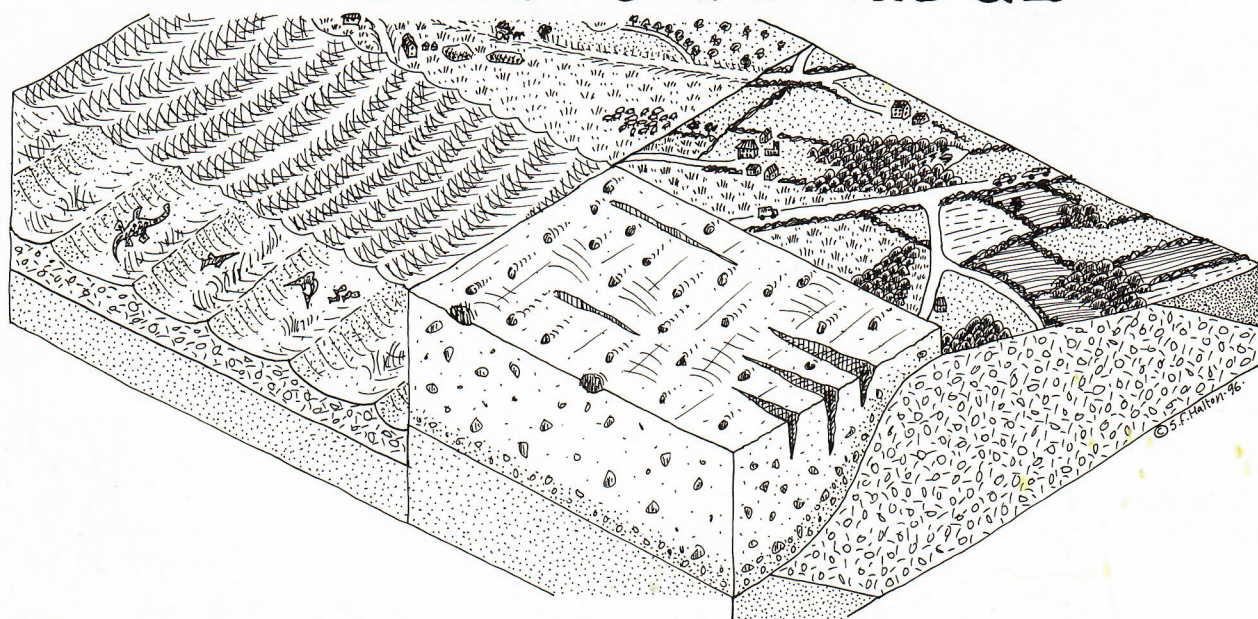


THE GREENSAND RIDGE :



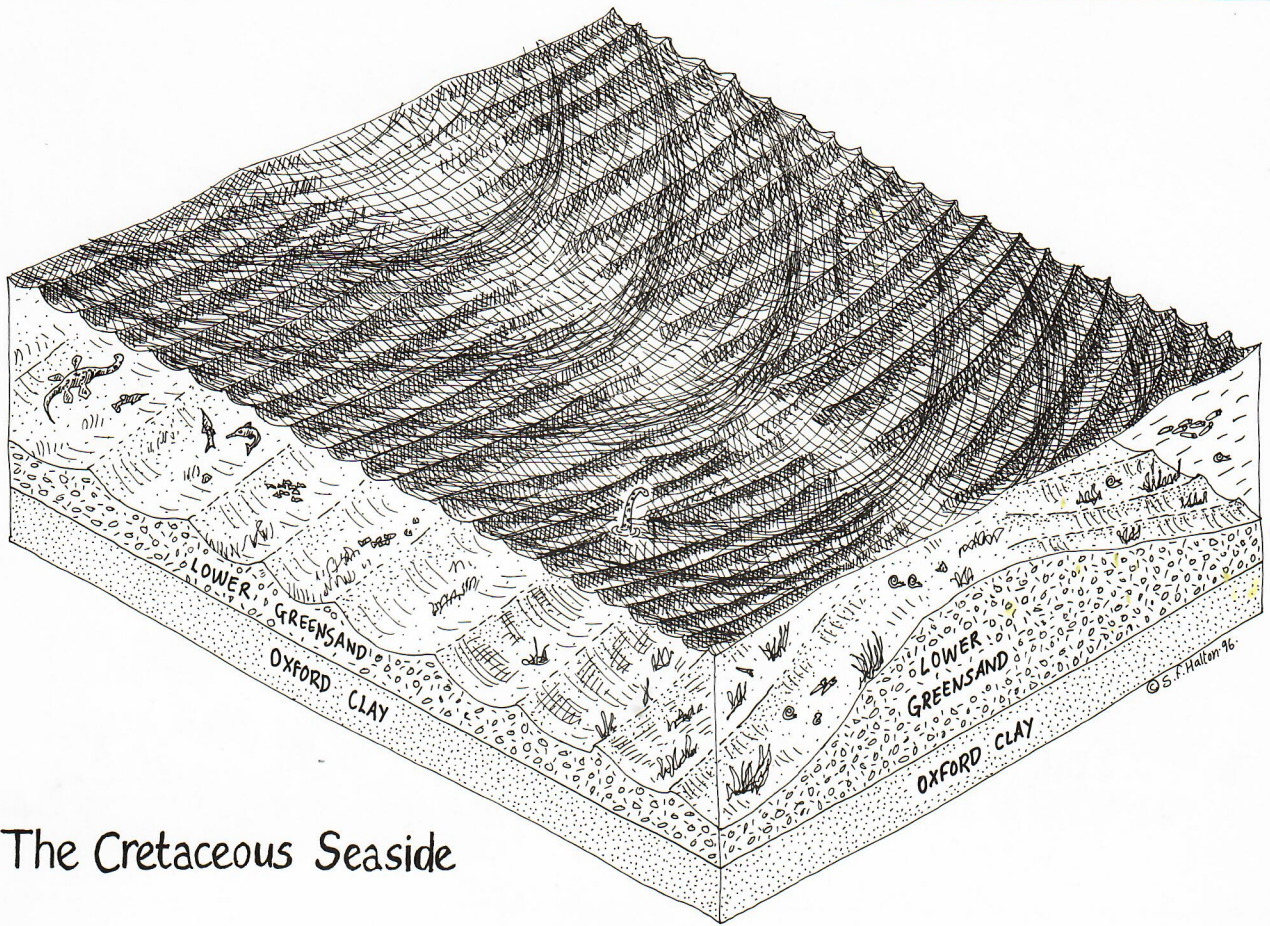
from Cretaceous Seaside to 21st Century

This leaflet is not a technical document, but a picture history of the Greensand Ridge from 100 million years ago to the present day.



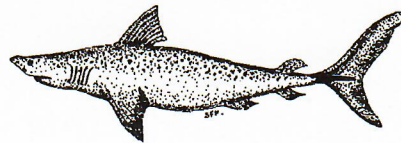
The original illustrations, by a local artist, show as simply as possible how the geology, landscape and management of the land has changed through time.

Who knows what the future will bring?



The Cretaceous Seaside

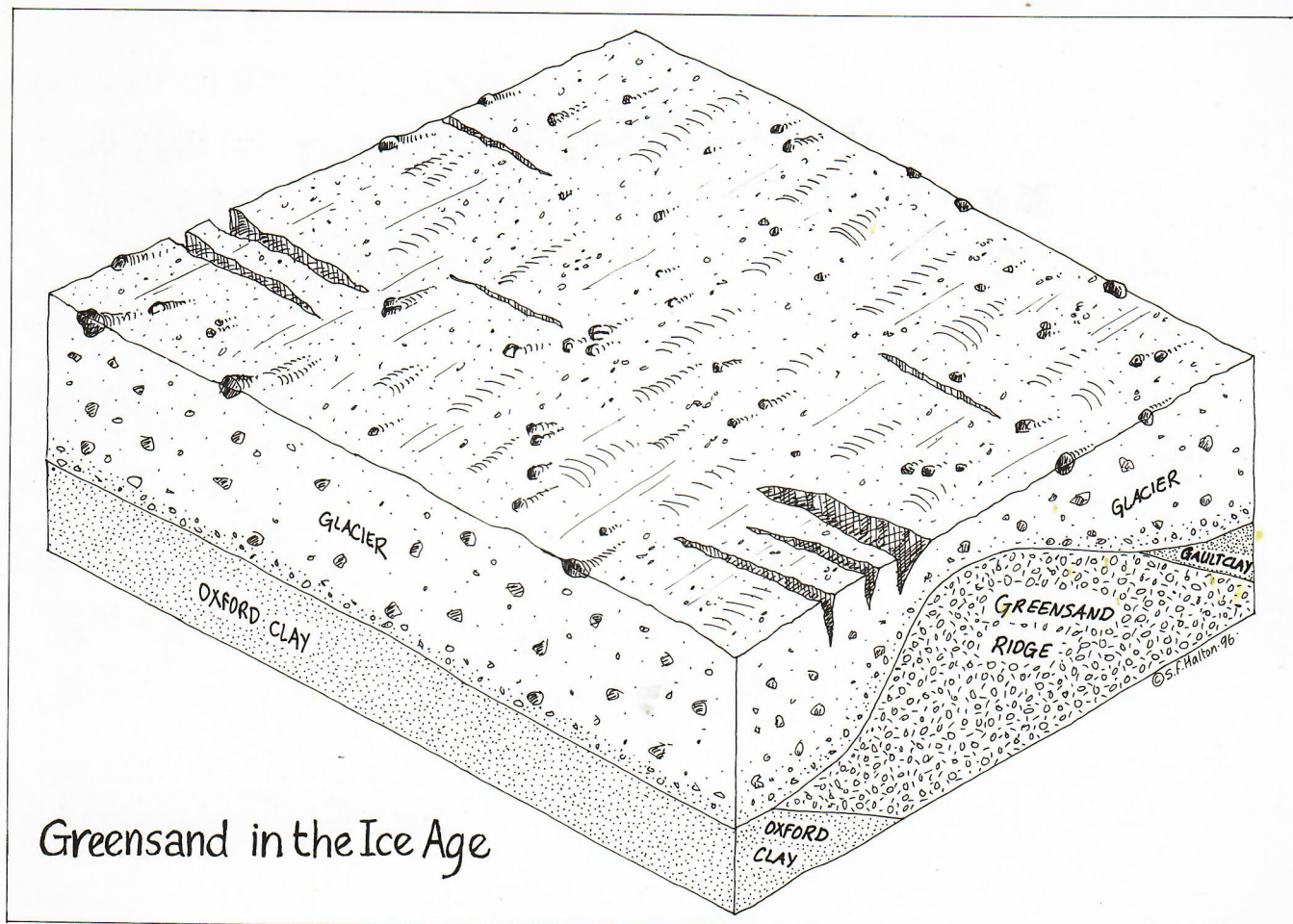
Cretaceous Seaside



Around 100 million years ago a shallow channel, similar to the Straits of Dover, connected two larger seas. Strong tides in this channel deposited the sand we now know as the Lower Greensand, on a bed of much older clays, including the Oxford Clay.



Many creatures lived in these seas, and when they died some parts of their bodies became fossilised - these fossils can be found today.

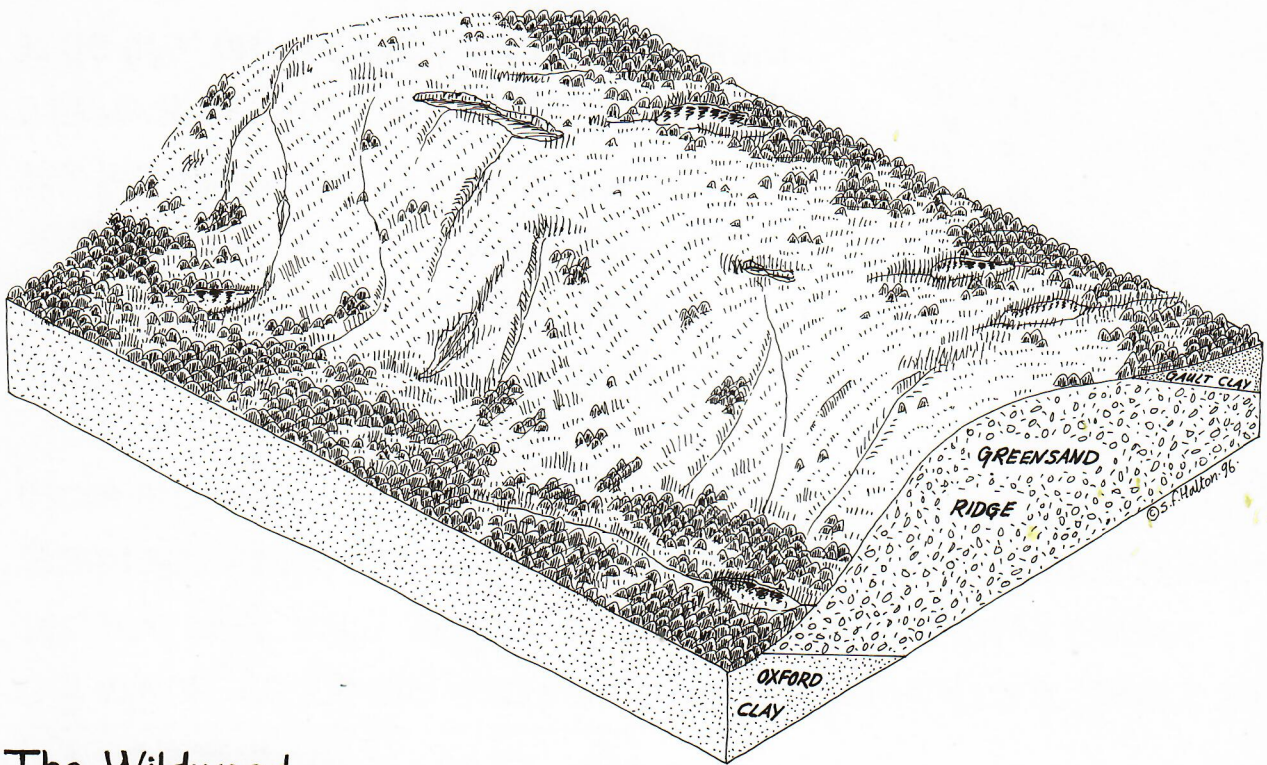


Greensand Ridge in the Ice Age

65 million years ago earth movements caused rock layers to tilt, and over many millions of years the upper layers were gradually washed away by rivers. The Greensand Ridge now came into being.

About a quarter of a million years ago, immense ice-sheets almost covered Britain. This ice came and went many times. During the last Ice Age, which finished about 12,000 years ago, the ice came as far as Norfolk and the Midlands; the Greensand Ridge was a bare area, like the tundra, with very little life, but lots of snow, the ground frozen to a great depth.





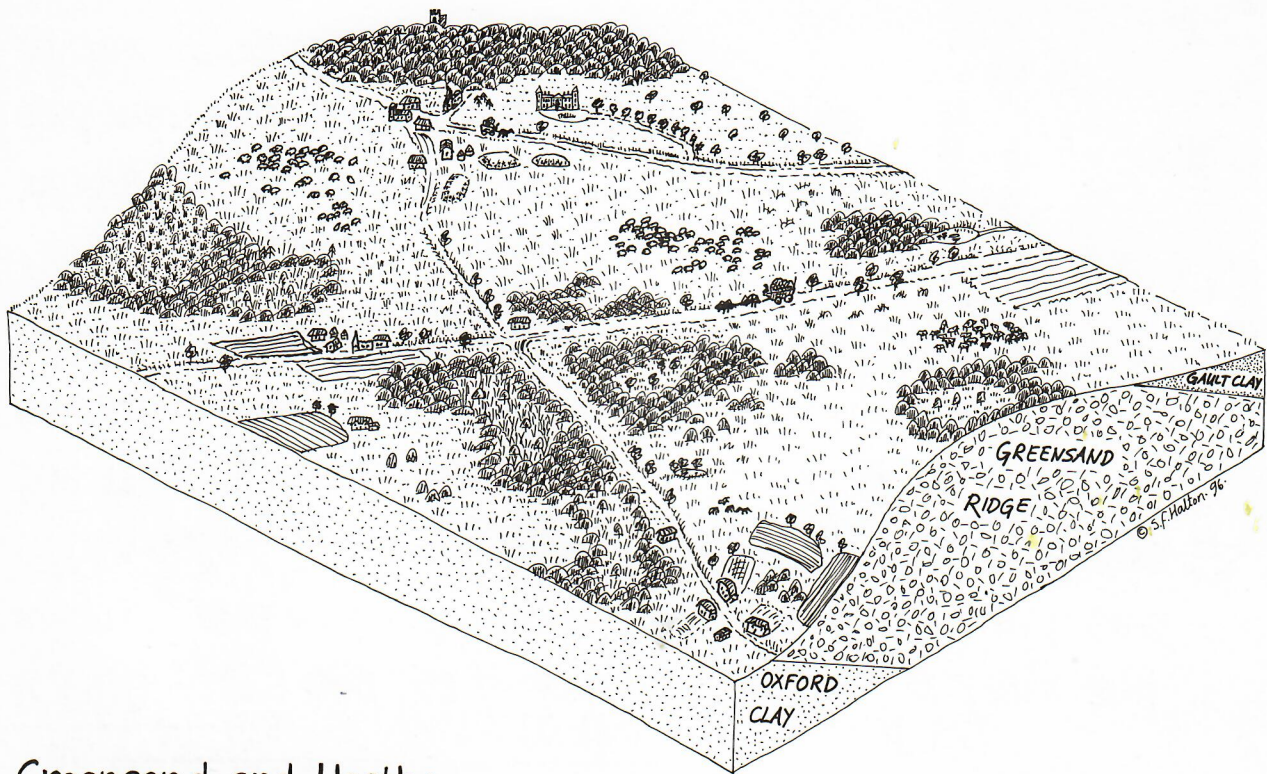
The Wildwood

The Wildwood

8,000 years ago the climate had become warmer and wetter, and much of the land was dominated by trees, often called "the wildwood". On the Greensand Ridge the free-draining sandy soils were not particularly favourable to trees, so some areas were open heath, with some bogs and peaty areas in the wet hollows.

Wolves and bears roamed the wildwood, and man began to manage and cut some of the wood for fuel.





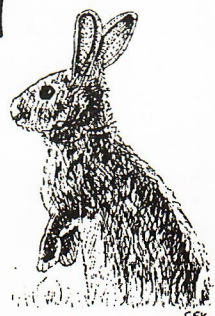
Greensand and Heaths

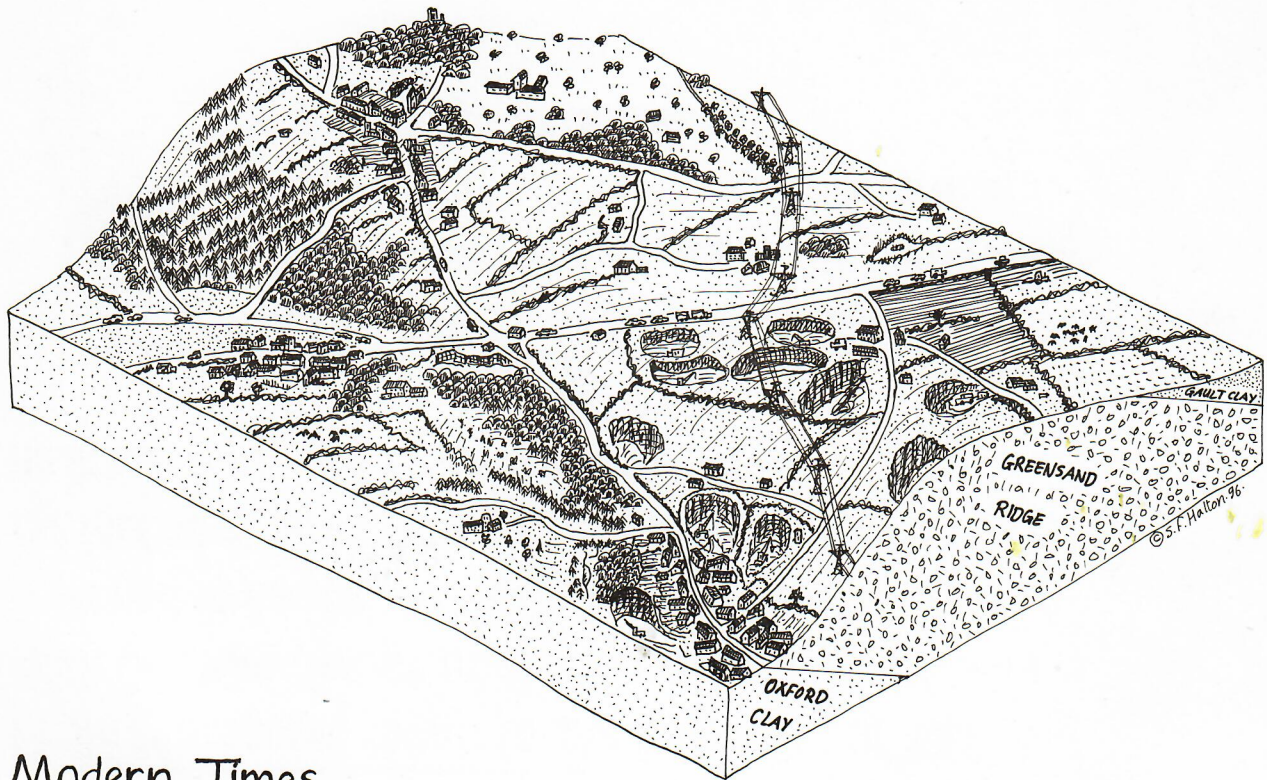
Heaths and the big landowners

From Mediaeval times to the beginning of the 18th Century, most of the Greensand Ridge was covered in heathland. But food demand and agricultural advances meant that much of the heather was lost to the plough.



Most of the remaining heath belonged to the big manor houses where they set aside land for big rabbit warrens - rabbits were very valuable at the time.



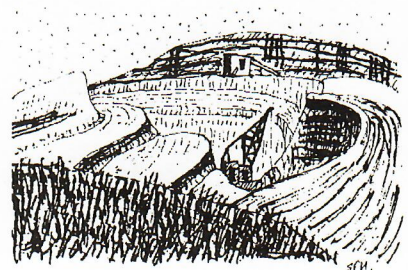
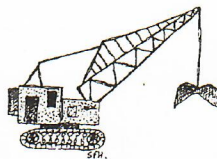
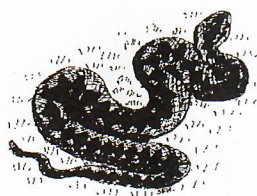


Modern Times

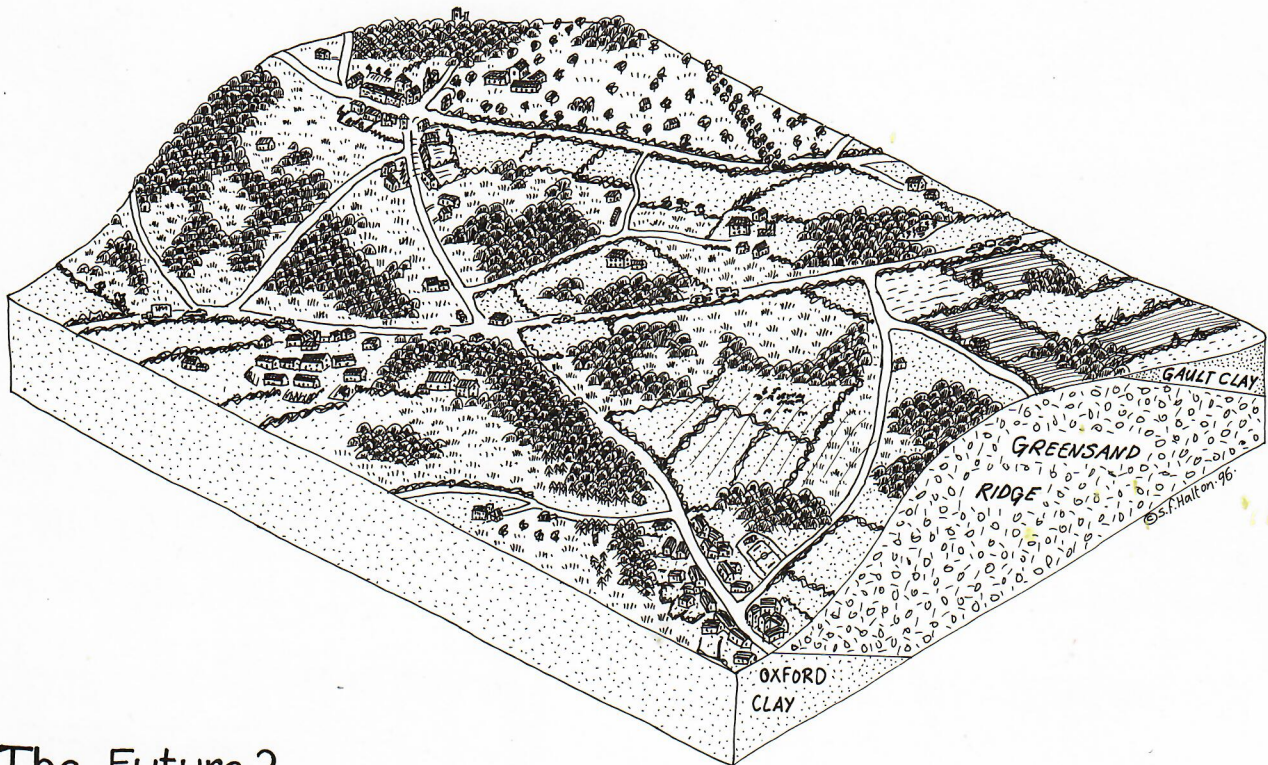
Modern Times

Today very few areas of heath and ancient woodland remain.

Over the last 200 years man has needed to quarry the green sand to build houses and roads, and advances in agriculture have meant more land is now in food production.



The areas that remain are very special and need to be protected and managed.



The Future?

The Future

The future of the heathland and the landscape of the Greensand Ridge will depend on how industry and development continues.



Hopefully as the lifespan of local quarries comes to an end and organisations work in partnership, this land will come back into countryside management, and we will see the return of lowland heath and the management of our ancient woodlands into the 21st Century.



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**COUNTRYSIDE
COMMISSION**



Environmental Partnership in Action