

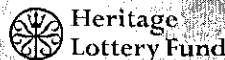


Sheepwashes in the Cotswolds AONB

Survey and Assessment



Working together to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds



Sheepwashes in the Cotswolds AONB
Map-based survey and conditional assessment

Part 1: report and appendices 1-6

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1st May 2002 .

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Worcestershire County Archaeological Service Report 940

Worcestershire County Archaeological Service Project 2075

In June wash thy sheep, where the water doth run:
And keep them from dust but not keep them from sun.
Then shear them and spare not, at two days anende,
The sooner, the better their bodies amend.

Thomas Tusser (1557), as quoted by Gosset (1911)

Shrill whistles barking dogs and chiding scold
Drive bleating sheep each morn from fallow fold
To wash pits where the willow shadows lean
Dashing them in their fold-staind coats to clean
Then turnd on sunning sward to dry agen
They drove them homeward to the clipping pen

John Clare (1827; Robinson and Summerfield 1964)

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Executive summary

The Cotswolds Sheepwash Project was set up by the Cotswolds AONB Partnership and funded by the Local Heritage Initiative. It was designed to collect information about sheep washing sites (variously known in the past as washes, washpools, and dips), with the participation of volunteer support. The project would not have been possible without the support also of the many farmers and landowners who granted access to the sites in the survey.

Though many of the sheepwashes remain undated, these sites give a strong impression of the former importance of sheep farming in the area. This provides a direct link with the Cotswold sheep breed which was renowned as one of the most valuable in the country in the Middle Ages. It was the source of great wealth to local landowners at a time when the economic strength of England was largely founded on the wealth generated by exploitation of the wool trade.

At the outset of the project 50 sheepwashes were known in County Sites and Monuments Records, which were mainly in Gloucestershire, with a very few also in Oxfordshire. During the map-based survey over 800 maps were consulted dating from the 18th century to the early 20th century. By the completion of this stage of the project a total of 132 sites, where there was evidence for the presence of a sheepwash, had been identified.

Local groups were then invited to participate as volunteer field surveyors and carry out a rapid written and photographic record of each sheepwash. Thirty individuals from seven local groups joined in the fieldwork stage of the project. Their site visits provided, for the first time, a more consistent account of the current state of sheepwash sites. The field survey results confirmed sheepwashes were present in Bath and North-East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire, as well as in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, and, therefore, were to be found in all the counties in the Cotswolds AONB.

The results showed that the sheepwashes had been constructed in a variety of different basic

forms, the most common type being the rectangular plan. The survey also showed that a variety of materials had been used in their construction, a surprising number incorporating dressed stone, indicating the former importance of these structures. It was also possible in many cases to identify surviving integral components of the washes, for instance the position of sluices designed to create the pool which was necessary for washing. Other associated remains, such as holding pens, could also sometimes be identified in the field, thereby showing the full extent of structures associated with the washing process.

Several clusters of sheepwashes were identified, for instance around Tetbury and Guiting Power, and in some cases particular river valleys were associated with washes, for instance the Rivers Coln and Leach. In many cases the sheepwashes were found close to existing paths, which may have been old routeways. These results suggest that there may be some localised variation in the distribution of the sheepwashes, which reflects the local history of towns and villages in the region.

Oral history, where available, was also noted. This has provided by far the best explanation of the use of these sites, and would make a worthwhile addition to the project.

The sheepwashes in good condition (36 examples; 27%) are most likely the result of the fact that the washing of sheep only ceased in the 20th century. Several sheepwashes were, therefore, readily identifiable as worthy of future restoration, where landowners are in agreement.

Overall, the survey has provided the first comprehensive account of sheepwash sites across the Cotswolds region. It has led to the discovery of many forgotten sites, some of which have a great deal of potential as historic features. The survey has also involved numerous members of volunteer conservation and local history groups, who have made a major contribution to the project. Much information has been collected which will be useful in coming years for the management and researching of sheepwashes in the Cotswolds AONB.

1. Introduction

Sheepwashing was once an important agricultural and social event in Cotswold villages, which reflected the prevalence of sheep farming in this region in the past. The sheep were kept primarily for their wool, and the wool industry played a significant part in the development of the Cotswold landscape of today. Sheep production was the mainstay of the economy in medieval England and remained important in the Cotswolds until the 20th century.

The legacy of the wealth that sheep farming generated is still visible in the Cotswold landscape today in the form of the fine wool churches and the great country houses. Other memorials to this industry of lesser stature, but of no less significance, are the sheepwash or washpool sites, which were used to clean the wool on the sheep before shearing. Washing the wool on the sheep increased the value of the fleece, and many sheepwash sites were still in use into the 20th century. Some of these sites are still visible reminders of a former great industry, whereas others are now either partially or totally lost to view.

The sheepwash (or washpool) is a good example of a feature which, though once important, has virtually disappeared from the contemporary scene. If encountered in the field its purpose would not generally be recognised today, and most of these sites are already in a state of total disrepair, and decline. As a consequence, at the outset of this project, there was no record of most of these sites on any official lists. The national index of heritage site types (Royal Commission for Historical Monuments of England 1995) records the sheepwash as a possible site type, though the majority of the Sites and Monuments Records in the survey area did not have any such sites recorded. This type of site has clearly not been given much attention in the past, and it is now important to record these sites, especially as some are likely to be of considerable age, a medieval date being claimed in some cases.

The Cotswold Sheepwash Project was specifically designed in order to undertake community based work aimed at identifying, restoring, and raising an awareness of sheepwash sites, both locally and at large across the Cotswolds. That part of this project reported here has aimed to locate and carry out a condition survey of possible sheepwash sites, and to recommend future management of sites (eg long term conservation and study) based on the results of a regional survey. The wider project also intends the restoration of sheepwash sites with the involvement of their respective communities, based on the results of this survey. The project was developed by the Cotswolds AONB Partnership, and supported by the Local Heritage Initiative, a grant programme managed by the Countryside Agency, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the Nationwide Building Society.

This report has been written by Derek Hurst, except for Section 7 which was jointly written with Shona Robson-Glyde, and the figures have been produced with the technical assistance of Neil Lockett.

2. General Background

Sheep farming in the Cotswolds

Sheep were once one of the mainstays of the Cotswold economy. It is not known how long ago that the importance of sheep to the region was established, but there are some indications that it could be far earlier than the medieval period. For instance it has been claimed that the waterless expanse of land to the north-east of Cirencester could have been a sheep-run in Roman times (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1976, xxiii), while the significance of sheep to the diet, as well as possibly in other ways, has been indicated by at least one Iron Age site in the region (Beckford in Worcestershire (unpublished)).

There are some clearer indications by the early medieval period of the significance of Cotswold wool. For instance, the early importance of Winchcombe, a royal manor, has been attributed to its position at the base of the Cotswolds scarp, controlling the approach to the sheep pastures of the northern wolds (Finberg 1972, 409). In the 8th century Charlemagne asked Offa to ensure that woollen cloaks should stay the same as previously manufactured by the Mercians, indicating a long-established woollen industry (*ibid*). One charter (though doubtful in some aspects) makes reference to a ford called *sheepwash* at Shipston on Stour (*ibid*), which would no doubt have had associations with sheep rearing in the Cotswolds. This is one of the earliest references to the practice of sheep washing.

By the medieval period the large areas of upland pasture in the Cotswolds were used in the summer for grazing sheep on a large scale, while in the winter they grazed in the arable parts of the farmland. In this way they fertilised the fields in readiness for the next year's crop.

By 1300 the Crown was taxing the wool, and the scale of the industry was so great that over 30,000 sacks (or about 5000 tons) of wool were being exported (Power 1941). The long wool of

the Cotswold breed was especially in demand, together with the wool from Herefordshire and Worcestershire sheep (*ibid*). Woolmen arranged for the purchase of wool from many farms and its export to the Continent, and these merchants set up the famous wool staple. This was a body of traders who specialised in the wool trade and bought up all the wool, enabling them to rig the market (with official sanction) in favour of the Crown, thereby keeping prices high (*ibid*).

In the later Middle Ages two sheep per acre seems to have been common in the Cotswolds (Jones 1994, 77). Some flocks were very large, for instance in the later 13th century, the Bishop of Worcester had 1612 sheep on his estate at Blockley. Merchants in the local towns were then engaged in the trading of the wool. In the later 14th century William Grevel of Chipping Campden bought the wool from manors owned by the Bishop of Worcester at a price of £133, a very large sum in that period. Winchcombe Abbey was also heavily involved in the wool business. Its tenants at Sherborne owed services to the Abbot, helping in the washing and shearing of his sheep. It is estimated that the total head of Winchcombe Abbey sheep in the Cotswolds was about 8000 in the later 14th century (Walrond 1973, 181). At this time the exchequer was gaining substantial revenues from the tax on the exportation of wool to the Low Countries. Families in Chipping Camden, Northleach and Cirencester were all prominent in this trade, as merchants engaged in various aspects of the business (eg as graziers, wool buyers or wool exporters). The importance of the trade was reflected by the offices that some of these men achieved, notably Dick Whittington who became the Lord Mayor of London three times (Walrond 1973, 182).

Various towns in the Cotswolds benefited greatly in the medieval period from the trade in wool, and eventually woollen goods. Cirencester was the main beneficiary, but Burford, Tetbury and Chipping Sodbury also derived much business from the sheep farming in their local districts (Garner and Ingram 1973), while the wool

merchants favoured Northleach as a centre (Power 1941). Much of the wool left the Cotswolds for a long journey, first to London, and then on to the Low Countries (now Belgium and Holland), where it was finally turned into cloth.

The keeping of large flocks of sheep was closely integrated into the wider agricultural system of the Cotswolds as the manuring of the valley fields became reliant on the sheep (Thomas 1945), and this enabled a sheep-corn system to flourish (Thirsk 1984, 1780). The sheep were quartered in the valleys after harvest and during the winter. The success of this system has been used to explain the longevity of common fields in the Cotswolds, though this was in decline in the 17th century (*ibid*).

The keeping of sizeable sheep flocks became even more common with the break-up of the monastic estates at the Dissolution. The high quality of the medieval wool had previously been unsurpassed and had been ideal for high quality textile production using medieval methods of manufacture. In the post-medieval period both long and short wools continued to be used. Only highly specialist farmers and other craftsmen ensured that the Cotswolds wool gained and maintained its prominent position over such a long period. During the post-medieval period home-produced wool came to be largely supplied to the domestic textile industry rather than being sent abroad to be made into cloth. This supply ensured that there came to be an even greater national dependence on sheep farming, and its related industry, as a source of income and wealth.

In the 16th and 17th century the wool was no longer exported, and textile manufacturing expanded in this country. In north-west Wiltshire a particularly important centre was set up, including Malmesbury, Castle Combe and Trowbridge (Ramsey 1965). By the 20th century there were still about 20 million sheep in the Cotswolds (Garner and Ingram 1973) indicating that sheep farming remained important in the

area, although, subsequently, modern arable farming has made inroads onto the sheep runs, and today fewer sheep (303,239; DEFRA 2000) are seen hereabouts.

The Cotswold breed

Despite its historic importance, there has been very little specifically recorded about the Cotswold breed (Haigh and Newton 1952, 19). It was extremely hardy, and its wool was highly valued in the medieval period, when it suited the prevailing methods of spinning and weaving.

The Cotswold breed predominated in its eponymous area, but was also used further afield. For instance it was the prevalent breed in south Worcestershire in the 18th century (Gaut 1939, 176). The purity of the breed was affected when crossing with Leicestershires occurred, for instance in Worcestershire, while crossing with Welsh breeds was common to the north of this area.

Other changes in farming practices also had a positive impact on the economics of sheep farming, and the woollen industry. Enclosures from the 15th/16th century in particular resulted in an increase in the size of fleeces. The average fleece in the Evesham area was 3-4lbs from sheep penned in the common fields, compared to 9lbs for sheep raised in the enclosures, presumably because of better quality animal husbandry. This certainly provided a strong economic argument for the advantage of enclosed ground (Gaut 1939, 176). One of the largest consumers of the Cotswolds wool in the post-medieval period was the blanket industry of Witney in Oxfordshire. In the 19th century the Cotswold breed remained popular as it was also a good source of meat (Gibbings 2000). However, the Cotswold breed eventually lost favour, and had become almost extinct by the mid 20th century (Thomas 1945, 38), as a result of changing farming practices, and the increase in demand for man-made fibres (Gibbings 2000). The Cotswold Sheep Society was revived in the 1960s (Gibbings 2000), and has now ensured the survival of the breed for the future.



Sheepwashing at Cleeve Hill in the early 20th century

Brief history of the washing process

It is likely that sheep have been washed over a long period of history, and there is circumstantial documentary evidence for this process since at least the middle Saxon period (see above). The main purpose was to remove grease and dirt (Ryder 1983, 690), in the latter case especially if the sheep had been grazing on former arable fields. The washed wool was also lighter to transport and less prone to deterioration during storage (Harris 1972), while the shearing of washed sheep was a much more pleasant and quick task.

The washing was largely a natural process as there is a natural detergent in the wool which helps to lift the grease from the wool once it is wet. In fact the retention of the dirty water in the sheepwash, during the washing, was deliberate, as it became

soapier the more sheep that had been washed. This may have been aided on occasion by the addition to the water of some other substance in the case of some sheepwashes, but, unfortunately, this has not been documented in detail. It was sometimes a festive occasion, with a number of neighbours sharing the same wash. Washing is known to have occurred in February, shortly before they were shorn (Porter and Abbott 1995), but was more likely to happen in the late spring or early summer (eg in May; Harris 1972).

The simplest method of washing was to use the natural flow of a fast stream. Here a bend on the stream would be selected so that the sheep could be placed in deep water before they were guided out in the shallows on the other side (Ryder 1983, 691). Structures could also be specially built in the stream to accommodate the sheep. Occasionally a

tub was constructed on to which a jet of water was directed, and the sheep were individually washed in this (Ryder 1983).

In the regular sheepwash the sheep were either handled from the side by long-handled implements, or by workmen standing in the water, in which case three persons worked together as a team passing the sheep from one to another (Ryder 1983). If there were no pens built near the sheepwash, a temporary pen would be fashioned out of hurdles. One of the most important aspects of the design was to have a clean area for the sheep to get out of the water, and clean pasture for them to dry out in afterwards (Ryder 1983, 692). Shearing usually took place several days after washing.

Sheepwashes were still being constructed in the late 19th century (or possibly rebuilt; eg on Cleeve Common (Garrett 1993, 47)), and wool was also usually sold as 'washed on the sheep's back' until the late 19th century (Reibel 1978). Eventually the factory washing of fleeces superseded the rather haphazard process of washing out in the fields (Ryder 1983). Though traditional washing declined throughout the 20th century, it was still happening in the central Welsh marches in the 1970s, though the economics no longer allowed the farmer to profit much from the trouble of washing the wool on the sheep, except in the case of some breeds (Harris 1978). By this time any community involvement in the washing had also ceased.

Sheepwashes and sheep dips, and their use

Dipping is quite distinct from washing in the modern sense, since these are different processes associated with different purposes. In particular the former involves the use of chemical disinfectant. Dipping occurred after the sheep had been sheared and was entirely different in purpose from traditional sheepwashing, being used as a guard against sheep mite/sheep scab (Thomas 1945, 69). In England dipping was normally necessary only once a year, and it seems

to have been a legal requirement in the 19th century that the local police were notified so that they could attend (Stanes 1990, 146).

However, though these two processes may be relatively distinct in practice, it was possible for the same structures to be used for both washing and dipping (as witnessed by Moss (1998)), especially in the earlier days of chemical dipping. The use of chemicals tended to favour a closed system (no running water), and this, in turn, tended to lead to the development of a tank-based system. This had benefits both in terms of the economy of maintaining the strength of the chemical solution being applied to the sheep, and in terms of protecting the environment from the potentially toxic effects of these chemicals on other wildlife, or indeed the local water supply. Hence the development of structures that did not involve naturally running water, and which technically could be usefully referred to specifically as 'dips' to separate them from the earlier 'washes'. Unfortunately the earlier term (*sheepwash*) seems to have remained in general use and to have been applied by the Ordnance Survey surveyors to both types of structure in the early 20th century.

Note. The term 'sheepwash' is used throughout this report to cover sheepwashes, washpools, and dips, in the absence of any strict definitions distinguishing types of structure, and without detailed survey data about these structures being available. Some differentiation of these features has, however, been undertaken in the analytical parts of the report from Section 7 onwards. This preliminary identification of site types has been based solely on an interpretation of the field records produced by the volunteer surveyors.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aims and scope of the project were:

- a) to raise awareness of the heritage of sheep washing in the Cotswolds
- b) to collect information relating to the use and history of sheepwash sites
- c) to assess the condition of individual sheepwashes
- d) to recommend future management of these sites
- e) to involve local groups in carrying out the research.

4. Methods

Study area

The study area was the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as officially defined in 1990 (Fig 1). This covers 790 square miles (2038 km²) comprising 282 parishes in whole, or in part, in six historic counties (now seven unitary or county local authority areas: Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Bath and North-East Somerset, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire), and is the largest AONB in England and Wales. The Cotswolds is the best known part of the band of oolitic limestone stretching from the English Channel to the North Sea. It is especially marked by the physical prominence of its west edge which is a major escarpment. To the south east the land gently dips away with rolling wolds and picturesque river valleys.

Stage 1 Map-based collection of information

The relevant County Sites and Monuments Records (CSMRs) were consulted about sheepwash sites, and a map-based search was also undertaken to ascertain the location of as many sheepwashes (including washpools and

sheep dips) as possible. This covered a selection of the following cartographic sources:

- Early edition Ordnance Survey maps (mainly 1:2500 scale – see Table 1)
- Tithe maps – Table 2
- Enclosure maps- Table 2
- Estate maps – Table 2.

Table 1 Quantification of early editions of Ordnance Survey maps consulted

Ordnance Survey map edition	Gloucestershire	Oxfordshire	Somerset	Warwickshire	Wiltshire	Worcestershire	Totals
OS 1st edition	9	-	3	-	-	-	12
OS 2nd edition	3	-	-	-	-	-	3
OS 2nd edition (updated)	378	87	30	27	68	11	601
OS 3rd edition	4	-	-	-	-	-	4

Other relevant documentary sources, other than maps, were also consulted, and these were mainly useful for providing a broader context for sheepwashing in the community. In addition local knowledge was sought through consultation with the local groups, especially during Stage 2.

An Access database was designed for the collation of all the data collected during the project, and the contents of this were based initially on the requirements of the relevant CSMRs.

Local groups were identified by consulting the Cotswolds AONB Partnership, the county SMRs, and local museums. Local authority web sites were particularly useful for this purpose. Contacts for the local groups were subsequently followed

up by phone in order to establish whether members of the group might be interested in carrying out fieldwork. Subsequently a letter was sent to each local group willing to participate in the project inviting any volunteers to attend the training sessions for field surveyors.

Table 2 Quantification of other cartographic sources for survey area

County	Tithe maps	Apportionments	Enclosure maps	Estate maps
Gloucestershire	(47)	(6)	(15)	+(21)
Oxfordshire	14(9)	(11)	1(4)	+
Somerset	14(14)	(14)	1(2)	+(5)
Warwickshire	8(9)	(10)	3(4)	+
Wiltshire	20(18)	(22)	7(8)	+(9)
Worcestershire	1(1)	(1)	11(11)	+(3)

+ = cartographic source type not quantified in detail
(figures in parentheses) = quantity of plans (etc) consulted

Stage 2 Field survey

Stage 2 was focussed primarily on recording the form and condition of each sheepwash identified in Stage 1. Two field training sessions were run, which were attended by members of local groups so that the process and methods of recording could be explained on the ground. The training sessions were based at sheepwashes at Sutton under Brailes and at Aldsworth on 1st September 2001. The local groups which had become involved in the project, were encouraged to undertake the recording of the sheepwashes in their own local area. Recording was based on *pro forma* recording sheets, specifically designed for the project, and a documented method was provided (Appendix 2). This method had been previously field-tested by two volunteer surveyors

before the design was finalised. The survey methods were also agreed in advance with the Cotswolds AONB Partnership.

In addition to a written and sketched record of each sheepwash, a photographic records was made. Photographic recording was primarily by colour print film (subsequently scanned during development), and standard 2m ranging poles were provided (a set of two per group) for the purposes of providing scales in the record photographs for each sheepwash. Black and white photographs were also taken, where possible, for archive purposes.

A draft copy of the project database was given to each field surveyor for consultation. During this consultation local groups were also asked to provide as much information as possible, including checking about the contact information for local landowners/tenants on whose property sheepwashes had been located. The field survey of the sheepwash sites identified during Stage 1 was almost entirely carried out by members of the local history and community groups. Only four sites were omitted from the survey by the volunteer surveyors, and these were subsequently visited by Worcestershire Archaeology Service personnel.

The field surveyors were responsible for making contact with landowners to ascertain permission for a field survey visit. Special precautions were built into the project in response to the need to take account of the continuing threat of foot and mouth disease. These included the provision of a generic risk assessment for foot and mouth, and continual emphasis during the project liaison with the field surveyors in order to ensure that individual sites were also subject to risk assessment, and that farmers were carefully consulted about access to their land.

Monitoring of the recording by local groups was undertaken on a sample basis (about 3% of sites), and used to assess the accuracy of the fieldwork recording being carried out overall.



Volunteer surveyors recording the Bledington sheepwash

A month (September 2001) was allowed for field surveyors to visit their allotted sites. Feedback from/to local groups was based on a symposium/liason meeting held in Cirencester on 13th October 2001, where members of the participating local groups contributed to a discussion of the sheepwashes, and to the listing of sites for possible future initiatives. This meeting was also widely advertised in the local papers in order to bring in any other interested members of the public not already involved through a local group. Those attending this meeting were encouraged to contribute any special information they were aware of about individual sheepwashes, and, especially, to identify the best sites they had visited.

The Stage 1 database, detailing the sheepwash locations identified from map sources, was augmented at this point with the data recorded during field visits. A final check of the data held about the sheepwash sites was also carried out.

Stage 3 Reporting

Main report

This report comprises:

- a) a project summary establishing the distribution of the sheepwashes and assessing their general condition.
- b) a base map and distribution maps of the sheepwashes showing: the distribution of the sheepwashes in the AONB; their condition; their location names.

- c) maps at 1:25,000 showing the location of each sheepwash in its locality.
- d) photographs (digitally scanned @ 2400dpi) of the surveyed sheepwashes on a CD with a maximum of three photos per site and with one photograph of each surveyed sheepwash included in the report.
- e) condition survey sheets for each sheepwash surveyed to include the size, shape, location and water source.
- f) project evaluation for each stage, with a detailed time audit and breakdown of personnel for each stage.

The report distribution list comprises seven counties (namely the archaeological services, where appropriate), and six county record offices, the Local Heritage Initiative (Countryside Agency), and the Cotswolds AONB Partnership.

Other reporting

Other reporting comprises data transfer of the relevant site information to the local CSMRs via the Access database. Selective reporting to all the local participating groups and farmers was also included. In the case of local groups, this was to comprise the provision of a CD of the local photographs, a copy of the local record sheets, summary text, and relevant maps. In the case of farmers paper copy of the relevant parts of the report was provided. All those involved in the project will also receive the newsletters associated with the project.

Archive

The archive, including the original photographic record (colour prints), and black and white photographs, will be placed with the Cotswolds AONB Partnership.

5. Map based survey and documentary search (Stage 1)

The map based survey and documentary search (Stage 1) was carried out in mid 2001. Initially the county sites and monuments records (CSMRs) were approached about whether they held data about any sheepwash, washpool, or sheep dip sites within the survey area. Only two out of six historic counties within the survey area already had such sites listed, as follows:

- Gloucestershire (and South Gloucestershire)* - 47 sites
 - Oxfordshire* - 3 sites
 - Bath and North-East Somerset
 - Warwickshire
 - Wiltshire
 - Worcestershire
- (* = sites listed in the SMR prior to survey)

Six county record offices (CROs) and a local studies centre (Gloucestershire) were also visited in June to July 2001:

- Gloucestershire (both the CRO and the local studies centre at Gloucester Library)
- Oxfordshire (CRO)
- Somerset (CRO)
- Warwickshire (CRO)
- Wiltshire (CRO)
- Worcestershire History Centre (this CRO was closed during the map based survey period of the project, and only visited afterwards to confirm various sites already identified from information held at the County Archaeological Service).

The National Monuments Record (NMR) was also visited, as this repository holds an almost complete series of early editions of Ordnance Survey maps for the area of the survey.

The maps

The prominence of the revised OS 2nd edition mapping as a source of sheepwash sites was

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probably as a result of a revision to the types of site being recorded by field surveyors and then draughtsmen in c1906 (see Oliver 1993, 70; OS 1906). In c1906 the sheepwash appeared for the first time in the Ordnance Survey list of sites to be recorded, and was defined as an 'artificial pool for washing purposes only'. Since the mapping of the counties in the survey area was revised subsequently (OS updated 2nd edition; Table 3 and Table 4), then it is not surprising that sheepwashes became a feature of this edition, as a result of the Ordnance Survey fieldworkers taking account of their new instruction to now include features of this type. This was fortunate timing as the practice of county-wide revisions was abandoned after 1922 in favour of revising only those areas with large-scale changes, and by 1928 this meant that only urban areas were being revised (Oliver 1993, 25).

Documentary evidence in the form of field-names indicates the earliest instances of sheepwash sites so far known, and in the current absence of any archaeological evidence it is not possible to show that these sites may be earlier in date. Thus Gelling (1954) records medieval instances of washpools at Chastleton (*Wassepole*; dated c1200), and in Charlbury (*Wassemere*, dated 1363, which may correspond to *Washbrook Hill* in the tithe, and is identified as site 126 in the present survey).

Table 3 Dates of county second revision of OS 1:2500 sheets

County	Dates
Gloucestershire	1912-22
Oxfordshire	1910-20
Somerset	1912-13, 1927-30, 1936-9 (incomplete)
Warwickshire	1912-14, 1919-20, 1921-3, 1926-9 (incomplete)
Wiltshire	1921-4
Worcestershire	1913-14, 1921-2, 1925-6

Table 4 Comparison of a sample of sheepwash data on different editions of OS mapping: number of sheepwash sites per sheet

1:2500 map sheet	1st edition*	2nd edition**	updated 2nd edition***	3rd edition
13/6	0	-	1	-
13/7	0	-	1	-
13/8	0	-	1	-
13/10	0	-	1	-
13/11	0	-	1	-
14/4	0	-	1	-
20/1	0	0	1	1
20/3	0	0	1	1
20/5	0	0	2	2

* Dated generally to late 1880s

** Dated generally to c1900

*** Dated generally to early to mid 1920s

A total of 148 sites was identified as a result of the map-based survey, which was primarily based on the OS updated 2nd edition mapping. Some preliminary observations were made about the location of this type of site during the course of this stage of the survey. For instance, there was a tendency for sheepwashes to be located near to boundaries (eg sites 7; 47; 62 in Alderton, Sherbourne and Coln St Denis parishes respectively in Gloucestershire; or site 85 on the shared border of Luckington and Sherston parishes respectively in Wiltshire), or to where streams crossed tracks (eg site 60 in Aldsworth parish in Gloucestershire). It was also clear from the tithe apportionments that the sheepwashes were not generally owned by the parish, in contrast to, for instance, the village pound, which was invariably a parochial property. The sheepwash would, therefore, normally have been held in private hands.

6. Evaluation of map-based survey and documentary search (Stage 1)

Assessment of methodology: availability of data

County Sites and Monuments Records

Consultation with the relevant County Sites and Monuments Records (CSMRs) was an essential first step. However, the amount of information about sheepwash sites available on CSMRs turned out to be relatively limited, especially in view of the number of such sites added as a result of the present survey. The data held by CSMRs was also inconsistent, as all the relevant counties were found to have sheepwashes, whereas only two of these had sites previously on their CSMR. The policies of each CSMR towards recording its sites were not included in the information sent, and so it is difficult to judge whether sheepwash sites had been excluded for any reason. Given that it has not yet been generally possible to prove the antiquity of sheepwash sites archaeologically, it is possible that this has had some bearing on the omission of these sites from CSMRs. Equally the documentary evidence for the likely medieval use of some of the better known sheepwash sites has not yet been widely acknowledged.

County Record Offices

This stage was largely concerned with map-based evidence most of which was only available as original documents in the county record offices. Each county record office (CRO) presented a different approach to making these documents available to the public, with some being quite restrictive as to the number of documents which could be on order at any one time. The production of documents could also, at some County Record Offices, be relatively slow, as this depended on staff availability and whether the office was busy. In at least one case it was not possible to pre-order documents for the following day. As a result of this generally slow response rate from County Record Offices (the notable

exception was the Wiltshire CRO) a strategy was developed for the Stage 1 documentary search, which sought to overcome some of these drawbacks. A heavy reliance was placed on the National Monuments Record (NMR; located at the Swindon office of English Heritage) for the Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, as here the maps were available in a public area, *albeit* on microfiche. In addition to the medium of microfiche, which is not renowned for its usability, the equipment used for microfiche viewing was far from ideal. The equipment available was also not capable of good quality copy reproduction (necessary so that the Stage 2 surveyors could follow precisely the evidence accumulated during Stage 1).

Map searching

As it was impossible to look at all the available mapping that could hold data on sheepwash sites, a strategy was developed at the commencement of this stage which provided a level of consistency to the results. Preliminary analysis had indicated that the best coverage for the detection of sheepwash sites was the revised 2nd edition OS 1:2500 maps. The whole of the survey area, as far as possible, was, therefore, covered using this series. The confirmation of this approach was made by comparing 1st, 2nd and 3rd edition OS maps at the same scale for the recording of sheepwash sites (see above Table 4), and this confirmed that many more sites were recorded on the later edition maps (ie revised 2nd edition and later). Smaller scale mapping was not considered useful for this study due to the small size of the sheepwash structures, however this assumption was not tested in detail.

A selection of tithe maps and enclosure maps was examined for each county, to try and assess whether these might add further sites. It was generally concluded that these may give important clues to earlier sites, though the fieldwork was often not able to find these sites (see Stage 2 results). A series of transcribed tithe maps for Gloucestershire (by Gwatkin) was

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particularly useful as it was possible to get large numbers of these out together.

Local groups

A total of nineteen local groups was approached about the possibility of joining in the fieldwork (Stage 2 below), and the response was always positive. Local group coverage across the Cotswolds AONB was, however, uneven, as there are some areas where there are apparent gaps in coverage (eg in the Moreton in the Marsh area). The groups represented local history, conservation, and archaeology interests, the former predominating. In some cases it was clear that few members of a group were active, and that the main group function was for meetings and lectures (see below). In the final analysis seven groups comprising twenty-six individuals, together with at least four unaffiliated members of the public, participated in the project fieldwork.

The approach to local groups may have benefited from a longer lead-in time into the project, as it was apparent that some groups have a formal committee structure, and that the approach had come at the wrong time in their business cycle. Most often a group of this type of group was entering its lecture season in September/October, and so the Stage 2 activity would have fitted better with the summer when outings would have been more in keeping with group activities. It is possible that more notice would have overcome this particular problem, and made it possible for more groups to accommodate practical field surveying in the late autumn or even winter. This is the best time to carry out this type of archaeological fieldwork, when vegetation is less of a problem and landscape survey, therefore, more productive.

7. Conditional survey (Stage 2 results)

Field survey

Nineteen organisations were contacted with a view to their participation in this stage of the project, and seven (37%) were able to participate in the fieldwork stage. The organisations and individuals participating in this stage are listed in the *Acknowledgements* section below.

Survey coverage

Thirteen sheepwash sites were found to be just outside the AONB area, often literally by a few metres, and these reduced the overall total of sheepwash sites in the survey to 132 (89%). The number of sheepwash sites in the survey was also reduced for the following reasons:

- not visited as a result of foot and mouth (8 sites)
- access denied by landowner (1 site)

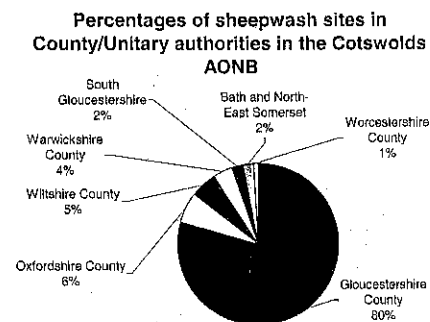
The actual number of sheepwashes surveyed, when reduced on the grounds given above, was reduced from 148 to 123 sites (83%).

Duplicate sites were recorded from different sources, especially where sheepwashes were located on the edge of parishes (eg at Sherston and Luckington in Wiltshire) and so appeared on both parish maps. The rest of the unrecorded sites were due to inaccessibility for a variety of reasons, notably the concern with foot and mouth disease. Though the disease had largely abated by the time of the commencement of the field survey, and the Cotswolds AONB area was officially clear, there was still a great deal of concern.

Understandably this led in some cases to access being denied by farmers. In practice it was also discovered that part of the Cotswolds AONB around Dumbleton Hill in Gloucestershire was still subject to restrictions, though the grounds for this could not be established. Only in the case of one landowner was access denied without this sort of justification.

Distribution

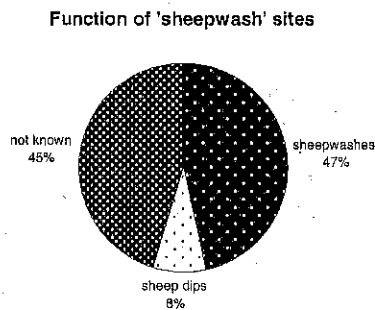
A total of 105 (80%) of the sheepwash sites in the Stage 1 survey results were located in Gloucestershire, with the majority of the rest of the sites being split between Oxfordshire (8 sites; 6%) and Wiltshire (7 sites; 5%). Since the survey area consisted primarily of Gloucestershire, with relatively small portions of the surrounding counties, this result suggested a broad distribution across the region. However, almost two-thirds of the washes were concentrated on the higher ground that runs along the western boundary of the Cotswolds AONB. Such a distribution would suggest that the sheepwashes may have been primarily constructed close to the sheep on their principal grazing grounds in the hills. In which case the sheep may not have been moved any great distance from their grazing areas when they were being washed and sheared, and the washes were built in the vicinity of where the sheep were being kept, as might be expected.



The distribution of the sheepwashes also indicated that a many of the sites are located along or close to routes and trackways, with a large number being close to watercourses (Figs 5-55). It seems that there was a need for each wash to have easy access for people and carts. It is likely that once the sheep had been washed they were kept close to the sheepwash until they were sheared; either in pens or more likely grazing loose in the fields around the wash. The shearing was then carried out in these fields rather than taking the sheep back to the farm. The fleeces could then have

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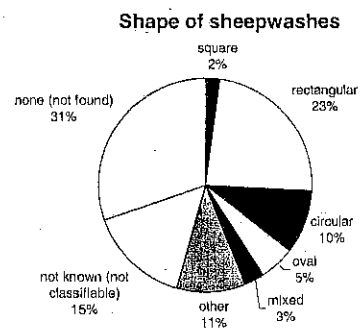
been directly taken away by cart to be further processed, or to be sold. Several clusters of sheepwashes can also be observed. In particular there are two groups that each consist of five rectangular washes. These are located around Naunton and Guiting Power, and Tetbury and Avening. It is possible that each of these groups had the same owner or belonged to a large estate, and were, therefore, built to a similar design. Although this similarity of form could also be explained in other ways, such as being due to a very localised style of sheepwash construction.



Broadly two areas seem to have the densest concentrations of sheepwashes. One of these is in the valleys of the Rivers Coln and Leach, and clusters especially around Northleach, Abingdon and Andoversford. The second area of greatest concentration is around Tetbury and Kingscote. A lesser concentration is present around Cirencester. The overall distribution across the Cotswolds AONB region shows a fall-off in sites to the north and north-east, and to the south. This favours the view that the central Cotswolds was at the centre of the sheep farming industry, at least in the post-medieval period, since it stands out even within this region where sheep farming was widespread generally. Such a distribution probably shows the extent of the agricultural specialisation that had been achieved in this part of the Cotswolds, and the extent of its success.

Typology (Fig 2)

A third of the sheepwash sites remained unclassified in form, mainly because none of the original structure could still be seen. In many cases these were inaccessible as a result of being located in woodland, or dense scrub, whilst others had become so ruined that only vague wall outlines could be traced. A total of 31 sheepwash structures (23%) were recorded as being of rectangular shape, and this was the commonest form overall. The circular form of wash was the next most common (13 sites (10)% of the total). There were small numbers of oval, mixed, or square shapes, and 11% of the total were recorded as being of 'other' shape. The latter consisted of C-shaped, L-shaped, horseshoe, comma and banjo shaped, and seem to represent a very miscellaneous group. It is possible, however, that these shapes relate to the entire structure, including the exit ramp and inlet leat, rather than to just the washpool itself, in which case some may need to be reclassified in due course. Alternatively they are unusual shapes that are significant to their local surroundings, and may be particular to the original owner or builder.



Condition (Figs 3-4)

The condition of the sheepwashes was recorded as part of the survey (see Appendix 2). Condition was defined as follows:

Intact – structure still surviving

Derelict – fallen into disrepair

Ruined – main components recognisable but largely missing

Demolished – structure largely removed

Not known – documentary evidence but could not be seen in field

None – documentary evidence but access not possible.

Unexpectedly the survey revealed that 36 sheepwashes (27%; Fig 3) were still intact. One reason for this may be that many of these sites were in use for sheep washing until the early to mid 20th century, as indicated by various sources. In some cases these features took on another function, once sheep washing had ceased, for instance being designed into a garden (eg site 52 in Standish parish in Gloucestershire), or for duck shooting or bird watching (site 37 at Brimpsfield in Gloucestershire). Alternatively sites may have been just forgotten about, and survived by chance. In some cases the local community have regarded their sheepwash as a feature of importance to their history, and have taken steps to keep the structure in good order.

Unfortunately 28 sheepwashes (21%) have already been demolished. Sometimes the structure has been built over (eg site 74 at Ozleworth in Gloucestershire), or it has simply been demolished. There were smaller numbers of derelict and ruined sites (15 sites (11%) and 10 sites (7%) respectively). Where sheepwashes at least partially survived, 22 (17%) were now silted up, suggesting that the lower parts of these structures may be in good condition.

In some cases the sheepwashes were in good condition, and were viewed by the surveyors as being particularly worthy of restoration (see especially Appendix 6). A total of 18 sheepwash

sites (14% of the survey total) showed this potential.

Oral history

Exceptionally in rare cases local inhabitants have been able to add a dimension of great importance to the survey, where they have been able to remember a sheepwash in use for its original purpose (eg site 19 at Broadwell in Gloucestershire or site 147 at Sutton under Brailes in Warwickshire). More commonly local oral tradition recorded that the local sheepwash had long gone out of use, and that nobody locally had any memory of its last use.

Antiquity of the sheepwash sites

Though the survey concentrated on tracing the location and assessment of the condition of sheepwashes that were still in existence, especially in the early 20th century, and which may at least partially still exist today, it was apparent that some of these sites could be of considerable antiquity. One of the best researched sites is in Aldsworth parish in Gloucestershire (Site 60), for which a late medieval date seems to be assured both on archaeological and historical grounds. Other evidence is also suggestive of the antiquity of some sites. For instance, place-name evidence for Gloucestershire, indicates that washing sites were widespread in medieval times (eg at Charlbury (*Wassemere*, a reference dated 1363, which may corresponds to the site referred to in the field-name *Washbrook Hill* in the tithe; site 126 in this report).

Old routes across the Cotswolds

The study of ancient routes is a particularly difficult subject, especially as it is often impossible to establish the date at which a route was first used. Archaeological excavation is often of no avail, as roads by their nature tend to be negative features as surfaces are worn away, and only in modern times have durable surfaces been achieved. The demonstration of an association between a particular route and sheepwashes is not possible except in the most general of terms.

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Major routes clearly linked the Cotswolds with the rest of the country from at least the Roman period, when a network of major routes converged on Cirencester. Though in evidence at a slightly later date, and associated with salt transportation, the salt-ways from Droitwich in Worcestershire also extended into the north and central Cotswolds. In medieval times droving of cattle over long distances was common, and a drover route over the Cotswolds linked Worcester, Pershore, Evesham, Broadway (where another route joined from Bredon Hill), Snowhill, Winchcombe, Cleeve Hill, Hawling, Salperton, Northleach, and Coln St Aldwyns (Bonser 1970, 186-7). Other such routes were from Gloucester to Bagendon to Cirencester (Bonser 1970, 186-7), and through Bagendon to Lechlade, via Barnsley and Fairford (Bonser 1970, 186-7).

It is clear, therefore, that the Cotswolds scarp was no barrier to travel and trade, and the Cotswolds was to some extent, at least from the later Saxon and medieval periods, a region situated between producers of commodity goods, such as salt and cattle, and their consumers based especially in the Thames valley, and London. Current archaeological studies of medieval material culture indicate that other goods such as ceramics were moving in the other direction. For instance pottery produced in Brill/Boarstall in Buckinghamshire is widely found on sites in the west Midlands, and may be presumed to have been carried over the Cotswolds.

8. Evaluation of the conditional survey (Stage 2)

The setting up and carrying out of the field training sessions was extremely difficult, given that this was the first time that the organisers and volunteers had met, and yet this was the only opportunity to put the survey plan into action. The distribution of sites to individual surveyors was not easy as though the group affiliation might have suggested certain sheepwashes for a particular individual, often they lived elsewhere and so preferred other sites. Some prior knowledge of this would have made the training days less hectic for the trainers, but it is difficult to see how this situation could have been avoided except by having a ready-made group whose details were made available to the project. However, despite this observation the training days turned out to be a very good way of imparting a lot of essential information about the project and the survey very quickly, with the opportunity to ask lots of questions as they arose, with everyone getting the benefit of at least meeting each other the once.

The surveying largely took place without further resort to the project organisers, unless there were some real discrepancies or queries to be raised about an entry in the site lists that had been handed out on the training days. This suggested that the field methods were well understood. Some further confirmation of this was achieved by sample monitoring of field survey in the case of sites 3 (Stanton) and 128 (Cutsdean), and by the assessment of the recording of sites at Sutton under Brailes and Aldsworth (sites 147 and 60 respectively). This 4% sample confirmed that the recording system was quite accessible to the surveyors, and was being well understood, if the guidance notes were carefully read. The feed-back at the Cirencester symposium (Appendix 6) also tended to confirm that the recording method worked well in most circumstances as long as the surveyors followed the full guidance available.

Throughout Stage 2 most comments from the volunteer surveyors indicated that the fieldwork was not considered difficult, and the quality of much of the recording was at a level where useful

data was being collected. However, there was some loss of quality in that, in some cases, sites were not fully recorded on the recording sheets and/or photographs were sometimes not taken. For instance information about landowners could be omitted, leaving an hiatus in the project data. This would seem inevitable given the substantial volunteer input into the project and the sheer number of volunteers involved. However, despite some shortcomings here and there, the data collected was broadly all to the point and useful. The project was, therefore, able to meet its archaeological objectives of collecting information about the sheepwashes so that they would be capable of assessment for the purposes of conservation and their future management.

There were, however, some concerns that developed during the project about the carrying out of projects in this way. The first would be the difficulty of undertaking what was a complex project with a team of volunteers, most of whom were not known to the project organisers beforehand. There is clearly a need here for a network to be better established in future for this type of project to take place. The other main concern is establishing methods of working, and expectations for professionals and volunteers working together in this way. For instance, the project deadlines were quite tight, which may not always suit volunteers who of course are fitting the work into already busy lives. Where surveying had already been allocated but deadlines were not met, it was not easy to rearrange the work, suggesting that larger contingencies should in future be built into similar projects, and more flexible deadlines set to take into account the particular and unforeseen circumstances of working with volunteers who were not previously known to those managing the project.

Health and safety

Safety in the field was a priority, and it is clear that where sites were considered too dangerous to approach they were left without more detailed recording taking place.

9. Summary of assessment

Several sites have emerged as being of interest from the point of view of conservation and presentation (see also Appendix 6). These sites comprise those that were commented on favourably by the field surveyors during the symposium meeting at Cirencester (Appendix 6), and those given special mention in the field survey recording sheets. The latter in particular are identified somewhat subjectively, based on an interpretation of their descriptions rather than any assessment based on a set of criteria used at the time of survey.

Several sheepwash sites have previously been restored (eg the Cleeve Hill sheepwash site 130, and the Cutsdean sheepwash site 128), but are currently in need of maintenance.

Very few sheepwash sites have been researched (eg site 142; the Ascott sheepwash in Oxfordshire; Minson 1997). There is clearly a need for further sites to be more extensively researched especially where considerable antiquity is suspected, and for this to include detailed field survey and the recording of oral history, where possible.

Notes to Table 5

Sites in bold are more likely to be sheepwashes than sheep dip sites.

Community interest – were favourable comments received from residents?

Landowner reaction – were landowners willing to see the structure restored?

Access to the site – is the site close to public access (eg footpaths, roads)?

Present condition – is the sheepwash in good condition?

* sites of special interest as identified during the Cirencester symposium meeting (see also Appendix 6)

■ sites of special interest as identified in field survey sheets

Table 5. Sheepwash sites of special interest

Site name (sheepwash ref no in parentheses)	Community interest	Landowner reaction	Access to site	Present condition	Ease of restoration
Stanton (3)*	?	3	3	1	1
Longborough (15)*	3	-	3	1	3
Broadwell (19)*	3	?	2	2	2
Sudeley (22)■	?	?	2	3	3
Cold Aston (33)■	-	-	0	3	-
Kingham (36)* ■	?	3	3	2	2
Withington (39)* ■	-	-	-	2	2
Painswick (53)*	?	3	3	3	3
Winstone (56)*	?	?	1	3	3
Duntisbourne Abbotts (58)*	?	3	1	3	3
Avening (71)* ■	3	3	2	2	3
Rodmarton (78)* ■	3	3	3	3	3
Horsley (115) ■	?	?	3	2	2
Cutsdean (128)*	2	3	3	3	3
Whittington (133) ■	?	?	3	3	2
Upper Slaughter (140)*	2	-	3	1	3
Chedworth (141) ■	?	?	3	2	3
Middle Norton (134)*	?	3	1	2	?

Scoring above: 1 – low, 2 – average, 3 – high rating

10. Acknowledgements

Given the large number of participants who were involved in the project, Derek Hurst would like to apologise in advance to anyone whose name has been inadvertently omitted above or assigned to the wrong local group. The groups formed an important component of the project and are to be congratulated for their enthusiastic involvement and energetic surveying.

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All the relevant County Record Offices pulled out extra stops in order to deal with the exceptional requests to scan numerous original documents very quickly. This often severely taxed the standard methods of issuing documents to researchers, but the request was usually met with a willingness to make an unusual number of documents available very quickly.

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Wychwood Local History Society - Dennis Minson

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Abbreviations

CSMR County sites and monuments record

CRO County Record Office