

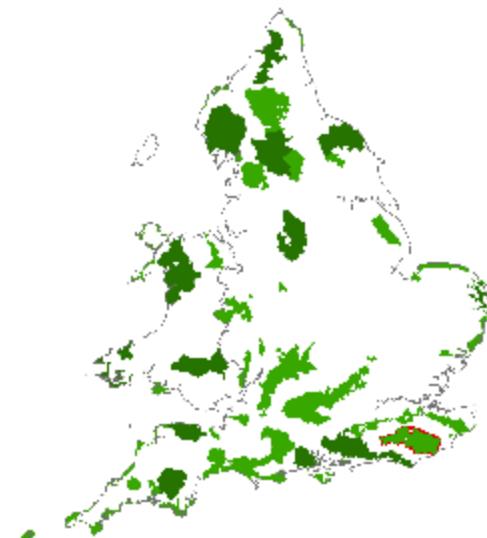


Cultural landscapes and rewilding

A UK Protected Landscape perspective

Dr Sally Marsh

Co-Director High Weald National Landscape Partnership



Cultural landscapes v rewilding?

Cultural landscapes:

'The combined works of nature and man' UNESCO
2023

But 80 years ago what we now call cultural landscapes were considered to be the **natural countryside** of Britain

CAMPAIGN for NATIONAL PARKS

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RORY STEWART MP: REWILDLING LEAVES NO PLACE FOR PEOPLE IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

Contributed by Rory Stewart MP

11 JULY 2023 • 3,000+ READERS • Rory Stewart MP: Rewilding Leaves No Place For People In The Lake District

6 JULY 2023

**Agroecological farming vs
rewilding session at the
Oxford Real Farming
Conference 2024**

'... positions have been polarised... there are two positions: land sharing in which biodiversity is part of agroecological farming, and land sparing in which people are packed together in one place and the land around is given over to rewilding'

(landforwhatlandforwhom.org)

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**Farmers' Union of Wales
wants rewilding project
scrapped**



George Monbiot



Nick Fenwick, FUW's head of policy, said: "It shouldn't exist - it shouldn't be here."

Mr Jones said: "They've arbitrarily put a line on a map... are they going to move us off our land?"

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The Download (Issue 14 April 2023). Photo courtesy of Clothing Association International clothinginternational.com/groups/101291492426200

Learning to Rewild: Examining the Failed Case of the Dutch "New Wilderness" Oostvaardersplassen

Communication & Education

Wild Range Meat

In balance with nature

'We couldn't do rewilding without our animals [livestock - cattle, deer and pigs]'



UK Protected Landscapes are all cultural landscapes

In 1949, the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act sought to protect the best examples of 'natural' (traditional) countryside

Policy makers were well aware that no part of the UK is truly wild

At the time these areas were considered by policy makers and scientists to be:

- the best examples of different types of cultural landscape
- of high scientific interest - **the most biodiverse and bio-abundant at a landscape scale (wrapping around SSSIs and NNRs)**
- associated with distinctive cultures, customs, language, buildings, or traditional practices

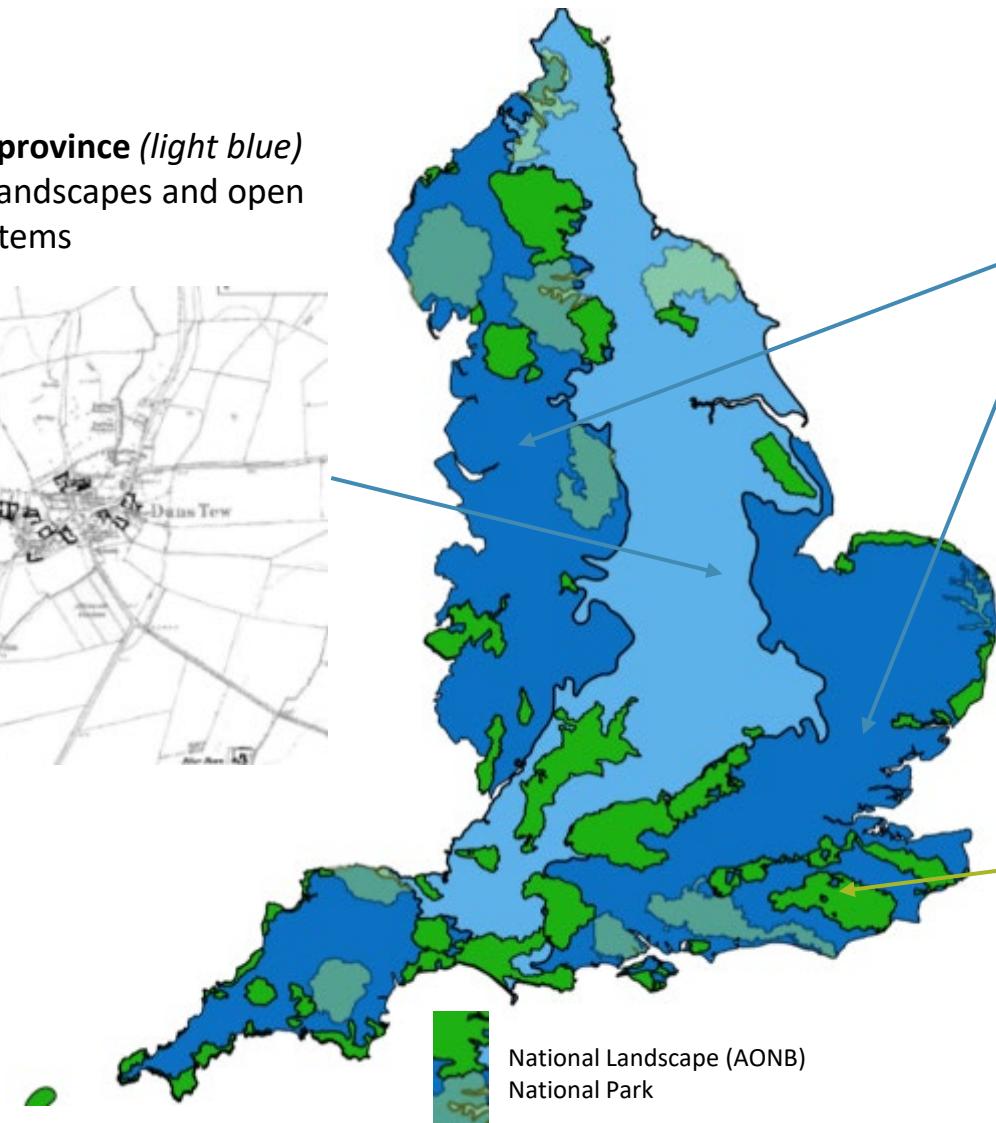
(This combination of qualities was termed natural beauty. These areas were designated to conserve and enhance natural beauty)

How did these areas remain so rich in nature into the early 20 century?

Central province (*light blue*)
Village landscapes and open
field systems



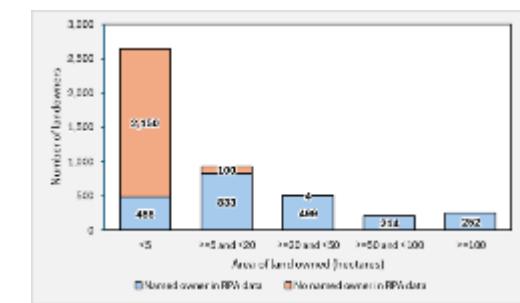
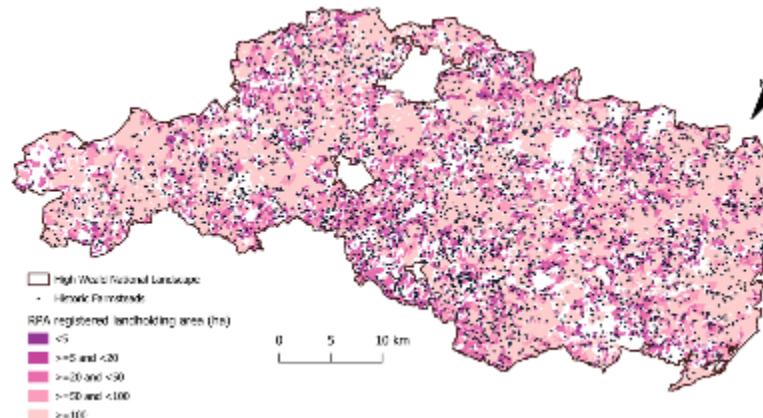
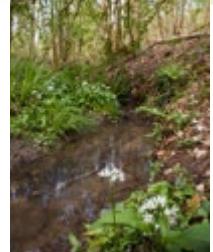
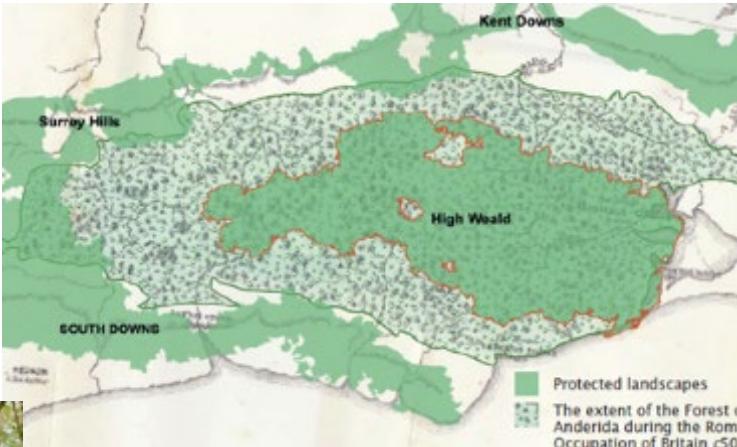
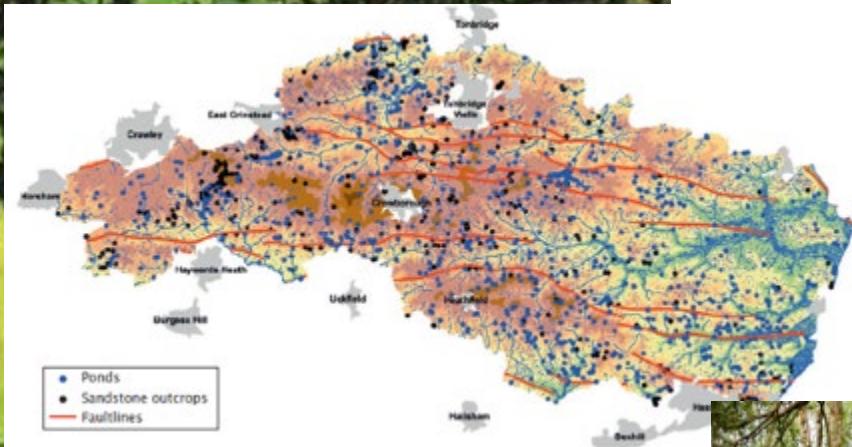
National Landscape (AONB) National Park



Landscapes of dispersed historic settlement (*dark blue*)
Isolated farmsteads and hamlets surrounded by their own fields interspersed with rough land and woodland



Understanding spatial and temporal heterogeneity - landscape history

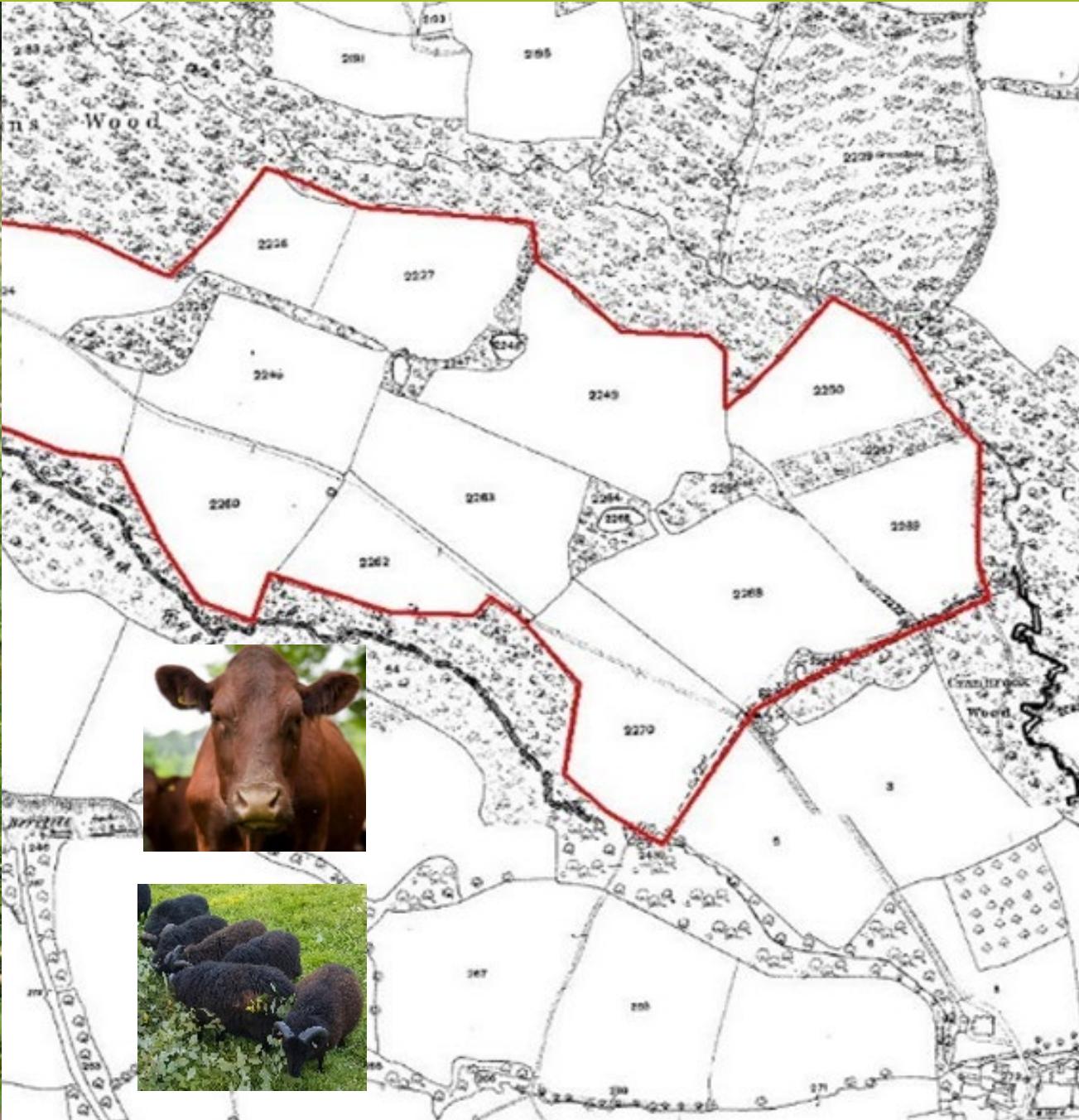


Sunken routeways and dispersed farmsteads





Neutral hay meadows and pastures





Traditional coppice systems



Pause for discussion

Any initial thoughts?

Where do cultural landscapes fit into the rewilding framework (do they fit)?

How do we get the best outcomes for biodiversity across the wider landscape?

Rewilding*

‘setting an identified socio-ecological system on a preferred trajectory’

Purpose

- Sustainable human-wildlife coexistence
- Well-functioning ecosystems

Principles

- Restoring ecosystem health
- Restoring ecosystem services
- Minimizing ongoing management (human intervention)
- Willing to accept novel species compositions (to improve resilience)
- Open to species introductions (based on functional traits)

• Singer et al. 2025



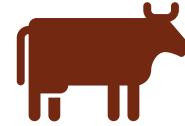
A chronicler of the culture and customs of rural labourers in the early 20th century, George Bourne, admiringly described rural labourers as 'human fauna'.

Rewilding definitions tend to rely on the idea of letting nature heal itself, allowing natural processes to do what they do (with limited human intervention) but this idea relies on a world view that sees people and nature as separate things. **Are they?**

Social and economic characteristics contributing to historic spatial and temporal heterogeneity in cultural landscapes



Economic necessity and self-sufficiency as the main drivers for management – land served a variety of functions



Livestock and people as the main tools for management – soils mostly undisturbed



Stable land management systems allowing habituated species assembles to flourish



Circular economy – nothing wasted



An absence of industrial machinery, synthetic pesticides and inorganic fertilizers