

Broad Character: Communications

Character Type: Transport

Regional Perspective: Southern England

Compiled by Seazone Solutions Ltd / M A Ltd, January 2011, after comment from D Hooley, English Heritage

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING/DISTINGUISHING ATTRIBUTES

The Southern England region is well served with transport infrastructure including motorways, main roads, railways and airports.

There is one canal in the Southern England coastal region, the Chichester Ship Canal. This opened in 1823 and enabled coastal ships to reach Chichester from its harbour. It carried trade until 1906 and was totally abandoned in 1928. It is now being restored by the Chichester Ship Canal Trust and is a popular recreational and tourist destination in the region.

Three main rail companies currently operate in the region - South West Trains, Southern and, to a lesser extent, First Great Western.

Two motorways converge on the region – the M3 from London to Southampton, where it joins the M27 which runs to Portsmouth in the east and to the New Forest in the west. Further west of the region (for example along coastal Dorset) there is no motorway presence, although the two motorways mentioned do facilitate access from London and the south coast conurbations to the number of 'A' roads running close to the coast. Despite this, some of the coastal villages are quite remote from major routes (eg Swanage on the Isle of Purbeck). There is also no motorway presence in the coastal zone to the east of the region, but main roads include the A259 which runs close to the coast from Hastings to Langstone, and the faster A27 which runs parallel to this, but slightly further inland.

Two international airfields serve the region, Southampton Airport and Bournemouth International Airport.

The railways, roads and airports of southern England have opened up the area to the people who live there as well as to tourists. They have increased the ability for people to commute further afield for jobs, have made the coast more accessible with people having access to goods and services, and have increased local economies through tourism.



Brighton Railway Station (© English Heritage)

HISTORICAL PROCESSES; COMPONENTS, FEATURES AND VARIABILITY

The Chichester Ship Canal was originally constructed as part of the Portsmouth and Arundel Canal, and was opened in 1823. It carried trade (for example bringing in building materials and coal, and taking away manure) until 1906, and fell derelict soon after. In the late 1970s the Portsmouth & Arundel Canal Society was formed (later changing their name to the Chichester Canal Society and more recently to Chichester Ship Canal Trust) with the aim of restoring the canal (www.chichestercanal.org.uk).

The first mainline railway in southern England was the London and Southampton Railway (renamed LSWR in 1838), which completed its line in May 1840. This was quickly followed by the London and Brighton Railway (September 1841) which served the port of Newhaven and several popular holiday resorts on the south coast.



Clayton Tunnel, West Sussex. Built in 1841 for the London and Brighton Railway (© English Heritage)

After WWI the government decided on a compulsory amalgamation of the railways into four large groups through the 1921 Railways Act, known as the Grouping. The south coast railways were amalgamated to form the Southern Railway in 1923. In addition to its railway operations, the Southern Railway inherited several important port and harbour facilities along the south coast, including Southampton and Newhaven, and ran services to the harbour at Portsmouth.



**Newhaven Port which has been well served by the railway since the nineteenth century
(© Maritime Archaeology Ltd)**

Holiday makers using the lines to the Channel ports and the West Country were replaced with troops during WWII, in response to the threat of a German invasion on the south coast. When the threat of invasion receded, the area served by the Southern Railway became the marshalling area for troops preparing to invade Normandy under 'Operation Overlord', and the railway played its part by providing a link in the logistics chain. This came at a cost, however, as the Southern Railway's strategic role around London and the Channel ports meant that it was subjected to heavy bombing.

The company was nationalised along with the rest of the railway network in 1948 and incorporated into British Railways. British Rail was privatised in 1997. Ownership of the track and infrastructure passed to Railtrack, later becoming Network Rail; passenger operations were franchised to individual private-sector operators. The region is now (2011) served by South West Trains, Southern and First Great Western.

The Southern England region is served by two major motorways. The M3 from London runs to Southampton where it joins the M27 which runs to east to Portsmouth and west to the New Forest in the West. There are no motorways in the coastal zone to the east of the region, but main roads include the A259 which runs close to the coast from Hastings to Langstone, and the faster A27 which runs parallel to this, but slightly further inland. These are main routes to the South Coast, enabling holidaymakers to reach seaside destinations quickly, and allowing residents of coastal towns to reach other areas of the country with ease. The coastal settlements in Dorset, to the west of the region, do not have easy access to a motorway: although a number of 'A' roads run through the county, some of the coastal villages, such as Swanage on the Isle of Purbeck, are quite remote from major routes



**Swanage on Isle of Purbeck (in distance) in coastal Dorset
(© Maritime Archaeology Ltd)**

Both motorways and the 'A' roads can become very busy in the summer months, with traffic jams of many miles occurring due to the large numbers of tourists trying to reach the coastal towns and villages for day trips and longer holidays.

Southampton operated a flying boat service between 1919 and 1958 carrying passengers and mail. The first services ran only as far as Bournemouth, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight, but in the 1920s flights operated to northern France, and from 1937 Imperial Airways began services to Africa, the USA, Australia, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong (www.disused-stations.org.uk/s/southampton_flying_boat_terminal/index.shtml). The flights ended with competition from land-based jets in 1958.



Flying boat pier, Southampton (© English Heritage)

Two international airfields now serve the region, Southampton Airport and Bournemouth International Airport. Southampton Municipal Airport, owned by Southampton Corporation, opened in 1932. It became a training area for the Royal Navy in WWII but began operating again as a municipal airport in 1945 with a regular service to the Channel Islands. (www.southampton-airport-guide.co.uk). Many improvements were made to the airport during the 1960s and 1970s including a new runway and air traffic control tower. In 1984 Airports UK Ltd was appointed to manage the operational activities and made further improvements. The financial future of the airport was secured when BAA plc purchased the site in 1990 and announced that they would be investing £27 million in developing it. The 'New Southampton Airport' was opened in the 1994. Today Southampton is one of Europe's most modern regional airports with over 1 million passengers each year flying to 33 different destinations (www.southampton-airport-guide.co.uk), opening up the South Coast region to a vast number of international travellers.

Bournemouth Airport originally opened as a Royal Air Force (RAF) air base (RAF Hurn) and accommodated many RAF units between 1941 and 1944 when it was handed over to the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Hurn was the main terminal for international airline flights into the UK until 1949 when Heathrow was opened and airline operators moved there. (www.airportguides.co.uk/guides/bournemouth/history.html). In 1969 the airport was bought by Bournemouth Corporation and Dorset County Council who ran the airport in partnership until 1995 when it was sold to National Express. Today, it is known as Bournemouth International Airport and serves the south coast with an increasing number of charter flights as well as a number of UK and European scheduled destinations (www.airportguides.co.uk/guides/bournemouth/history.html). In addition to commercial flights, Bournemouth Airport carries cargo (including flowers from the Channel Islands and Royal Mail flights) and operates a fleet of Falcon jets for service with the RAF and Royal Navy. The airport is also home to three flying schools training private and commercial pilots (www.bournemouthairport.com).

VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS

Canals are a lasting imprint on the present-day landscape of a 19th century period of prosperity and success. At the same time, they are an integral part of the present social and cultural landscape, with a range of current uses, including leisure. Recreation uses of the Chichester Ship Canal include canal trips, rowboat hire, canoeing, angling, towpath walks, painting and bird watching. This quiet area is highly valued by residents and visitors to the region.

The South Coast's railways, roads and airports have opened up the area for the people who live there as well as to tourists. They have made the coast more accessible with people having access to goods and services as well as increasing local economies through tourism.



The region's railways, roads and airports have increased access to the South Coast and its holiday destinations such as Brighton (© Maritime Archaeology Ltd)

However, all these means of transport have generated mixed feelings with local residents with increased noise, pollution, traffic jams and a negative impact on the landscape with junction improvements and motorway extensions such as the M3 extension through Twyford Down in 1994.

RESEARCH, AMENITY AND EDUCATION

Generally, research has focused on canals from an 'industrial' and 'historical' point of view. Further research integrating maritime perspectives will contribute to a greater understanding of canals and their effects on developing early industrial period landscapes, contextualised regionally, nationally and internationally. Today, many canals such as the Chichester Ship Canal are largely used for leisure purposes. As such, education and outreach initiatives which bring together leisure activities whilst also exploring the insights of the 'industrial heritage' of canals would be highly beneficial in terms of educating and raising public awareness. This could also be the starting point of promoting and seeking further economic benefits.

The Southern Railway's memory lives on at several preserved railways in the south of England, including the Watercress Line and Swanage Railway. There are several societies that specialise in the Southern Railway, including the Southern Railways Group and the Southern Electric Group.

Further research on early development of the region's long distance routeways would be valuable at national, regional and local levels, by looking at the developing relationships through time between coastal populations, trade, transport and topography.

Transport routes fulfil a variety of roles in respect of land/seascape. They are facilitators, providing the means and locations for many people's perception and appreciation of the historic landscape/seascape. They also have considerable character effects on the landscape/seascape, directly and indirectly through, for example, the establishment of new coastal settlements and trade. However, they also possess a range of interesting features which are an expression of people's past activities. Bridges, viaducts, stations, roadside services, out-of-town shopping centres, big-shed warehousing and distribution

centres and other infrastructure are also aspects which contribute to their landscape/seascape. A high proportion of the market supporting this infrastructure is generated by the huge numbers of people living in, or travelling to access, the region on account of their appreciation of its coastal qualities.

Due to the intrusive nature of the work involved in the construction of new communication routes, this can have major effects of the existing historic environment in coastal and foreshore areas can be. In addition, construction may also have indirect effects as a result of alterations to existing patterns of drainage, water flow in rivers, or tidal currents, thus creating the possibility of removal or exposure of historic assets through erosion (Fulford et al 1997). These are issues, including landscape impact issues, which should be noted as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements in advance of such developments.

This Character Type could be further explored through the way it enables people to access the wider historic landscape/seascape (e.g. canal, railway and road features). In addition, the disused canals and railway lines offer routes for public access and enjoyment.

CONDITION AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

The Chichester Ship Canal is a typical example of how an abandoned working canal is now being utilised for recreational purposes.

The region's railways are heavily used during the summer months by holidaymakers and day trippers travelling to the coast. They are also used extensively by commuters, particularly for travelling to London. This has caused significant overcrowding on the morning and evening rush hour trains. Some railway operators eg Southern are increasing capacity in the hope of easing the overcrowding.

Construction of communication routes at or near the coast frequently involves major engineering projects since coastal areas are generally unstable environments. Such new route-building responds to several factors which include increased traffic to the coast, changing configuration of the coastline, rising sea-levels, or coastal defence initiatives, amongst others. The direct impact of these projects on the landscape/seascape needs to be assessed according to UK Government and EC requirements (e.g. Environmental Impact Assessments), but they are also often highly contested, setting regional and national infrastructure pressures against those seeking landscape conservation, as in the debates over the possible future re-routing of the A35 behind the Golden Cap estate in the west Dorset coastal hinterland.

RARITY AND VULNERABILITY

Today, the scale of change has affected the size and frequency of key nodal transport points. It has also affected the differing frequencies of expression of past and present transport infrastructure along the coast as well as the low, easily overlooked (and therefore vulnerable) profile of much early transport related character.

Pressures to improve transport infrastructure and conflicting public responses to them will continue to affect the expressions of this Character Type.

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