lower Devonian period.

Igneous rocks

Inland within the parish, the Dartmouth slate is hidden by the overlying soils. But small outcrops of rock can be found inland, notably at Tor Rock and nearby at the old Pipers' Cross quarry. These outcrops are quite different in nature to the Dartmouth slate. They were formed by molten material (magma) from the Earth's core that was squeezed up through the overlying rocks to the surface from small volcanoes and fissures. Rocks which are formed by the cooling and hardening of magma or molten lava are referred to as 'igneous'.

Igneous rocks underlie only a very small proportion of the parish, but there are a number of distinctive, thin bands that have been detected running through the slate on an approximately WSW to ENE axis, especially in the north of the parish (Fig 2.2). These bands are of two types, that are likely to have been created during different geological periods:

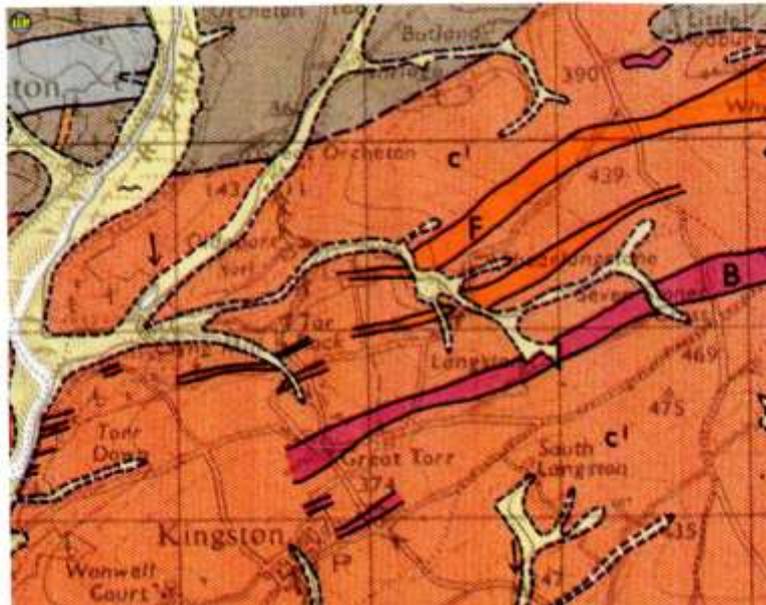


Fig 2: The location of the bands of igneous rock within the parish of Kingston

- B: Diabase
- F: Felsite

2.3 Overview of soils

The soils that overlie the rocks of the parish are critically important to local farming, as well as being a key factor in determining the types of wildlife habitats present.

In common with much of the South Hams, the soils of Kingston can broadly be described as 'loamy' meaning that they contain a reasonable mix of typical soil constituents (sand, silt, clay and organic material) and are suitable for cultivation. More specifically, the soils of the parish may be described as 'Brown Earths'. These are generally loamy and free draining and are normally quite acid except where they have been limed. This acidity can be a problem with growing arable crops, especially barley, but grass grows well. In wetter locations the soils are classified as 'Gleyic Brown Earths', but in more severely waterlogged situations (such as valley bottoms) they are called 'Surface Water Gleys'. The term 'gley' means that conditions are anoxic (low in oxygen) causing the typical red colour of the freely drained soils (due to the presence of iron oxide) to change to a characteristic grey colour (reduced iron) (Harrod, *et al* 1976).

Following the classification of soils used in the government's 'LandIS' Land Information System (see: <http://www.landis.org.uk/>), the soils of Kingston are classified as:

Soil Type:	6
Name:	Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils
Main Surface Texture Class:	Loamy
Natural Drainage Type:	Freely draining
Natural fertility:	Low
Main land cover:	Arable and grassland
Semi-natural habitats:	Neutral and acid pastures and deciduous woodlands;

Since the 1960s, government agencies in England and Wales have also used The Agricultural Land Classification scheme for classifying land according to how its physical or chemical characteristics affect agricultural use. The highest quality land is classified as 'Grade 1' and very poor land as 'Grade 5'. Most of the brown earths within the parish would be classified as Grade 3 – 'good to moderate quality agricultural land', with the main limitations being wetness, gradient and climate. But in the wetter areas the gleyed soils would be classed as Grade 5 – 'very poor'.

In practice this means that farming in the parish is mixed with a good range of livestock, including dairy, as well as cereals and other crops such as oil seed rape and potatoes. Other vegetables notably carrots and brassicas are still grown on a smaller scale and in the past there was some market gardening producing soft fruit such as strawberries.

References:

Durrance, E.M. and Laming, D.J.C (1997). *The Geology of Devon*. University of Exeter Press, Exeter.
Harrod, T.R., Hogan, D.V. and Staines, S.J. (1976). *Soils in Devon II. Soil Survey Record No. 39*. Soil Survey of England and Wales, Harpenden.

3. Landscape and recreation

The parish of Kingston lies within the historic landscape of the South Hams of Devon that is highly valued for its scenery, wildlife habitats and recreational opportunities. The parish includes an exceptional stretch of undeveloped coast that is rare in southern England.

Residents of the parish have highlighted the landscape as one of the key elements that make Kingston a special place to live.

3.1 Designations

The high value of the landscape has been recognised by statutory and non-statutory designations that provide legal protection and other controls over planning and development matters. The key legal designation is:

The South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The parish lies entirely within the South Devon AONB (Fig 3.1). The National Planning Policy Framework (Section 172) states that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Localism Act 2012).



Fig 3.1: Position of the parish of Kingston within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (shaded green).

The statutory South Devon AONB Management Plan highlights the special qualities and significance of the AONB and sets out the policies, objectives and actions that are required for its protection (see: <http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk>).

Planning authorities must take the Management Plan into consideration when determining planning decisions (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000).

Other, non-statutory, landscape designations also apply to the parish of Kingston:

Heritage Coast

The AONB incorporates the South Devon Heritage Coast, which was designated by The Countryside Commission as one of the finest stretches of undeveloped coastline in England and Wales. The Heritage Coast extends 2km out to sea and inland covering most of Kingston parish (Fig 3.2). The main objective of the Heritage Coast is to conserve, protect and enhance the natural beauty of the coastal zone. Although this is a non-statutory designation it carries some weight in development matters, for example the National Planning Policy Framework (section 173) states that within areas defined as Heritage Coast, planning policies should be consistent with the special character of the area and that major development is unlikely to be appropriate.

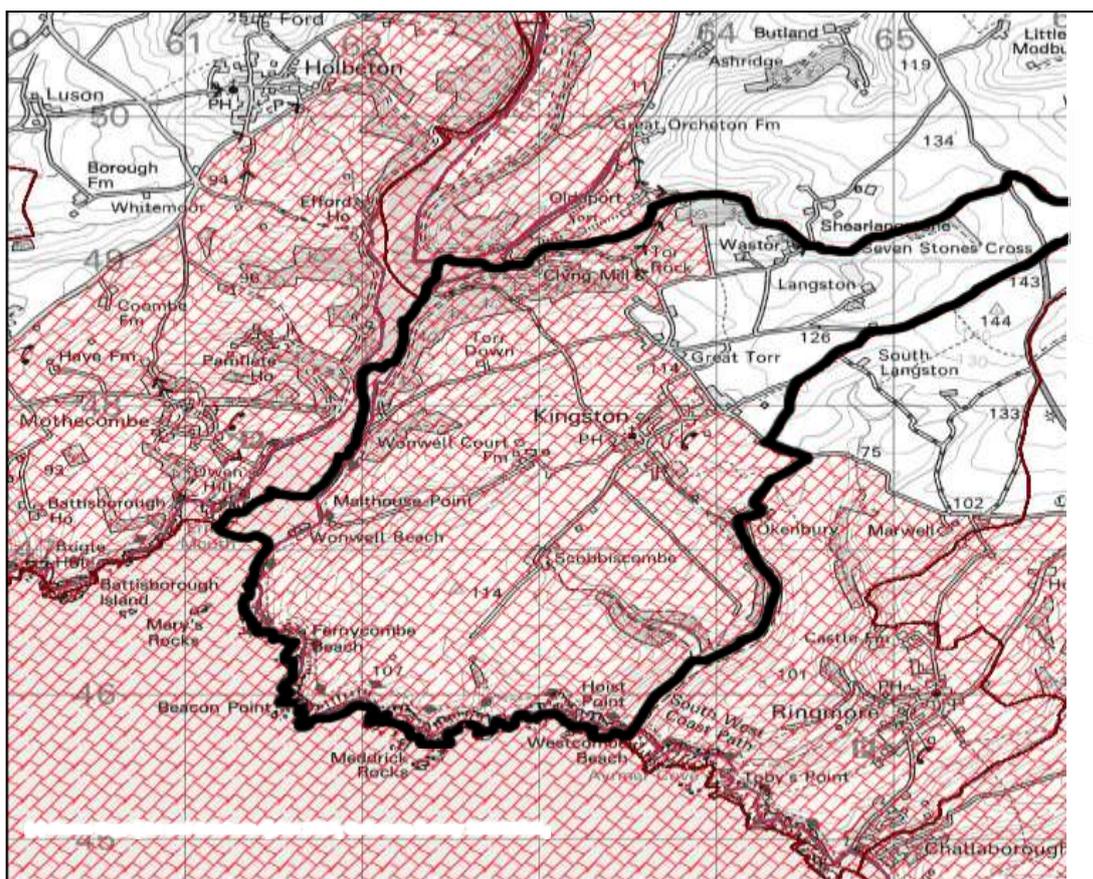


Fig 3.2: The extent of the Heritage Coast (hatched area) within the parish of Kingston.

Undeveloped Coast

The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan has established an area of Undeveloped Coast, with a boundary that is broadly similar to the Heritage Coast. Plan Policy DEV24 states: *'Development which would have a detrimental effect on the undeveloped and unspoilt character, appearance or tranquillity of the Undeveloped Coast, estuaries, and the Heritage Coast will not be permitted except under exceptional circumstances.'* A significant proportion of the land area of the parish lies within the area designated as Undeveloped Coast (Fig 3.3).



Fig 3.3 Undeveloped Coast boundary

3.2 Landscape Character Assessment

The parish, like most of the South Hams, is an agricultural landscape bounded by the coast to the south and enjoying dramatic views of Dartmoor to the north. The core is a wide plateau rising to over 100m above sea level, dissected by the estuary of the river Erme and other steep, often wooded, valleys and streams.

Farming is mixed, with larger arable fields on the top of the plateau and smaller irregular pastures around the flanks of the valleys.

The village itself sits in a sheltered location within a depression in the contours of the coastal plateau. From several viewpoints, the village is almost invisible and only the top of the church tower and some of the higher buildings may be seen above the surrounding land.

Landscape Characterisation

A standard framework, *Landscape Character Assessment*, is now widely used to describe and understand different landscapes across the UK. Landscape Character Assessment is based on a hierarchy of national and local 'Character Areas' together with generic 'Landscape Types' that may be found within these areas. The Devon Policy Landscape Group, with members drawn from a number of agencies, including Natural England, the Devon planning authorities and AONB partnerships, has already undertaken much work to characterise the landscapes of Devon using this approach (Natural England, 2014, a; b).

Drawing from the work of the Devon Policy Landscape Group, the landscape of Kingston parish may be characterised as follows:

Kingston parish lies within:	
NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA:	151. South Devon
DEVON CHARACTER AREA:	4. Bigbury Bay Coastal Plateau

(see: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policies/landscape>)

The whole extent of Kingston parish lies within the Devon Character Area known as the 'Bigbury Bay Coastal Plateau', which itself lies within the National Character Area of 'South Devon' (Fig 3.4).

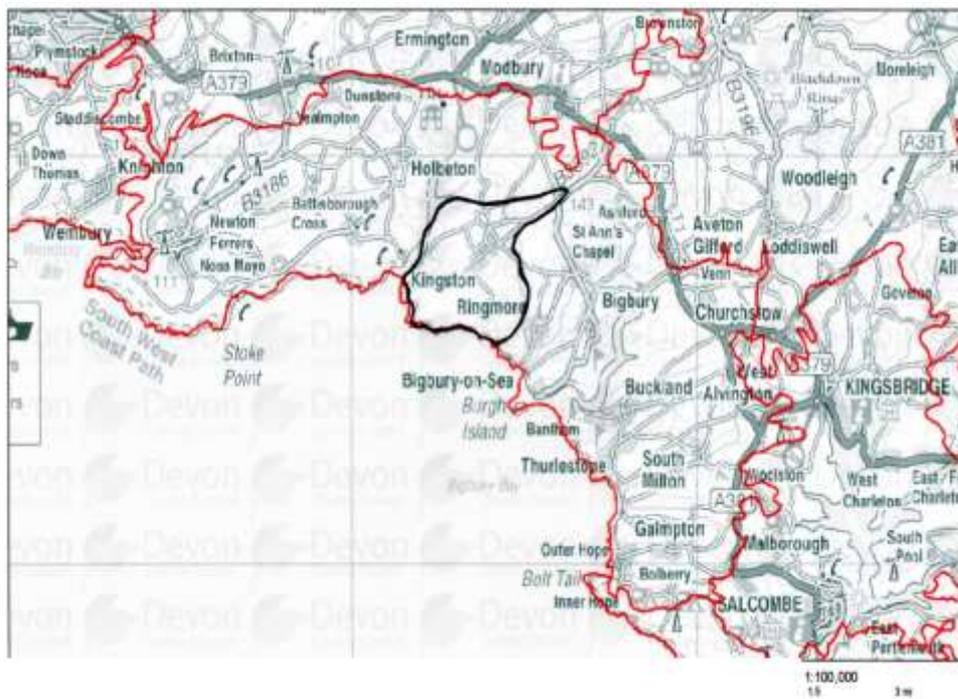


Fig 3.4: The parish of Kingston within the Devon Character Area 'Bigbury Bay Coastal Plateau'

3.3 Typical characteristics of the landscape

Within the Bigbury Bay Coastal Plateau, six generic Landscape Character Types have been identified and five of these are found within the parish:

1B: Open Coastal Plateau.

3G: River Valley Slopes and Combes.

4D: Coastal Slopes and Combes.

4H: Cliffs.

4A: Estuaries.

These landscape types are shown mapped across the parish (Fig 3.5). The typical characteristics are as follows:

Open Coastal Plateau:

- High, open plateaux, dissected by valleys.
- Larger fields and fewer hedgebanks with windblown vegetation.
- Mixed land use, but large areas of arable.
- Few trees and little woodland.
- Relatively few buildings.
- Some excellent views of the sea and Dartmoor.



View towards Langston. Landscape Character Type 1B: *Open Coastal Plateau.*

River Valley Slopes and Combes

- High, undulating slopes on either side of small narrow valleys.
- Small to medium pastures with hedgebanks.
- Broadleaved woods and scrub with some conifers.
- Scattering of houses and farms.
- Views over valleys.



View of Wastor woods. Landscape Character Type 3G: *River Valley Slopes and Combes*

Coastal Slopes and Combes

- Narrow, steep valleys.
- Small to medium irregular field pattern.
- Broadleaved woods dominant in places.
- Tranquil and remote.
- Coastal influence and sea views.



View of Broad Cliff Copse and valley, Scobbiscombe. Landscape Character Type 4D: *Coastal Slopes and Combes.*

Cliffs

- Steeply sloping cliffs, near-vertical in places.

- Narrow beaches, small stony coves or rocky foreshore at foot of cliffs.
- Scrub or coastal grassland on less steep landward slopes.
- Accessible only along cliff top paths or in some places along shore.



View of cliffs above Broad Cliff beach. Landscape Character Type 4H: *Cliffs*.

Estuaries

- Extensive, wide, shallow area of mudflats, sand banks and salt marsh.
- Inundated by salt water at high tide.
- Low accessibility but well used for water-related recreation.
- Very few houses.
- Tranquil.



View of the mouth of the Erme Estuary. Landscape Character Type 4A: *Estuaries*.

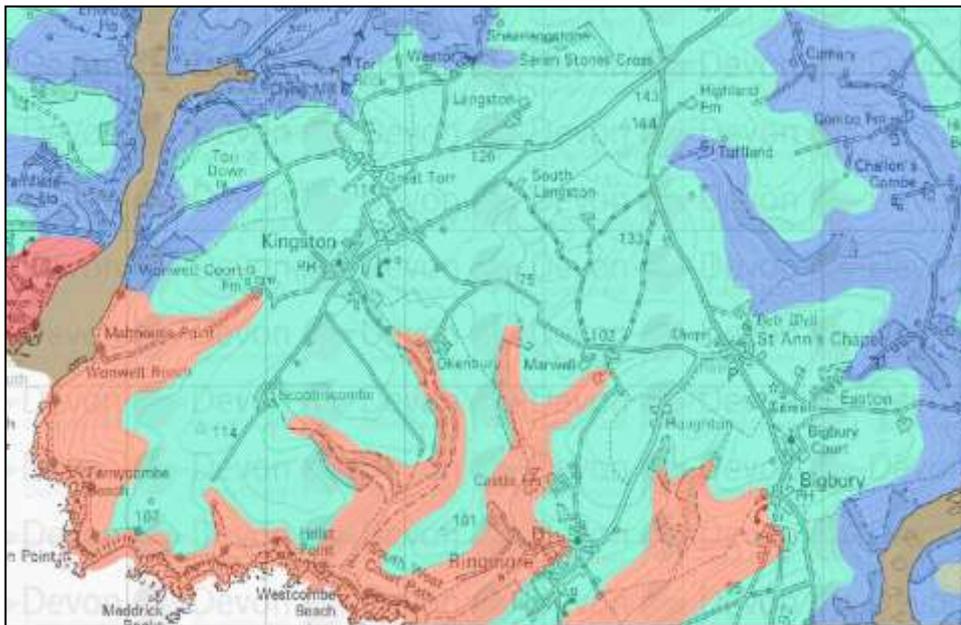


Fig 3.5: The distribution of Devon Landscape Character Types within the parish of Kingston.

- Open Coastal Plateau (1B)
- River Valley Slopes and Combes (3G)
- Coastal Slopes and Combes (4D) with some cliffs (4H)
- Estuary (4A)

Taken from Devon CC Historic Landscape Characterisation Maps:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/the-devon-historic-environment-record/historic-landscape-characterisation/>

3.4 Special qualities and features of the landscape

As well as displaying the features typical of its Devon Character Area, the landscape of the parish of Kingston is very special and defines a sense of ‘place’ that is keenly felt by residents and visitors alike. The special qualities of the local landscape include:

- Unique viewpoints that allow unrivalled views of Dartmoor and the open coast from the same spot.
- Special views of the ancient village settlement seen from the surrounding countryside.
- High scenic quality reflected in inclusion in the South Devon AONB, Heritage Coast and Undeveloped Coast designations.
- Broad range of mixed farming habitats including ancient woodland, arable, and small fields, hedgebanks and sunken lanes of ancient origin.
- The special habitats and scenery of the undeveloped and unspoilt Erme estuary.
- The cliffs, coves and secluded beaches of the coast.
- The Registered Park and Garden at Flete is listed Grade II and lies partly in the parish.
- Sense of peace and tranquillity as a result of distance from major roads and dark night skies (see 3.7).

3.5 Recreation

The mix of landscape types across the parish offers the possibility for a wide range of outdoor pursuits that are enjoyed by local residents and thousands of visitors every year:

- Swimming, surfing and otherwise relaxing on the beaches.
- Sailing, canoeing, wind surfing and paddle boarding around the coast and to explore the quiet waters of the estuary.
- Fishing.
- Snorkelling and SCUBA diving.
- Walking along the South West Coast Path – a recreational route of national importance.
- Exploring the sunken lanes, bridle paths and footpaths across farmland and through secluded combes by foot, cycling or on horse-back.
- Birdwatching, especially studying the winter visitors on the estuary (see notes on the SSSI in section 4).
- Studying other wildlife and the great variety of wild plants.
- Photography and painting.
- Foraging for wild food such as blackberries, hazel nuts and mushrooms.

3.6 Dark night skies

There are no street lights in the parish and the village is many miles from any settlement, roads or facilities that are well lit. The Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) uses satellite imaging to measure and map the UK's night skies. The results show that the parish of Kingston has a very low level of light pollution and distinctively dark night skies (Fig. 3.6).

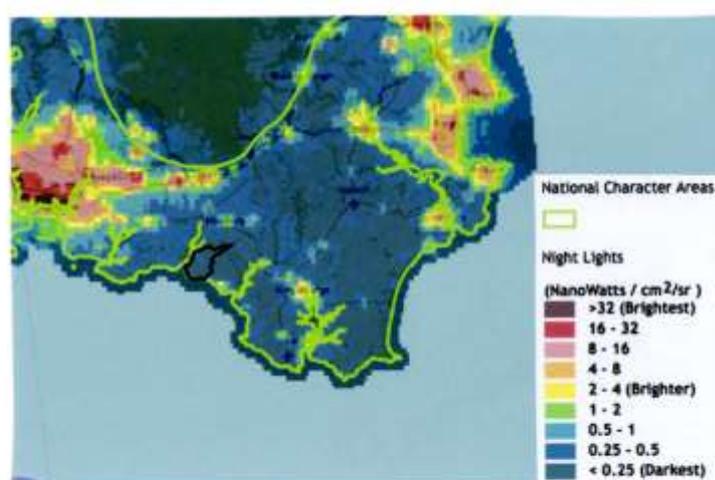


Fig 3.6: Satellite mapping of south Devon with Kingston parish highlighted, showing the measured levels of light pollution. (Source: CPRE).

References:

- 1) Natural England (2014 a). National Character Area Profiles. *HTML at* www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making
- 2) Natural England (2014 b). National Character Area Profile 151. South Devon *HTML at* <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/1911063?category=587130>

4. Habitats and wildlife

4.1 Overview

The striking and varied agricultural and coastal landscape of the South Hams of Devon provides a wide range of habitats for wild plants and animals. The parish of Kingston reflects this diversity and contains representatives of all of the habitats typical of the area as well as sites and species of national importance.

In 2017, Kingston Parish Council commissioned the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre to produce a report and map showing designated and other wildlife sites within the parish, together with a list of Developmental Control Species and other legally protected and notable species that have been recorded in the parish (DBRC, 2017). The information summarised below draws on this report, as well as a range of other published sources and the personal knowledge of parishioners. Highlights of the habitats and wildlife of the parish include:

- The river Erme, one of the four main rivers of the South Hams, flows along the western edge of the parish and a significant portion of its estuary lies within the parish. This is a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In 2019 the tidal waters of the SSSI were also designated as a Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ).
- The Erme Estuary SSSI contains areas of woodland that have been included in the Devon Ancient Woodland Inventory.
- The southern boundary of the parish consists of undeveloped coastline with high cliffs, rocky shoreline and small, secluded beaches. Most of this area has been designated as a Devon County Wildlife Site.
- The sea off the coastline is included in an internationally important Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because of the high biological diversity of its offshore reefs. Although strictly outside the parish boundary, this designation is indicative of the high wildlife value of the area.
- Over 90% of the surface area of the parish is mixed farmland that encompasses a range of wildlife habitats. The wide and open coastal plateau forms the core of the farmland, where there is significant arable cultivation. Livestock farming, including dairy, is also very important and many fields, especially steeper slopes, are pasture.
- A number of sheltered wooded combs and smaller streams cut through the agricultural plateau. A number of these locations have been identified as having significant wildlife interest.
- Most of the fields are bounded by traditional Devon hedgebanks that support a wide range of birds, small mammals, insects and wildflowers. Although there has been significant loss of field boundaries in the last 50 years, very great lengths remain and the majority of these can be shown to have ancient origins.
- A network of narrow, high-sided lanes and unmade green lanes crosses the parish, also bounded by hedgebanks.
- Over 20 species of wild animals and plants that have been officially recorded in the parish have Development Control Species status (ie: considered most important by local authorities in the planning process).
- Most of the parish lies within a Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone.

In 2010, as part of an initiative to improve tree cover around the village, the community planted a new copse in the Recreation Ground, added trees to the hedgerow and planted fruit trees and cherries around the car parking area.

4.2 Designations

The Erme Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

The Erme Estuary was designated as an SSSI (Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) in 1976. The designated area extends from the upper tidal limit just below Sequers Bridge on the A379 to the mouth of the estuary at the open sea, a length of about 5km and a total area of just over 430 ha. Approximately one third of this area lies physically within the parish of Kingston (Fig 4.1).

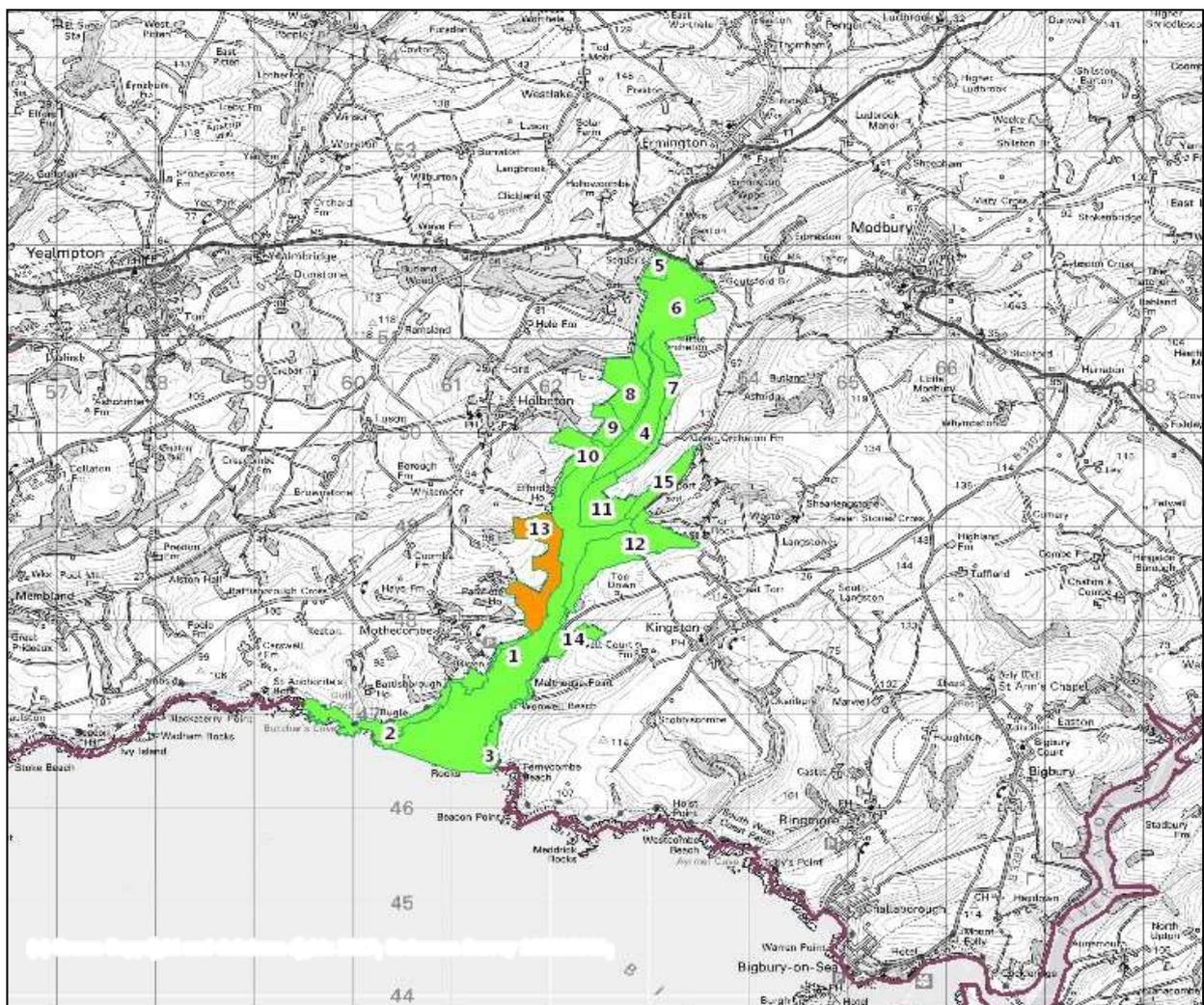


Fig 4.1: The Erme Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The numbers refer to an assessment of the status of areas of the SSSI, undertaken by Natural England.

- Favourable condition
- Unfavourable due to *Rhododendron* invasion

see: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/>

The SSSI designation recognises the rarity of this secluded and undeveloped estuary on the English south coast, within 15 miles of a major city centre. The site contains nationally important habitats and wildlife:

- Fine examples of estuarine, saltmarsh, freshwater and oak-hazel habitats.
- Important breeding bird community.
- Feeding and roosting grounds for waterfowl on passage and in winter.
- Important fish nursery.

The mouth of the estuary has extensive sandflats with an often steep and rugged shoreline which is home to a range of intertidal seaweeds and invertebrate animals. Further upstream, mudflats predominate, with areas of saltmarsh dominated by common cord-grass *Spartina anglica*, with sea-purslane *Halimione portulacoides*, sea aster *Aster tripolium* and glasswort *Salicornia* spp. At the head of the estuary, the saltmarsh grades into a succession of wet meadows lying beside the River Erme. These are subject to varying degrees of flooding by saline water and support areas of soft rush *Juncus effuses* and common reed *Phragmites australis*. A number of artificial fish ponds and other freshwater pools occur. These have become partially silted up and carry fringing belts of reedswamp and support a wide variety of freshwater plants and animals.

The slopes above the estuary are extensively wooded, including areas of ancient or semi-ancient wood. These are dominated by pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* and an understorey with an abundance of hazel *Corylus avellana* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The landscape provided by these oaks, with their stretched horizontally flattened lower limbs, is unique to the undeveloped estuaries and rias of Devon and Cornwall. The woods have a diverse ground flora including fine displays of bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* and other plants such as great woodrush *Luzula sylvatica*, columbine *Aquilegia vulgaris*, wood spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea* and butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus*.

The site as a whole supports a diverse breeding bird community including heron *Ardea cinerea*, little egret *Egretta garzetta*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, kingfisher *Acedo atthis* and cirl bunting *Emberiza cirlus*. It also provides feeding and roosting grounds for many birds including the common species of gull, shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Canada goose *Branta canadensis* and waders on passage and during winter, for example curlew *Numenius arquatica*, wigeon *Anas penelope* and redshank *Tringa totanus*.

The estuary of the River Erme is a spawning run for sea trout *Salmo trutta* and an important nursery area for other species of juvenile fish. The European otter *Lutra lutra* may also be seen.

A survey of the Erme SSSI undertaken in 2016 by Natural England showed that all parts of the site were in 'favourable' condition, with the exception of a section of woodland on the Holbeton side where the invasive species *Rhododendron ponticum* remains a problem (Fig 4.1).

Erme Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)

In May 2019 the whole of the tidal area of the Erme estuary from the mouth of the river to the limits of the tidal influence near the village of Ermington, was designated as an MCZ (Section 116 of the

Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009). This designation recognises that the estuary contains a wide variety of habitats from rocky shores to intertidal mud flats. These support a large number of important species including several that are rare, such as the nationally scarce tentacled lagoon worm (*Alkmaria romijni*). The designation also recognises the importance of the estuary as an area for wading and migratory birds to feed and rest and as a nursery for juvenile species of fish. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marine-conservation-zones-erme-estuary>

Other designations

Aside from the SSSI and MCZ, there are no other statutory habitat designations within the parish (eg: Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves, Devon Wildlife Trust Nature Reserves). A number of other wildlife sites have been designated however. Whilst these designations are non-statutory, they are well-recognised and carry some weight in development and planning matters (Fig 4.2).

Statutory and non-statutory sites
within the Parish of Kingston (August 2017)

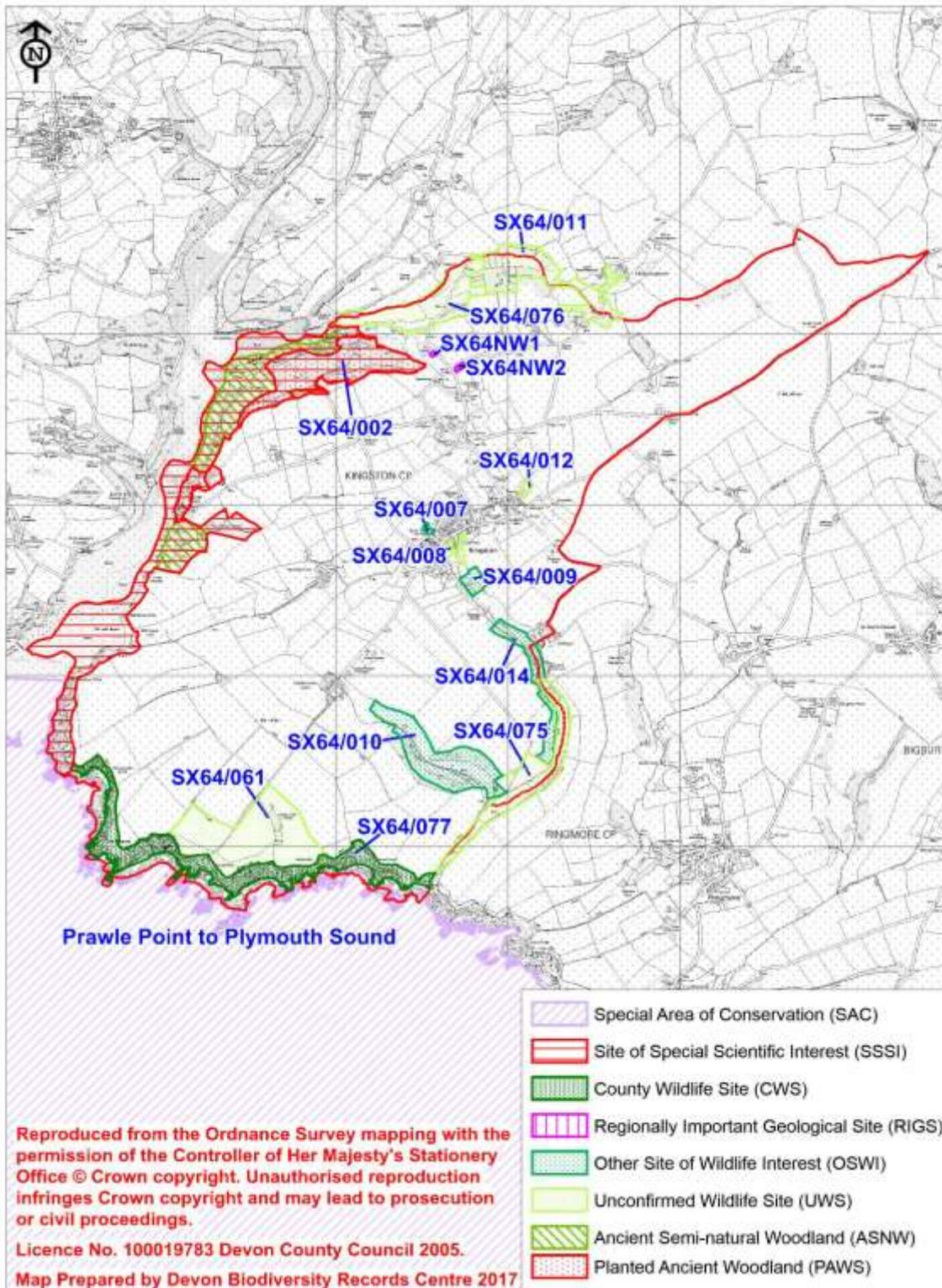


Fig 4.2: Designated wildlife sites within the parish of Kingston

For detailed information see the report: *Wildlife site resource map and species information for neighbourhood planning – Kingston*. Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, 2017.

(www.kingstonplan.org)

In summary, the key non-statutory designations are:

- **County Wildlife Sites (CWS):** sites of county importance for wildlife, designated on the basis of the habitat or the known presence of particular species. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires local authorities to identify and map locally designated sites of biodiversity importance (such as County Wildlife Sites) as part of the Local Plan process.
- **Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI):** woodlands which have existed from at least Medieval times to the present day. The Devon Ancient Woodland Inventory was prepared in 1986 by the Nature Conservancy Council. The NPPF affords protection to these woodlands, distinguishing between:
 - **Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW),** composed of native trees that may have been managed, eg by coppicing.
 - **Plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS),** where native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planted stock
- **Other Sites of Wildlife Interest (OSWI):** sites of significant wildlife interest within a local context that have been surveyed but do not reach the criteria for County Wildlife Sites. They are not covered by the NPPF, but may be included in Local Plans.
- **Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS):** these are sites identified as having possible interest but not fully surveyed.

The parish of Kingston contains a number of sites with these designations (Fig 4.2) and further information about each of these is may be found in the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre Report on the Neighbourhood Plan web-site: www.kingstonplan.org.

4.3 Characteristic habitats and species

The designated sites referred to above (4.2) and other locations within the parish contain a number of typical habitats and species. These are summarised below:

Hedgebanks and lanes

Devon hedgebanks of earth and stone partition most of the fields in the parish and run along many of the lanes and by-ways. Shrubby species notably blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hazel *Corylus avellana* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* were traditionally grown on top of these banks to make them stock-proof. Tree species such as ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, oak *Quercus robur*, elms *Ulmus glabra* and *Ulmus minor*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, field maple *Acer campestre*, beech *Fagus sylvatica* and willow *Salix* spp have subsequently colonised many hedges, especially in the sheltered valleys. Shrubby species such as spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* may also be present.

Devon is renowned for its hedgerow flowers and Kingston is no exception with breathtaking displays of flowers including snow drops *Galanthus nivalis* in the late winter and primroses *Primula vulgaris*, bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, ramsons *Allium ursinum* and red campion *Silene dioica* in the spring and early summer. The range of flower species to be found in the hedges of south Devon has been well documented (eg Ivimey-Cook, 1984) and most of these can be found within the parish. Some rarer and notable species recorded around Kingston include the Bastard Balm *Melittis melissophyllum*.

Hedgebanks are also one of our most valuable habitats for wild animals who rely on them for shelter, food and to provide corridors for movement. All of the typical hedgerow species of birds endemic to south Devon are found in Kingston and a range of mammals use hedgebanks for shelter, food and to provide corridors for movement, including rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, hares *Lepus capensis*, foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, stoats *Mustela erminea*, weasels *Mustela nivalis*, badgers *Meles meles*, dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius*, bank voles *Clethrionomys glareolus* and several species of bats (see below).

Reptiles, notably common lizards *Lacerta vivipara*, slow worms *Anguis fragilis*, grass snakes *Natrix natrix* and occasionally adders *Vipera berus* are also found along hedgebanks.

Invertebrate animals, for example butterflies and other insects, also greatly benefit from the shelter of hedgebanks and the food provided by hedgerow plants. Glow-worms *Lampyrus noctiluca* are an especially distinctive sighting on summer evenings, especially on hedges close to the coast and benefit from the low levels of light pollution in the parish.

Many field boundaries have been lost in the last 50 years as modern farming requires larger fields better suited to mechanisation. Old hedges may also be lost through road schemes and other development. A survey of hedges in the parish has shown a mixed picture (Turner, 2005), with greatest loss in the arable fields of the open plateau. In other areas of the parish however, especially around the sides of the valleys, many original fields remain of which some are of medieval or post-medieval date (Fig 4.3). Hedgebanks now receive much greater legal protection and the rate of loss has greatly reduced. Preservation of existing hedgebanks should, nevertheless, be a priority given their importance to the landscape and wildlife.

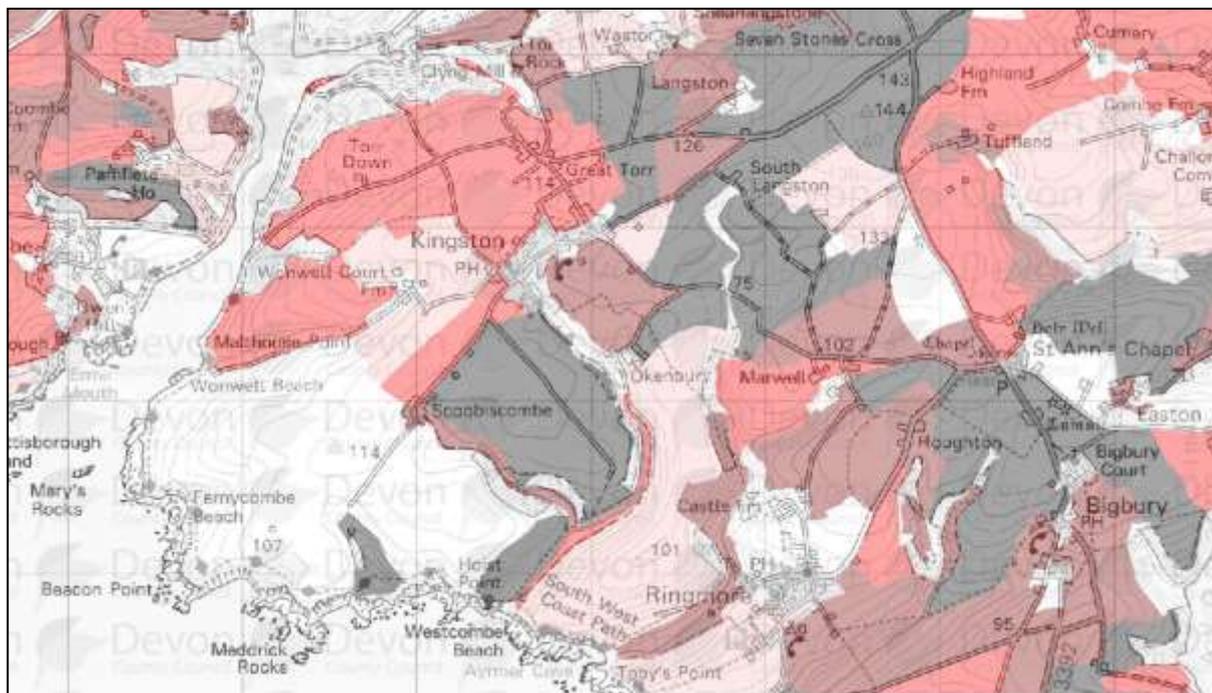


Fig 4.3: Loss of field boundaries in parish of Kingston since the 19th century.

□ 0%

	0-24%
	25-49%
	50-74%
	75-100%

Taken from Devon CC Historic Landscape Characterisation Maps:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/the-devon-historic-environment-record/historic-landscape-characterisation/>

Open farmland

Whilst hedgebanks are arguably the most important habitat on farmland, open areas, including pasture, stubble and field margins provide important habitat for many flowers, birds, mammals and insects. Certain farms in the parish participate in wildlife stewardship programmes that involve leaving field margins unploughed. Species that may benefit from open areas include the nationally rare ciril bunting *Emberiza circlus*, skylarks *Aluada arvensis* and brown hares *Lepus capensis* and a range of wildflowers and associated insects.

Streams and ponds

Aside from the saline estuary of the river Erme, the parish contains a small number of freshwater streams:

- Kingston stream arises from springs near the centre of the village and flows in a deep, wooded valley along the eastern boundary of the parish, entering the sea across Westcombe beach.
- A tributary of the Kingston stream rises below Scobbiscombe farm and flows down another wooded valley before joining the main stream about 500m above Westcombe beach.
- A small stream runs along the northern boundary of the parish and flows into the Erme estuary at Clyng Mill. This is believed to be the historic boundary of the Saxon Charterlands (see Section 5).
- Three other minor streams join the Erme estuary along its eastern margin.

Away from the estuary, the only standing water consists of irrigation ponds constructed at Langston farm and by damming the Kingston stream at Okenbury and its tributary below Scobbiscombe.

Although the area of freshwater habitat is relatively small, distinctive wild plants can be found around the margins including marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and ladies' smock (cuckoo flower) *Cardamine pratensis* which is an important food source for orange-tip butterflies *Anthocharis cardamines*.

Wooded combes

In addition to the fine woods bordering the estuary SSSI, other smaller areas of wood are found fringing the valleys:

- Wastor wood on the northern edge of the parish
- The woods fringing Kingston stream as it flows from the village towards Westcombe beach
- The woods fringing the tributary of the Kingston stream as it flows down the valley from Scobbiscombe

A number of these locations have been designated as wildlife sites (Fig 4.2) and notable plants include the butcher's broom *Ruscus aculeatus* and enchanters nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*. Follow

deer *Dama dama* and roe deer *Capreolus capreolus* are increasingly seen within and around the margins of wooded areas in the parish.

Coast

Beyond the mouth of the estuary of the Erme, stretching eastwards as far as Westcombe beach, the parish contains around 2.5 km of dramatic open coast. The coastline consists of high sea-cliffs, including Hoist Point, the highest point on the south Devon coast. At the foot of the cliffs there is a rugged rocky shoreline interspersed with a small number of beaches (Fernycombe, Beacon and Gutterside). These beaches are only easily accessible by boat, and disappear when inundated by high tides. Most of the land along the open coast is owned by the National Trust (Scobbiscombe Farm). The South West Coast Path runs through the parish along the top of the cliff line, providing dramatic views out over Bigbury Bay. Most of this area has been designated as a County Wildlife Site (Fig 4.2).

This stretch of coast is a fine example of unspoilt coastline and provides habitats for a range of maritime species:

- Along the cliff tops and rocky outcrops typical plants include: English stonecrop *Sedum anglicum*, buckthorn *Rhamnus carthatica*, sea plantains *Plantago maritima*, rock sea spurrey *Spergularia rupicola*, sea storksbill *Erodium maritimum*, wild thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, sheepsbit *Jasione montana*, thrift *Armeria maritima*, sea campion *Silene uniflora* and kidney vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*.
- Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and gorse scrub *Ulex* spp. and other vegetation along the cliff tops and on rocky slopes and ledges are important for insects such as: beetles (eg bloody-nose beetle *Timarcha tenebricosa*, black oil beetle *Meloe proscarabaeus*); butterflies (eg green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, small heath *Coenonympha tullia*) and gorse shield bug *Piezodorus lituratus*.
- Typical birds along the cliff tops include: stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, whitethroats *Sylvia communis*, rock pipits *Anthus petrosus*, yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* and linnets *Carduelis cannabina*.
- During spring and autumn migration periods wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* and the much rarer black redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* may also be seen passing through.
- The National Trust manages the land sensitively to provide a mix of vegetation and grassland that favours coastal wildlife. Much of this effort has been focussed on re-establishing populations of the nationally rare circl bunting *Emberiza circlus*, which may increasingly be seen along the coast path.
- The cliffs themselves are home to a typical range of seabirds: herring gull *Larus argentatus*, lesser *Larus fuscus* and greater black-back gull *Larus marinus*, shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* and gannets *Morus bassanus* may also be seen flying and diving offshore during the summer.
- Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* are frequent hunters along the coast. More rarely, a merlin *Falco columbarius* or peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* can be seen and there have been rare sightings of an osprey *Pandion haliaetus* passing through in the spring or summer.

4.4 Development Control Species

Over 20 species of wild animals and plants that have been recorded in the parish by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre have *Development Control Species* status (Table 4.1). These are species that are considered most important by local authorities in the planning process. They include certain species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act (2006), those that have European protection and those listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Table 4.1: Developmental Control Species recorded within Kingston parish

Mammals	
Eurasian badger	<i>Meles meles</i>
European otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
Barbastelle bat	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>
Nathusius' pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusi</i>
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>
Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>
Greater horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>
Lesser horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>
Natterer's bat	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>
Noctule bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>
Whiskered or Brandt's bat	<i>Myotis mystacinus / brandtii</i>
Birds	
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>
Reptiles	
Grass snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>
Insects	
High brown fritillary	<i>Argynnis adippe</i>
Plants	
Shore dock	<i>Rumex rupestris</i>

4.5 Other legally protected and notable species

Around 30 other species of plants and animals have been recorded within the parish of Kingston that have particular legal protection or are of particular conservation interest (DBRC, 2017).

Further information may be found in the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre Report on the Neighbourhood Plan web-site: www.kingstonplan.org

Tree Preservation orders

A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) is an order made by a local planning authority in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity (Part VIII of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). There are 2 TPOs at present in Kingston, giving protection to an ancient oak *Quercus robur* and a mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*.

Great Crested Newts

Most of the parish of Kingston lies within a Great Crested Newt consultation zone. These are two kilometre buffers around existing and historical (post 1970) great crested newt records. A great crested newt survey might be required for development sites within the parish (DBRC, 2017).

References:

- DBRC, (2017). *Wildlife site resource map and species information for neighbourhood planning – Kingston*. Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, 2017. (see: www.kingstonplan.org)
- Ivimey-Cook, R. B., (1984). *Atlas of the Devon Flora*. The Devonshire Association, Exeter.
- Turner, S. L., (1985). *Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation*. Devon County Council Historic Environment Service & English Heritage.

5. Historical development

Kingston has a long and rich history that underpins the special qualities of the parish:

- Traditional farming practices have shaped the landscape of the parish. These are reflected in the patchwork of fields with high hedgebanks, and sunken lanes. A significant proportion of ancient field patterns has been retained into the present day.
- The historic fabric of the centre of the village and the vernacular architecture of the older buildings and farms across the parish provide a strong local identity.
- The sense of 'place' and continuity that is valued by residents of the parish, comes from being a part of a long, on-going history.

The Kingston Local History Society was formed in the mid-1970s, with the aim of preserving Kingston's past and making it accessible to all. The Society has researched and published many valuable studies of the history of Kingston (see www.kingstonlocalhistory.co.uk). In 2006 the History Society received a Heritage Award for a project entitled 'Preserving Kingston's Past' which produced a DVD recording local people's memories and helped to preserve the oral history of the village.

The Kingston Parish Plan (2007) established an informative 'Time Line' that provides a snapshot of landmarks in the village's history (see www.kingstonplan.org). More details of the various periods in the history of the parish are set out below.

5.1 Pre-history

People lived, hunted, fished, farmed and traded in what we now call the parish of Kingston, long before the village existed and before there were any written records. This period of 'Pre-History' covers an immense span of time: going back to when people had only simple stone tools and lived a nomadic life hunting and gathering, progressing through the development of permanent dwellings, farming and the replacement of stone tools with bronze and then iron implements.

The marks these people left behind are understandably sparse, but traces can be seen in the land of the parish and the artefacts that have been found here. The Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation Project is an important source of information about these features (Turner, 2005).

Palaeolithic

This period, sometimes known as the 'Old Stone Age', extends from the earliest use of stone tools around 750,000 years ago until the end of the last Ice Age around 12,000 years ago. The population of South Devon would have been very low in this period. People roamed the land in search of nuts, berries, edible roots and the game which they hunted. Simple stone tools were used to prepare the food they gathered.

Just a single record of Palaeolithic people has been found in the parish. This consists of a scattering of flint debris, including a scraper, possibly used for dealing with animal carcasses, that was found in 1986 between the village and Westcombe beach (Table 5.1 and Fig 5.1).

Mesolithic

The 'Middle Stone Age' began as the ice retreated and is marked by an increase in population and a more settled way of life, where people moved around less and lived in semi-permanent encampments. It was during this period that people began to domesticate animals and use more sophisticated stone tools. There are no archaeological remains or finds in the parish that can be clearly dated to this period.

Neolithic

The 'New Stone Age' saw the development of the first settled farming communities where people kept sheep and cattle. The first monuments built by humans were constructed in this period in the form of burial mounds. Remains of these, known as long barrows, have been found near Bigbury and Ermington, but none actually within the parish of Kingston.

Bronze Age

The Bronze Age is so named because it marks the first widespread use of metal – in the form of bronze which is an alloy of copper and tin. Ores of both of these metals have been mined around Dartmoor since time immemorial, and perhaps the most exciting evidence of bronze age activity in Kingston was the discovery by divers in 1992 of the so-called Erme Estuary Ingot Wreck.

This wreck is believed, by some, to be the oldest shipwreck found in British waters, possibly that of a Phoenician trader from about 1000 BC who was engaged in exporting Dartmoor tin to the Mediterranean. The wreck consisted of four sections of timber spread over approximately 24m along the northward side of The West Mary reef at the mouth of the estuary. A total of 27 ingots has been raised, analysed as 99% pure tin and likely to have originated from Dartmoor. A number of these ingots are displayed in the Salcombe Maritime Museum.

The only other possible indications of bronze age activity in the parish are two pale, circular cropmarks or soil marks that were identified on aerial photographs taken of Scobbiscombe Farm in 1951. These were tentatively identified as the possible remains of bronze age barrow mounds, but this has not been confirmed.

Iron Age

Iron, which is a much tougher and superior metal to bronze, first came into widespread use around 700 BC. By this time, organised farming including the cultivation of cereal crops, had become well-established. Permanent settlements, often located within banked enclosures, and fields with defined boundaries have left their mark on the landscape. The population increased significantly during this period and was organised into tribes. Large defended enclosures known as hillforts were built in this period, with high banks and massive ditches. One such hillfort is located on a promontory overlooking the Erme estuary at Oldaport. Although this scheduled ancient monument ('Oldaport Camp') is actually within Modbury parish, it flanks the northern border of the parish of Kingston and is definitive evidence of extensive iron age activity in the area, possibly using the river Erme as a trading link.

Further evidence of Iron Age activity in the parish of Kingston is provided by the remains of banked enclosures, that have been identified at six locations: two just east of Fernycombe beach: two close

to Scobbiscombe House; one adjacent to the lane leading to Westcombe and one above the estuary in Wrinkle Wood (Fig 5.1 and Table 5.1).

Evidence of a seventh Iron Age enclosure has recently come to light. A geophysical survey undertaken in 2016, on two fields subject to a proposed development by Vicarage Park Ltd (named 'Long Field' and 'Vicarage Park' on the 1840 tithe map), identified a curved land feature likely to be of archaeological value. Subsequent investigation by excavating trial pits has indeed identified this feature as part of an Iron Age enclosure. Field boundaries, ditches and post holes have also been located in this area (Table 5.1 and Fig 5.1).

Another geophysical survey undertaken in 2018 in a field that was also subject to development proposals (named as 'Lower Vicarage Park' on the 1840 tithe map and sometimes known as 'Sanderson's field'), has also found evidence of Iron Age field boundaries (Table 5.1 and Fig 5.1). Further investigation by excavation took place on this site in 2019, but the results have not yet been published (at the time of writing).

These recent investigations provide further evidence of pre-historic activity within the parish.

Some archaeological finds and other historic features in the parish enjoy statutory protection and are included in the National Heritage List for England database maintained by Historic England. Many other features have been designated with a Monument UID (Unique Identifier) and are included in the Devon Historic Environment Record database (Devon County Council) but these may lack clear legal protection. See:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

and,

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/the-devon-historic-environment-record/>

Roman period

The Romans began their invasion in AD 43 and Britain remained part of the Roman Empire for almost the next four hundred years. This period perhaps marks the boundary between 'Pre-History' and 'History', because the Romans left extensive written records and much is known about their occupation.

The Romans established a legionary fortress and city at Exeter ('Isca') that was connected with the rest of England by the excellent Roman road system. West of Exeter evidence of Roman activity is rather sparse however, and there is no evidence of planned roads or towns in the South Hams. It appears that the Iron Age peoples continued their patterns of settlement and farming largely unchanged during the Roman occupation. There is evidence however of extensive coastal trading along the whole coast of south-west England during the Romano-British period. There is believed to have been Roman trading posts at Totnes and also at the mouth of the Avon near Bantham. Roman

pottery has been found at Oldaport Camp and this suggests that the Romans may also have been using the River Erme as a trading link with the rest of Britain and possibly the near Continent.

Table 5.1: Summary of pre-historic finds and features in the parish of Kingston.

Period	Description	Monument UID*	Grid reference
Palaeolithic 750,000-12,000 BC	A. Small flint scatter in field. One scraper found.	MDV28866	SX638 471
Mesolithic 12,000-4,500 BC			
Neolithic 4,500-2,300 BC			
Bronze Age 2,300-700 BC	B. Erme Estuary Ingot Wreck	MDV42771 (Protected Wreck)	SX606 466
	C. Two pale circular cropmarks visible on aerial photographs taken in 1951. Possibly remains of barrow mounds.	MDV104142	SX622 463
Iron Age 700 BC to 50 AD	D. Iron Age promontory fort known as 'Oldaport Camp'	MDV4861 (Scheduled Monument)	SX632 492
	E. Two rectilinear enclosures north-east of Fernycombe Beach. Visible as cropmarks on aerial photographs taken in 1989.	MDV 40097 MDV 104132	SX 621 465 SX 607 465
	Double ditched enclosure near Scobbiscombe House recorded from the air in 1989.	MDV40099	SX631 471
	F. Single ditched rectilinear enclosure near Scobbiscombe House recorded from the air in 1989.	MDV 40100	SX630 471
	G. Single ditched circular enclosure recorded from the air in 1989.	MDV 40096	SX636 472
	H. Possible enclosure in Wrinkle Wood	MDV 104442	SX622 477
	I. Curved feature located by geophysical survey on the	MDV118288 MDV118291	SX638 482

	<p>site proposed for development at 'Long Field' and 'Vicarage Park' Subsequently confirmed by trial pitting to be part of an Iron Age enclosure . Field boundaries, ditches, drainage and post holes also found on this site.</p>	<p>MDV119903 MDV119908</p>	
	<p>J. Iron age field boundaries located by geophysical survey on site proposed for development at 'Lower Vicarage Park' ('Sanderson's field'). Further investigation underway.</p>	<p>MDV121571</p>	<p>SX635 479</p>
<p>Roman Period 43 AD-410 AD</p>	<p>K. Roman pottery found at Oldaport Camp</p>	<p>MDV36045</p>	<p>SX632 492</p>

*Note: The Monument UID is the unique reference number assigned by Historic England to archaeological features.

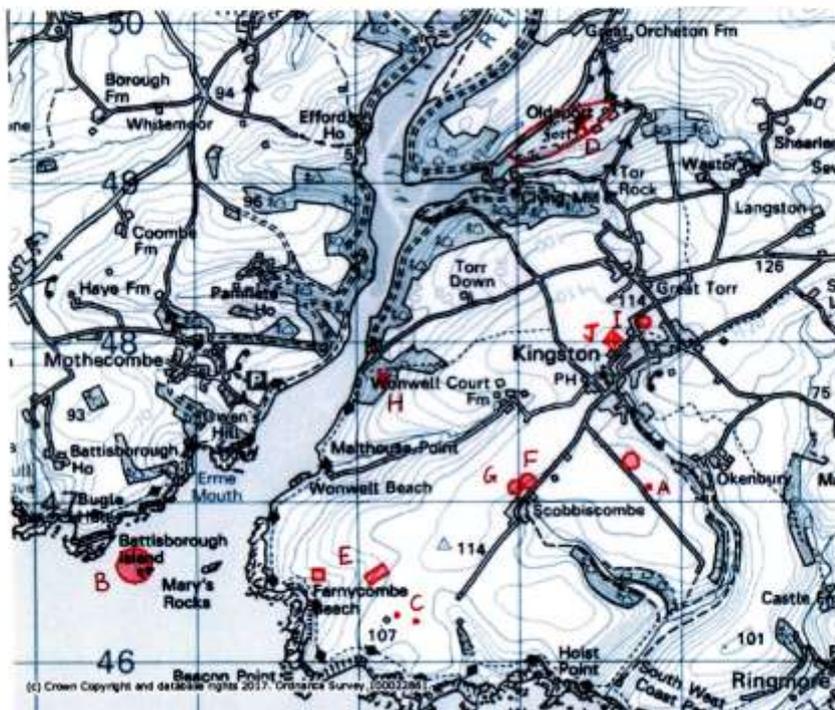


Fig 5.1: Pre-historic finds and features in the parish of Kingston (see Table 5.1 for key)

5.2 Foundation of Kingston

The Iron Age, or Celtic, people who inhabited the south-western peninsula of Britain at the time of the Roman invasion belonged to the Dumnonii tribe (from which the name 'Devon' is derived). After Roman rule came to an end in about 410 AD, the native Britons who remained created the kingdom of Dumnonia, covering Devon, Cornwall and parts of Somerset. There is very limited information about this period of history, but it is known that the kings of Dumnonia were Christian and maintained the episcopal structure established by the Romans. Everyday life and farming probably continued in what is now the parish of Kingston during this period with very little change, much as it had done since before the Romans.

Anglo Saxon settlement

The Anglo-Saxons began to arrive on the eastern shores of England, from across the North Sea during the first half of the 5th century. They spread slowly west and by the middle of the 6th century the Saxon Kingdom of Wessex had been established, and dominated much of the south of England. From AD 658 the kings of Wessex began a deliberate push to the west seeking to find new land to settle and to extend their kingdom. They won a number of decisive battles against the kingdom of Dumnonia and the region slowly came under Saxon rule from the 7th century onwards.

Despite the victories of the Saxons, it does not appear that there was any wholesale expulsion of the native Britons from south Devon, or any mass movement of Saxons into Devon, and there is evidence that native communities and new Saxon settlements co-existed in the area for a considerable period.

The Saxons referred to native Britons as *Wealhas* ('Welsh') meaning 'foreigners'. This name persists in modern day Devon place names such as 'Wallabrook' – further indication that both Briton and Saxon communities lived together in the region. Where the Saxons took over land that had been previously farmed by their Celtic forebears they referred to it in their language as *yeoland* ('old land'). Derivatives of this name can still be seen all over Devon and in Kingston it is preserved in the modern names 'Yellands' and 'Yellons'.

Although incoming Saxons and native Britons may have co-existed to a degree, it is clear that the Saxons completely changed the system of governance and also the methods of farming. As well as taking land previously farmed by the Britons, the Saxons cleared trees to bring more undeveloped land into cultivation. They also introduced the system of open field farming, dividing fields into long acre strips, a pattern that is still discernible in the dimensions of modern fields in Kingston.

In the year AD 846, Aethelwulf, king of the West Saxons (and father of Alfred the Great) passed a charter that granted to himself a large tract of land between the rivers Erme and Dart. This Charter is one of the oldest surviving acts of state and is preserved in the British Museum. The historian H.P.R. Fetter painstakingly discovered most of the landmarks that define the northern boundary of this land. The Kingston Local History Society has re-visited this work, using local knowledge to confirm the boundary between the Erme and the Avon. Remarkably, the boundary coincides quite closely with the present day boundary between Kingston and Modbury parishes starting at the creek by

Orcheton Wood and proceeding eastwards past Clyng Mill and then Wastor, towards Sevenstones. (Finberg 1969, Petter, 1985).

It is believed that the settlement we now know as Kingston village was first established at this time. The name 'Kingston' (King's Tun) means the King's Manor or Farm in the Saxon language. This would have been an agricultural, trading and administrative hub, from which the King's officials asserted his control over the area.

5.3 The Medieval

After the Norman conquest in 1066, Kingston remained in royal ownership, but the village is not recorded separately in the Domesday Book. It ceased to be a royal possession when Henry I gave it to Matilda Peverel in the early 12th century, and it became part of the ecclesiastical parish of Ermington, Kingston Church being the daughter Church of Ermington. Members of the Peverel family were Lords of the Manor for two centuries, but they never lived in Kingston.

It is believed that Lord of the Manor let land in the middle of the parish to tenant farmers, most of whom lived in the village. The outlying farms (including what are now Scobbiscombe and Wonwell) are believed to have been freehold properties. The Manor lands themselves were cultivated in large fields which were divided into strips, the farmers being apportioned these in various locations throughout the parish. There are few written records of Kingston from this time. In about 1250 Ralph de Punchardon granted Ellis le Brun one furlong of land in Kyngeston with 'free pasture for all beasts' and the right to search for sand at Schobescumb (Scobbiscombe) for a yearly rent of 5s. In 1269 Roberto de Wuniewill (Wonwell) was witness to a deed involving the priory of Modbury. In 1291 there was a court case concerning the unlawful holding of land in Kingston belonging to William Martyn, the Lord of the Manor.

5.4 Post-medieval

From the reign of the Tudors at the beginning of the 16th century and onwards, written records provide more detailed information about life in Kingston. Members of the Kingston Local History Society have researched many sources, which are recorded in the Society's Archives and have been summarised in key publications (see www.kingstonlocalhistory.co.uk).

The parish registers start in 1633, but the names of many of the inhabitants of Kingston were recorded for the first time in 1524 when they were assessed for taxes to finance the war with France. There were forty-five men and two women who were wealthy enough to be taxed, and this gives an insight into the surnames in use in the village at that time (Table 5.2)

Table 5.2: Inhabitants of Kingston recorded as being liable for tax in the Devon Lay Subsidy Rolls 1524-7 (Stoate, 1979)

Robert Aisheford	Hugh Haycche
Thomas Aisheford	Richard Veale
William Aisheford	Nicholas Cooker
Henry ??llyng	Richard Walke
John Haycche	John Malbowro

John Palmer	John Colyn
Nicholas Palmer	William Warde
William Haycche	Hugh Hyne
John Towsyn	Thomas Brownyng
Richard Towsyn	John Whytyng
Philip Hugh	Gregory Herte
John Mochelmore	Joan Holman wid
Philip Cocke	Richard Harvy
John Coke jun.	Richard Edmund
John Foterell	John Edmund
John Coke sen.	William Edmunde
Nicholas Rede	Richard Cooker
John Mathewe	Richard Whytyng
Philip Rogger	Jn Crofte
Nicholas Evelyng	John Rogger
John Evelyng	Edward Cooker
John Sheperd	Isabel Cooker
William Burryng	

During the reign of Elizabeth I, Devon was especially vulnerable from the threat of invasion by the Spanish Armada. In 1586 beacons were ordered to be built at every place where a landing might be made, and all able-bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 were recruited into the militia. Kingston's beacon guarding the mouth of the Erme was on Beacon Point and a smaller beacon was built on the shore below. In 1596 fifty-one Kingston men were shown to be liable for war service during the threat of invasion.

5.5 Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries

Kingston Local History Society has published a fascinating account of what life was like in Kingston in the eighteenth century. Mary Petter, a resident of Kingston and the author of this work, drew on a number of documents written in the 1780s and 1790s, notably the Kingston Poor Law Accounts and a Survey of the Manor of Kingston (Petter, 1988). The Poor Law Accounts record the names of landowners and tenants who paid rates, the land on which the rates were assessed, and the amount paid, and they give details of how the money was spent and to whom it was given. The survey of the manor names the tenants and describes in great detail the methods of farming, land tenure, and the terms of employment in South Devon.

The population of the village is estimated to have been around 350 at this time, and administration was in the hands of the Churchwardens and the Overseers of the Poor. The parish was required to look after its paupers and money to support the poor was drawn from rates paid by parishioners. Lawbreakers were taken to Plympton to be tried, and fathers of illegitimate children were required to pay maintenance. Orphans were boarded with neighbours, some children received schooling, and at the age of eleven or twelve were often apprenticed, usually to local farmers.

The majority of those working were employed on the land and a labourer's wage was six shillings (30 new pence) a week with a quart of cider a day. Other trades recorded in the village included: blacksmith, mason, glazier, slater, tailor, seamstress and shoemaker. The village was self-sufficient and contact with neighbouring villages and larger centres such as Plymouth and Exeter would have

been difficult. The roads were narrow, twisting, steep and very poorly surfaced. The use of wheeled vehicles was rare, with most goods being carried on the roads by packhorse. Bulky materials such as coal and limestone for the lime kilns beside the estuary would have been brought by sea.

The first national census was taken in 1801 and continued at ten-yearly intervals giving a detailed account of all the people living in the parish. The picture these records paint shows that village life changed only slowly during the nineteenth century. Most of the men and some of the women still worked on the land, and there were many tradesmen in what was still a self-contained community. Sea fishing is first clearly recorded as the occupation of some villagers at this time.

Tithes, paid in kind in the form of agricultural produce, had been the right of the Church since medieval times. In 1839 and 1841 a tithe map of the parish and a tithe assessment were produced so that tithes in kind could be converted to money rents. These records show every field and property in the parish and their owners and occupiers. Many of the field boundaries recorded then persist to this day. (See: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/historicenvironment/tithe-map/kingston/>)

The village had two pubs: the present Dolphin, but also the New Inn (later the Britannia Inn) which was located on Kingston Plain. The road links with the outside world improved and by 1850 the village had a post office.

In 1851 village children attended the Erme and Avon school at Bigbury, but a school was established in Kingston in 1860 and remained open until July 1966.

5.6 Twentieth and twenty-first centuries

Our record of the first half of the twentieth century has been enormously enriched by Kingston Local History Society's efforts to record the memories of long-standing villagers and to assemble photographic records. These records span the years from just before the First World War until the early 1950s, covering all aspects of village life, work and recreation (see KLHS publications).

Many of the photographs in these publications could have been taken yesterday and show how much of the village remains unaltered. Nevertheless, the huge changes that have taken place in our society since the end of the second world war have touched Kingston. Kingston can no longer be described as a self-contained farming community, somewhat isolated from the outside world. In many respects the village may have experienced greater change in the last 50 years than the previous 500:

- Whilst the present population is actually lower than in the mid-nineteenth century, there are many more houses and the built area of the village has expanded.
- Agriculture remains important but relatively few in the parish now work on the land.
- Agricultural and other trades (blacksmith, wheelwright, shoemaker, shopkeepers) have disappeared.
- Many people commute every day to their places of work which are outside the parish.
- Modern communications by mobile phone and superfast broad band, both reaching the parish in 2016, have allowed some to establish new types of business and to work from home.
- Many people come here to retire.

- Many old families remain, but a high proportion of residents was not born in the parish.
- Around 21% of properties are holiday lets or second homes.
- Almost every household has at least one car and road traffic dominates transport in and out of the village.

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Other Kingston Local History Society publications:

- *Early Kingston*
- *Kingston – A South Hams Village*
- *Kingston Remembered*
- *Back-along with Viv Freeman*
- *The Church of St James the Less Kingston*