

Hardown Hill, Morcomblake

NGR: SY404 944



View of the chert beds at Hardown Hill

This 207m high hill has magnificent views over Charmouth and Golden Cap to the south and across Marshwood Vale to Pilsden Pen, Coney Castle and Lambert's Castle. The geological interest is in the Cretaceous Chert Beds of the Upper Greensand and the drift above, which have been worked in open pits and adits for building stone and road stone since medieval times. Although most workings are now re-vegetated, one area, at Love's Lane has been retained as a Regionally Important Geological site. The beds comprise chert cobs in a sandy matrix interspersed with bands of more sandy material.

The 'cobs' were split for building using a small hammer with a long handle - the Hardown hammer. An iron bar with three claws was used to hold the cobs which were hung in wet hessian sacks to save the workman's eyes, though they also wore wire goggles. The tenants on the

hill had the right to two cartloads of 'hoggin' for the roads. Hoggin was a mixture of chert, sand and clay.



View from the site towards Golden Cap to the south



The church at Catherston Leweston which is faced with chert

The chert from Hardown Hill can be seen in many local churches and domestic buildings in Morcomblake and Marshwood Vale. Some of the best material was taken from 30 foot thick chert seams in adits driven into the side of the hill above Ryall.

N.B. The adits are now a bat refuge and not accessible.



View from Hardown Hill across Marshwood Vale to the north



Detail of the chert facing at Catherston Leweston church



Entrance to one of the adits