



3.1 Introduction

The Cotswolds landscape, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from 1966, forms the best-known section of the outcrop of Oolitic limestone that stretches across England from Lyme Bay in Dorset to the North Sea, in North Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. The Cotswolds landscape attracts many visitors both from this country as well as from around the world, in response to its perception as a rural idyll.

Many of the features associated with this cherished landscape evoke strong images, particularly the dramatic escarpment and expansive high wolds, the network of limestone walls, beech woods clothing the escarpment, and secluded valleys and valley bottom meadows. The built environment is also very evocative ranging from the charm of the many picturesque villages and historic small towns to the individual houses, churches and mansions, and historic landscaped parks. Together these create a strong perception of harmony throughout the area. Despite this unifying pattern of common elements, however, a great variety of landscapes can be observed, each displaying distinctive patterns of landform, vegetation, and landscape elements.

The initial findings of the landscape character assessment have identified a total of 19 Landscape Character Types. The steep escarpment located on the western and northern perimeters of the Cotswolds is perhaps the most striking type, from which there are exhilarating and extensive views across the wide plains of the Vales of Berkeley, Gloucester to the west, and Evesham and Feldon to the north. The dramatic scenery of the escarpment creates a backdrop to the larger settlements of Bath and Stroud that nestle within deeply incised valleys that extend into the heart of the escarpment, and where steep valley sides and ridge crests are often accentuated by dense woodland. Beyond the escarpment in the west and north are outlying hills comprising remnants of the former alignment of the scarp edge, and now isolated by the progressive eastern retreat of the escarpment. Gently dipping away to the south-east the land forms a broad plateau of high wolds, dissected by a series of river valleys. The numerous Cotswolds valleys all have their own unique character; many have an intimate scale, and a secluded and 'secret' character. To the south-east of the high wold there is a progressive transition across the dip-slope to the lower lying dip-slope lowland where valleys are generally broader than on the high wold, and often form subtle undulations in the landscape. In the north-eastern part of the AONB the influences of the older Lias Group rocks are more evident. The sense of elevation is still apparent but

this is a softer, rolling, and often complex landform arising from the effect of geological faults and folding determining a succession of rock outcrops. The escarpment at Edge Hill is a prominent feature, but unlike the main Cotswolds escarpment, this is formed by the iron-rich Marlstone Rock Formation. Within this Ironstone region of the Cotswolds AONB, the characteristic warm-brown colour of the building stone within the villages, as well as the soils, is particularly notable. Although contrasting with the familiar Oolitic limestone terrain associated with the main part of the Cotswolds, the sense of unity and local distinctiveness is very apparent.

This assessment provides a detailed review of the AONB's landscape and recognises that **all** landscapes matter, not just those that are particularly well known or evoke strong images. The assessment acknowledges that each landscape character type and landscape character area has a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes it different from another. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct and gives each its particular sense of place, regardless of perceptions of quality or value. The assessment provides a new descriptive map of the AONB that draws attention to the contrasts in landscape character that are so often taken for granted.

3.2 Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

The *Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment* uses as a framework the Countryside Agency's *Character Map of England* and the draft *National Landscape Typology for England* (Figure 2). Descriptions of relevant Countryside Character Areas and National Landscape Types are presented in Appendix 4. For the area of the AONB within Gloucestershire, the *Draft County Landscape Typology* was also used. This recent study comprised a desk based assessment of landscape types for the entire county based on the *National Landscape Typology for England*. Reference has also been made to earlier landscape

character assessments carried out within the AONB, and in neighbouring county and district authorities and study areas. These are listed in the Section 5: *References* and illustrated in *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*. A comprehensive review of the Partnership Landscape Character Assessments that include part of the AONB, and those commissioned for the AONB only, is provided in a separate report to the AONB Partnership. (See Section 1.5 of this report).

The 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance', 2002 published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage sets out the spatial hierarchy for the assessment process with a top down cascade from the National Typology down to local level. As described above, this assessment has been based on a refinement of the latest data available for the National Typology, and through detailed desk and field study, has identified landscape character types based on a more detailed refinement of the National Types. These equate to the 'local authority scale' of assessment referred to in the Guidance. Within this network of landscape types, the landscape character areas identified across the AONB represent the geographically specific representation of the types. There is an opportunity for future studies to take the assessment to a more detailed local scale. For example, separate landform and land use facets may be identified within each of the types eg valley sides and valley bottoms within each of the valley landscape character types. These in turn would be identified by a local name to reflect the geographical location and local identity. As a further clarification of the landscape assessment methodology employed, a flow diagram is presented in Appendix 4.

Building upon this solid framework and methodology, the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Character Assessment has identified 19 landscape character types and 68 landscape character areas. These are listed in Table 3.1 and their distribution across the AONB is shown on *Figure 8*, confined to types only. *Figure 9*, comprising a more detailed map at 1:100,000, indicates both landscape types and areas, and is provided on CD at the back of this report.

Following this introduction, each of the generic landscape types is described. The key characteristics are summarised followed by a review of landscape character, and the physical and human influences that have shaped the landscape and contributed to its character. A description of the unique landscape character areas that occur within each landscape character type, and a summary of the principal features that are particular to each follow this.

3.3 Landscape Character Type and Area Boundary Determination

The boundaries of the landscape character types and areas have been mapped to 1:50,000 scale, using the range of data sets that were made available at this scale, and subsequently verified and refined in the field. Reference to 1:25,000 scale maps were also made as an integral part of the desk and field studies, to provide a more informed and detailed analysis of mapped features, and the pattern of field sizes and types in particular. The boundary lines are primarily defined by contours where these correlate with a well-defined landform, mark a change in slope profile or a general height above Ordnance Datum, or correlate with a change in the underlying geology where this has a significant surface expression. Within the principal discipline of geology, landform and land use, the boundaries are also drawn to contour lines and thereafter follow the perimeter of areas of woodlands, and roads, tracks and occasionally footpaths, where these form a well-defined landscape feature.

Changes in landscape character rarely follow clearly defined lines on the ground, and as a consequence many of the boundaries may be considered as transitional. This is particularly evident in the transition between the High Wold, High Wold Dip-Slope, and Dip-Slope Lowland. While other types are more clearly defined, such as the escarpment, even this distinctive morphological unit still demonstrates transitional characteristics, particularly at the base of the escarpment where rotational slipping, and slumping has resulted in hummocky ground at the junction between the Lias Group rocks and the overlying Oolitic Limestone.

Despite the transitional nature of landscape character, it is considered that the provision of a definitive line provides an essential reference point from which to commence the determination of specific outputs from the LCA. Throughout the study, therefore, the boundaries to landscape character types and areas are all definitive, based on the determining features associated with geology, landform and land use. In recognition of transitional nature of landscape character, however, the definitive lines represent the centre line of the transition. To provide a consistent level of control across the AONB, the centre line of transitional boundaries between types, and individual character areas, have been drawn to contour lines where landform change is a principal determinant of landscape character, together with identifiable features, notably roads, footpaths, and woodland edges.

Where the assessment of a particular site or area is undertaken that falls close to, or within 0.5 km of a boundary line, it is recommended that the characteristics, descriptions and management strategies for each of these adjacent landscape types / areas are taken into

consideration. This is particularly important in the evaluation and guidance of management requirements, as well as in the response to consultations, and the development of landscape and environmental projects.

Table 3.1
Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPE	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS
1 Escarpment Outliers	1A Cam Long Down, Peaked Down and Downham Hills 1B Langley Hill 1C Oxenton and Dixton Hills 1D Dumbleton and Alderton Hills 1E Bredon Hill 1F Meon and Ebrington Hills 1G Brailes Hill and Castle Hill
2 Escarpment	2A Bath to Beach Farm 2B Beach Farm to Hillesley 2C Uley to Cooper's Hill 2D Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe 2E Winchcombe to Dover's Hill 2F Dover's Hill to Mickleton 2G Edge Hill
3 Rolling Hills and Valleys	3A Ozleworth Bottom and Lower Kilcott 3B Stinchcombe and North Nibley
4 Enclosed Limestone Valley	4A Cam and Wellow Brook Valleys 4B Bathampton and Limpley Stoke 4C Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook Valleys 4D Lower By Brook Valley 4E Perrymead Slopes
5 Settled Valley	5A Nailsworth 5B Frome Golden Valley and Stroud
6 Ironstone Hills and Valleys	6A Whichford Hills and Valleys 6B Ratley Hills and Valleys
7 High Wold	7A Nymphsfield and Kingscote Plateau, & Minchinhampton Common 7B Bisley Plateau 7C Cotswolds High Wold Plateau 7D Rissington Plateau and Milton Downs 7E Rollright and Chastleton Plateau 7F Over Norton Plateau 7G Edge Hill Ironstone Plateau

8 High Wold Valley	8A Toadsmoor, Holy Brook and Upper Frome Valleys 8B Painswick and Slad Valleys 8C Upper Churn Valley 8D Upper Coln Valley 8E Upper Windrush Valley 8F Upper Dikler Valley
9 High Wold Dip-Slope	9A Sulis Manor Plateau 9B Bathampton and Claverton Down 9C Lansdown 9D Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope 9E Wychwood Forest 9F West Enstone Uplands
10 High Wold Dip-Slope Valley	10A Middle Churn Valley 10B Middle Coln Valley 10C Upper / Middle Leach Valley
11 Dip-Slope Lowland	11A South and Mid Cotswolds Lowlands 11B Stonesfield Lowlands
12 Dip-Slope Lowland Valley	12A Upper By Brook Valley 12B Lower Coln Valley 12C Lower Leach Valley
13 Low Limestone Plateau	13A Paulton and Peasedown St John Ridge 13B Hinton Charterhouse Plateau
14 Cornbrash Lowlands	14A Biddestone Lowland Farmland 14B West Malmesbury Lowland Farmland
15 Farmed Slopes	15A Vale of Bourton Farmed Slopes 15B Vale of Moreton Farmed Slopes
16 Broad Floodplain Valley	16A Lower Windrush Valley 16B Lower Evenlode Valley
17 Pastoral Lowland Vale	17A Vale of Bourton 17B Vale of Moreton
18 Settled Unwooded Vale	18A Vale of Gloucester Fringe
19 Unwooded Vale	19A Avon Valley 19B Boyd Valley 19C Wickwar Vale 19D Vale of Evesham Fringe 19E Vale of Feldon Fringe

1 ESCARPMENT OUTLIER

Character Areas

- 1A Cam Long Down Peaked Down and Downham Hills
- 1B Langley Hill
- 1C Oxenton and Dixton Hills
- 1D Dumbleton and Alderton Hills
- 1E Bredon Hill
- 1F Meon and Ebrington Hills
- 1G Brailes Hill and Castle Hill



Key Characteristics

- Distinctive hills detached from the main Cotswolds escarpment and rising above the neighbouring vale;
- varied and sometimes steeply sloping topography;
- dramatic panoramic views from upper slopes possible over the Severn Vale to the Welsh borders and eastwards to the Cotswolds Escarpment;
- areas of rough grassland and scrub occur on some sections of the upper slopes and areas of steep landform;
- woodlands and belts of trees often occupy steeper slopes of the outliers and border the gullies of brooks draining radially into the vale;

- areas of woodland and hedgerows form interlocking patterns;
- lower, gentler slopes cloaked in improved pastures and arable farmland, divided up by a network of hedgerows and some dry stone walls;
- sparsely settled;
- hilltops often the site of prehistoric hillforts or other defensive enclosures; and
- hills criss crossed by footpaths often surrounded by dense vegetation link the hill tops to the vale villages.

Landscape Character

The outliers represent remnants of the ancient escarpment that have survived as distinct and discrete hills rising from the lowland vale to the west of the main scarp slope. The majority of the Cotswolds outliers are located within the AONB, Robinswood Hill and Churchdown Hill being notable exceptions, and are located at varying distances from the scarp between Mickleton in the north and Cam in the south. A further outlier at Brailes Hill is located to the north of Stourton in the north-east part of the AONB. They vary in size with the largest being Bredon Hill, which is extensive enough to have influenced the course of roads and rivers. Although the smallest, Peaked Down is a dramatic landscape feature and local landmark.

The intrinsic character of the outliers is derived from their pronounced relief, flowing woodland cover and field boundaries, which combine to give a strong sense of unity and visual integration. The character of each individual outlier varies dramatically, however, and depends upon the extent of woodland cover, the nature of landform and the type of agriculture employed on their slopes. Interestingly,

patterns may vary across different sides of the same hill and result in giving each face a distinct and separate character and sense of place.

Despite their differences all represent very visible landscapes that frame views, and form punctuation marks in the landscape. The larger outliers form a backdrop to the vale landscapes beneath them and all offer an important orientation point and local landmark. These landscapes also offer dramatic long distance views from their upper slopes. From the highest outliers, views to the Welsh mountains are possible. Even from lower elevations, dramatic views across the vale are possible.

The outliers share many geological, physiographic and land cover elements with the neighbouring escarpment, having once been a part of it themselves. As a result, patterns of land use and historic influences are broadly similar. Hedgerows follow landform and emphasise the sloping landform and help contribute to the sense that the hills are well wooded. In reality few large woodlands survive, and the majority of broadleaved woods are small and occupy slopes that are too steep to cultivate, and areas bordering streams. Stone walls, whilst not widespread, are present on the Ebrington and Bredon Hill outliers and where present contribute to landscape character and evoke images reminiscent of the high wold landscape to the east where stone walls are more prevalent.

Agriculture on the outliers contributes significantly to their character. Mature hawthorn hedges define productive pasture and arable land on lower gentler slopes. These give way to more open areas and larger fields of rough grassland on upper slopes. In many areas scrub encroachment is evident.

Physical Influences

The Cotswolds outliers represent areas of rock separated by erosion from the main mass of the Cotswolds. At one time, the escarpment lay very close to the line of the Severn, but over the course of millions of years the escarpment has been eroded eastwards through the exploitation of lines of weakness or faulting. Erosion has therefore been uneven leaving the outliers as upstanding remnants of the former scarp. Their position marks the former alignment of the escarpment, the most westerly line of which is marked by Robins Wood Hill and Churchdown Hill which lie to the west of the boundary of the AONB.

Much of the eroded debris from the escarpment has long since disappeared having been carried to the sea by rivers. As a result, a number of the outliers are of particular geological interest as they afford greater clarity for the

study of divisions in the Lower Jurassic system, unlike the same sequence occurring on the adjacent escarpment slopes where divisions are often obscured by slippage of the Lias Group clays and Oolitic debris.

The processes that formed the outliers still continue and new outliers are progressively becoming detached from the escarpment. The most notable example is Langley Hill. Further eastern retreat of the escarpment, together with headward erosion of Dip-Slope streams will eventually fully detach the Hill.

The outliers generally mirror the Jurassic geology of the stretch of escarpment they are located adjacent to. Local differences do occur, however, largely due to the dip of the strata and differing rates of erosion. As a result of their similar geology, land cover and land use patterns on the scarp slopes and outliers are broadly similar. For example, where areas of slip occur at the base of both landscape types, hummocky ground is widespread. In both landscape types such areas are evident as undulating areas of either permanent pasture or occasional arable fields. Areas of slip are also marked by gorse, which rapidly colonises disturbed ground as well as areas of sandy and poor soil.

Woodland cover is notably less extensive than on the scarp. Where it does occur, however, broadleaved woods predominate, often marking areas of steeper landform or defining the line of streams that drain radially from the summits of the outliers into the surrounding vale. These woodlands often form interlocking patterns with surrounding hedged fields, and combine with hedgerow and field trees to give the impression that the outliers are well wooded, especially when viewed from the surrounding vale. Few of the woodlands are ancient which possibly indicates that the outliers were extensively cleared for agriculture. This is substantiated by field patterns and historic documents that indicate that throughout the medieval period the majority of the outliers were indeed open areas of common land used for sheep grazing by the villagers living in settlements on the lower slopes.

Human Influences

The symbolic and strategic importance of the outliers cannot be underestimated. Wide views over the surrounding vale and the natural defences formed by steep slopes all around ensured that a number of these hills were exploited as the site of hillforts during the Iron Age period. Indeed fine views over the Severn Vale probably mean that they were used as vantage points as far back as the Mesolithic when hunters tracked the movement of big game herds. Interestingly, long barrows and round barrows, the burial monuments of the Neolithic

and Bronze Age so typical of the scarp slope, are absent. This possibly indicates that the outliers were beyond territories stretching westwards from the scarp across the High Wold and Dip-slope.

Owing to their steep slopes and shallow soils limiting agriculture, the upper portion of many of the outliers were open common land during the Medieval period, and used for sheep grazing by villagers living on the lower slopes and the bishops and abbeys which owned much of the north Cotswolds during the Medieval period. Interestingly it is the medieval abbeys that pioneered sheep farming on a large scale, Gloucester Abbey at one stage owning a flock of 10,000. The names of individual hills often mirror the name of the village that the common land was farmed by. Fine examples are Alderton Hill and Dumbleton Hill, with the villages linked to them located on the gentler lower slopes in the vale to the north and south of the outlier. Many of the tracks that traverse the outliers are ancient and may mark the line of routes used by villagers to drive their sheep to these commons. As was typical the lower gentler slopes formed part of the open fields that surrounded villages and which extended into the vale. These were large hedged fields divided up into furlongs, the ridges and furrows of which are evident in many locations today. Field patterns, on the lower slopes of numerous outliers such as those on the north-eastern slopes of Bredon Hill, also indicate that assarting was taking place.

Despite objections, many of the outliers were enclosed during the 19th century and the open hill pastures divided into a neat patchwork of fields by hawthorn hedges and walls, profoundly altering their appearance. There is no common land remaining on the outliers although remnants of calcareous grassland and ancient woodland on steeper slopes are remnants of the pre-enclosure landscape. The upper slopes of some hills retain their open character and represent areas of common pastures or waste that escaped enclosure.

The dramatic relief and views afforded from the outliers has been exploited by numerous late medieval landowners who established great houses and landscaped gardens on their lower slopes. Whilst occupying only a small section of individual hills, they exert a strong influence over the local landscape, particularly in the extensive woodlands and exotic tree species that are associated with them, as at Overbury Park. Other settlement on the Outliers consists mainly of dispersed linear hamlets and on the hillsides and hill terraces with a number of farmsteads and individual buildings mainly on the hillsides, terraces and crests, although they can also be found scattered in the vale

below. Compact linear villages and hamlets and dispersed villages, whilst limited on the Outliers, do occasionally occur at the foothills of this character type.

Roads fringe the lower slopes of many of the larger outliers. Where present they encircle the hill and link villages on their lower slopes. These narrow, winding lanes generally follow the contours of the hill and in many instances mark the outer limits of the outlier. Despite the roads encircling them, most hills are remote, cars being unable to access beyond the lower slopes. Tracks are present but these tend to link the encircling roads to mid-slope farms that date to the enclosures. Public rights of way criss cross the hills and are often the only means of accessing vantage points on or close to their summits.

Some summits, notably Ebrington Hill, are accessible by car, with roads providing easy access to the large communication masts that mark the hilltop. The height of the outliers, combined with their proximity to the M5 and large urban populations has made them the ideal location for such aerials and indeed many have one on their summit.

Character Areas

1A

Cam Long Down, Peaked Down and Downham Hills

These three hills are the southernmost of the Cotswolds outliers in the AONB and are only partially separated from the stretch of escarpment to the east of Cam by narrow winding brooks.



The profiles of these hills are important and ensure that they are instantly recognisable features of the local landscape, and indeed Cam Long Down is a local landmark. Cam Long Down and Downham Hill retain their capping of hard Inferior Oolite limestone, which has helped them retain their level surface. However, on the Peaked



Down, this layer has been eroded away exposing the Lias Group Sandstone to the elements. The sandstone is soft and easily weathered, resulting in the hill's distinctive conical shape. On the Cam Long Down and Downham Hill, the presence of these sands has resulted in steep even slopes below their surface capping.

The Oolitic limestone cap of Cam Long Down and Downham Hill supports a fine example of unimproved grassland. On Cam Long Down this sits above an area of scrub woodland that clings to its steep southern slopes. By contrast, the particular geology of Peaked Down has meant that amongst areas of bracken, patches of more acidic grassland thrive. Here, plants such as Sheep's Sorrel and Heath Bedstraw may be found. Bracken is also conspicuous on the mid slopes of Downham Hill and Cam Long Down, where the Lias Group sandstone outcrops below the Oolitic cap. Traditionally, these hills were grazed by sheep, and the bracken burnt. In more recent times, however, cattle grazing and bracken cutting maintain the open grassy hillsides and areas of heath.



The various habitats on these hills are important to a range of faunal species including Buzzards, Chiffchaffs, Fieldfare and Brambling. Migratory birds such as the rare Ring Ouzel are also known to stop off here. Such species, and the landscape itself, attract many visitors and a small car park has been constructed at the base of the Peaked Down to serve the nature reserve located on its slopes.

Beyond the hedges on the lower slopes of these hills, the lynchets amidst bracken and isolated scrub trees on the slopes of Cam Long Down are the most potent remnant of human interaction with the landscape. There can be little doubt, however, that these distinctive hills would have retained some importance to the Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age communities whose monuments line the escarpment from Uley Bury fort to Nymphsfield. Until Victorian times limestone was extracted from the Long Down. This area has also been used as a rabbit warren, and during the Second World War a firing range was established and used by the Volunteer Rifle Brigade; however, few traces of these uses remain.

1B

Langley Hill



Langley Hill is located to the west of Winchcombe and effectively defines the limits of the town. Its position is very close to the stretch of escarpment below Nottingham Hill and is an excellent place to observe how the outliers have been formed. Langley Hill is gradually becoming detached from the main scarp and Cotswolds 'massif', separated from Nottingham Hill only by the Prestcott Saddle. Underlain by a band of the more resistant Marlstone Rock, the Saddle forms the local watershed between the headwaters of the Tirl Brook flowing north-westwards eventually into the Severn, and the initially south-east flowing headwaters of the Langley Brook,



a tributary of the River Isbourne. Over the next few thousand years, as the escarpment retreats eastwards, Langley Hill will become a true outlier, left surrounded by vale landscapes on all sides.

The hill rises in gentle, even slopes to its summit at 274 m AOD and is capped by the Cleeve Cloud Member of the Birdlip Limestone Formation under which sits thin bands of the Leckhampton and Crickley Members of the same Formation. These strata form a steeper landform and are cloaked in broadleaved woodland and limited areas of calcareous grassland. The hill's lower slopes are formed from mudstone and siltstone and the gentle slopes are characterised by arable farming and improved pastures.

The landscape is divided up into moderately sized irregular fields by hawthorn hedges and it is likely that, prior to enclosure, the hill was largely open and communally grazed by the local villagers although remnants of ridge and furrow on lower slopes mark the limits of the open common fields. Hedges are generally overgrown and gappy and give the landscape a neglected appearance. This is emphasised by areas of rough grassland and scrub encroachment in a number of fields on the upper slopes.

Small compact farms occupy sheltered positions on the mid slopes of the hill and are reached by narrow tracks. The hill is encircled by roads. However, public access to the summit is only possible by traversing footpaths such as the Wychavon Way.

1C

Oxenton and Dixon Hills

Hard outcrops of Birdlip Limestone Formation form the summits of Oxenton Hill and Crane Hill, which rise to 223 m AOD and 120 m AOD respectively. These are underlain by a wide Lias Group Marlstone Rock terrace, below which extend gentler slopes formed from older

mudstones of the Lias Group. By contrast on Dixon Hill (164 m AOD), the Marlstone Rock forms the summit on which sits the kidney shaped Iron Age hillfort.

The north and south faces of Oxenton Hill are of very different character. The north face is cloaked in woodland, with lower slopes characterised by large areas of open semi-improved pasture and orchards. The woodlands, a large proportion of which are ancient, are valued for their beetle populations and mark the limits of the Dyrham Formation mudstone. These woodlands also obscures views to the summit of the hill on which sits The Knolls, an Iron Age enclosure, made more remarkable by an area of calcareous grassland and woodland that form an impressive silhouette against the skyline when viewed from the vale.

The sheltered and sunnier aspect of the southern slopes makes them more suitable for farming and more intensive agriculture is evident here, with hedged fields extending up the slopes to the summit where significant slumping create an interesting landscape feature.

Dixon Hill is a well-known local landmark, particularly with historians interested in how the landscape appeared in the 18th century. A painting titled 'Dixton Manor House' by an unknown artist and dated to 1715, shows the hill as it would have appeared at the time with the house and formal gardens in the foreground and a patchwork of small hedged field on the lower slopes of the hill leading to woodlands and open grassland on the summit. Many features of the scene are still identifiable. A second painting by the same artist, entitled 'Countryside Around Dixon Manor' illustrates the landscape surrounding the hill.



1D**Dumbleton and Alderton Hills**

Dumbleton and Alderton Hills form a prominent outlier punctuating the vale between the main Cotswold escarpment and Bredon Hill. The hills, rising to 203 m AOD and 168 m AOD respectively, are capped by Whitby Mudstone Formation rocks and surrounded by a broad Marlstone Rock terrace, which is cloaked in extensive areas of broadleaved woodland.

Woodland essentially defines the character of these hills and ensures that they are instantly recognisable from the surrounding vale. It is likely that most are relatively recent in origin, especially the large-scale coniferous woodlands on the south side of Alderton Hill. An exception is the ancient woodland capping Alderton Hill. Despite being extensive, woodland is not continuous across the entire hill and forms a broken pattern, with small blocks following and emphasising landform. Between areas of woodland lies a patchwork of hedged fields. These are predominantly managed as improved pastures although some arable fields on the gentle slopes of the summit are visible.

Alderton Hill Quarry, located on Alderton Hill to the immediate south west of Dumbleton Wood, is a SSSI and noted for its well-preserved fossil insects and fish. The site is an important research site for the study of early insect faunas.

1E**Bredon Hill**

Bredon Hill is the largest of the Cotswold Outliers, extending to some 5 km (3 miles) long and 2.5 km (1.5 miles) wide. It rises to 305 m AOD in the north-west where steep slopes, some of 20 degrees, occur. Bredon Hill dominates the skyline and rises from the surrounding vale as a massive whaleback hill that forms a backdrop to the vale landscapes between Pershore and Eckington. Indeed Bredon Hill is so large as to have deflected north south traffic and the course of the Avon. During the last Ice Age it is also said that the hill formed a barrier to ice flows coming down from Wales and Lincolnshire¹⁹.



The cap of the hill is formed from Birdlip Limestone Formation, beneath which sits mudstones and a Marlstone Rock terrace. Beneath these strata, the Lias clay gives the landscape a hummocky nature, particularly where it has been affected by rotational slips on its northern slopes. The hill itself is like the Cotswolds in miniature, with a north west facing escarpment leading to a gentle Dip-Slope trending southwards to Overbury and Ashton under Hill.

Beneath the limestone summit of Bredon, and occupying the steep northern slopes above the junction with the mudstone, is a narrow surviving band of ancient, unimproved calcareous grassland, which is interspersed with areas of calcareous scrub. This sits between areas of mixed woodland, which again clings to these steep slopes. Species rich grassland such as this would have at one time been much more extensive; however, agricultural improvement since enclosure has diminished this resource. Ancient broadleaved woodlands occupy lower slopes generally just above the Lias clay on areas of mudstone and Marlstone Rock.

¹⁹. William Dreghorn (1967) *Geology Explained in the Severn Vale and the Cotswolds*

Areas of calcareous grassland, ancient woodland and isolated veteran trees are together designated as part of the Bredon Hill NNR/SSSI/cSAC. This major lowland wood pasture site in Worcestershire supports an outstanding assemblage of saproxylic invertebrates. The interest extends far beyond the SSSI boundary where surviving parkland, veteran trees in regenerating woodland, remnants of undisturbed woodland and hedgerow and field trees offer important habitats. The 13th century deer park and associated medieval castle above Elmley Castle offer particularly important parkland habitats.

The southern face of Bredon Hill is generally less steep and therefore has been less of a constraint to agriculture. Here, hawthorn hedges and dry stone walls divide the landscape up into a patchwork of large to moderately sized fields. Extensive landscaped parkland also exists at Overbury Park.

The name Bredon refers to an area of Anglo Saxon Down, the suffix 'Dun' being added to an earlier British word for Hill that must already have been used to describe it. The implication of this is that the hill was largely open common grazing land from early times and only in the past few centuries has it been enclosed to create the modern patchwork pattern of fields. Indeed the early name for the hill may date back to the Iron Age, during which time three hillforts were located on Bredon Hill at Comberton, Elmley and the summit itself.

Local landmarks include Bredon Tower, or Parsons' Folly, which was built by Mr Parsons of Kemerton in the late 18th century. The landmark is made more visible by the introduction of modern communication masts. Other well-known landmarks are the King and Queen and the Banbury Stones. These are regarded as fine examples of gulls, a feature of Oolitic geology.

Bredon Hill is ringed by settlements marking the springline just below the band of the Marlstone Rock Formation. These are linked by narrow winding lanes that mark the outer limits of the hill. A number of narrow lanes also link these settlements to farms slightly higher up its slopes. The upper slopes of Bredon are only accessible on foot. A holloway runs up the hill from Woolas Hall, an early 17th century mansion, past St Catherine's Well to the Banbury Stone and probably represents one of many ancient trackways onto the summit from the vale.

1F

Meon and Ebrington Hills

Meon and Ebrington Hills are the northernmost of the Cotswolds outliers and mark the point where the main Cotswold escarpment terminates before entering the Vale of Evesham. These impressive hills, along with Brailes Hill and Castle Hill to the east, act as a gateway marking the entrance to the Vale of Moreton.

Meon Hill, capped with Marlstone Rock, and with lower slopes formed from Dyrham Formation mudstone and siltstone, is the smaller of the hills, rising to just 194 m AOD. Its summit is capped by an impressive Iron Age hillfort defended by double rampart and ditch except on its north-west side where steep slopes require only single defences. The hill was settled thousands of years prior to this and traces remain on the south of the hill of Neolithic earthworks. On visiting the hill it not difficult to appreciate its strategic importance, the summit affording splendid views across the Vale of Evesham as far as the Malvern Hills.



The northern scarp face of the hill and the ramparts of the fort are obscured by scrub and woodland. However, on the Marlstone Rock cap, including the inner area of the hillfort, and on the hill's gentler south facing slopes, arable farming predominates. Here, large sweeping fields are defined by well-maintained hawthorn hedges.

Ebrington Hill is to the south of Meon Hill and represents a massive outlier. It rises to 259 m AOD and 242 m AOD as two distinct hilltops, both of which are capped by large telecommunication masts. Indeed, Ebrington Hill is the highest point in the whole of Warwickshire and is visible from many points in the lowland vale.

The gentle, even slopes of the hill are formed from siltstone and mudstone although a wide Marlstone Rock Formation terrace is also evident. Inferior Oolite caps the



hill and is surrounded by a thin outcrop of Bridport Sand Formation. Settlements such as Ilmington and Ebrington sit at the base of the hill where the siltstones and mudstones of the Lias Group gives way to the clay of the Blue Lias Formation, which extends into the vale.

The gentle slopes are well suited to farming and large fields of brassicas are conspicuous on the hill's southern face. Elsewhere, permanent pasture predominates although some arable is also evident. On steeper slopes, rough grazing prevails; however, no significant species rich grasslands have been identified, possibly due to improvement in the past. These areas are generally open and dotted with scrub and isolated field trees with remnants of ridge and furrow.

Woodland is not extensive although ancient broadleaved woodland is conspicuous on the hill's steep northern slopes below the Marlstone Rock and above Kiftsgate Court and on Windmill Hill. Kiftsgate and Hidcote are well known features of the landscape, both representing 20th century plant and shrub gardens.

1G

Brailes Hill and Castle Hill



Brailes Hill, and the smaller 'knoll' of Castle Hill, forms a low, gentle but distinctive outlier in the far north east of the AONB. Here, a hard cap of Chipping Norton Limestone and Sandstone survives at the summit, which rises to 232 m AOD. The conspicuous rectangular copse located on the summit of the hill is a distinctive local landmark. The lower slopes are formed from mudstone, and shelve gently into the surrounding vale. These slopes are cloaked in a mosaic of arable fields and semi-improved pastures. Fields are generally large scale although the network is breaking down and gappy due to poor hedgerow management. Isolated areas of scrub encroachment also occur on sections of steeper slopes giving the landscape a locally neglected or unmanaged appearance. Broadleaved woodlands are generally located on the hill's northern and western slopes bordering the 150 m contour.



The village of Upper Brailes borders the lower slopes of Brailes Hill to the north and mark the breach between it and the smaller Castle Hill. This is a distinctive landscape feature and may be observed for some distance, despite only rising to 160 m AOD. Castle Hill is a fine example of a medieval Motte and Bailey castle and is cloaked in pasture. Scrub encroachment is extensive on the steep slopes and its summit is punctuated with scrub trees.

2 ESCARPMENT

Character Areas

- 2A Bath to Beach Farm
- 2B Beach Farm to Hillesley
- 2C Uley to Cooper's Hill
- 2D Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe
- 2E Winchcombe to Dover's Hill
- 2F Dover's Hill to Mickleton
- 2G Edge Hill



Key Characteristics

- Steep exposed and elevated west facing scarp slope, partly cloaked in semi natural broadleaved woodland;
- generally poor soils and steep sloping relief of the escarpment not suited to arable farming, and primarily used for pasture or woodland;
- limited areas of Registered Common Land on upper scarp slopes merging into the more extensive areas on the High Wold;
- distinct sense of elevation with dramatic panoramic views over the Severn Vale to the Forest of Dean and beyond into Wales, the Malverns and the Shropshire Hills;

- continuity of escarpment face interrupted by a series of major valleys and embayments;
- gentler landform on lower slopes below the spring line;
- calcareous grasslands located on steeper scarp slopes;
- summit of the scarp slope marked by dramatic linear beech hangers;
- rock outcrops often mark the site of former quarries, except within the southern section of the escarpment;
- woodlands, hedgerows, scrub and isolated trees give the impression of a well treed landscape;
- small scale settlement generally confined to lower, shallower slopes of the escarpment, in sheltered locations, and adjacent to spring lines;
- many large towns and cities located at varying distances from, or in the vicinity of the foot of the escarpment;
- roads and tracks surrounded by dense vegetation and occupying holloways;
- numerous prehistoric sites, and more recent monuments and follies, are located on promontories and elevated sections of the escarpment; and
- intermittent historic parks and designed landscapes provide distinctive features on escarpment.

Landscape Character

The Cotswold escarpment is a narrow landscape type, rarely exceeding more than 1 km (0.6 mile) in width. It forms a dramatic and prominent landscape feature running in a virtually unbroken line for 84 kilometres (52 miles) from Mickleton in the north, south westwards to Bath and often appears as a wooded backdrop to undulating landscapes of the vale in the foreground. Breaches do occur, however, where major rivers have carved substantial valleys through the escarpment, notably the Frome as it flows out from the Stroud Valleys, and the Bristol Avon and its tributaries to the south in the vicinity of Bath. Between Hillesley and Uley, the escarpment has been breached by numerous streams and rivers and is less defined than elsewhere, forming a complex succession of Rolling Hills and Valleys. As a result, this section of the escarpment has been classified as a separate Landscape Character Type (3). The escarpment affords excellent views westwards, and from some areas on the upper escarpment slopes, the course of the Severn can be traced in the Vale below. Fine views of Gloucester, Evesham, Bath, Bristol and Cheltenham are also possible from key viewpoints on the escarpment. The Cotswold Way follows the summit of the escarpment, between Chipping Campden and Bath.

The escarpment is a well-known landscape feature, forming a 'wall' to the Vale below, and is best viewed in its entirety from the uplands of the Forest of Dean. From here it can be seen to rise sharply from the undulating landscapes of the Vale where solid geology is overlain by thick Quaternary deposits. The escarpment serves to define the western limits of the outcrop of the Middle Jurassic Limestone that forms the bulk of the elevated landform of the Cotswolds.

For much of its length the escarpment forms an abrupt face of Middle Jurassic Oolitic Limestone and overlying older Lias Group clay strata, and rises in a concave profile to where it meets the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope. South of Hawkesbury the escarpment is less than 100 m high, but below at Cleeve Common it reaches almost 320 m AOD, the highest point in the Cotswolds. The summit of the escarpment is often marked by a narrow belt of trees or beech hangers, which when viewed from the vale, occupy the skyline and form a dramatic silhouette.

The Inferior Oolite is the main scarp-forming rock in the north, whilst in the south this becomes thinner with Great Oolite forming the highest relief. The upper slopes of the escarpment are outward looking, steep, exposed and elevated, although embayments and combes give these upper slopes a dissected appearance. The upper slopes are also often marked with former and active quarry sites, and areas of exposed rock also occur, creating dramatic

landscape features. Beyond the more open areas characterised by rough grassland, scrub and calcareous grasslands, and small, hedged and sometimes walled, improved pastures are evident.

At the base of the escarpment slope older Lias Group shales, sandstones, mudstones and siltstones of the Lower Jurassic are exposed. These are soft and easily weathered and as a result have slumped or been eroded to form hummocky ground. These areas of slippage blur the transition from scarp slope to undulating vale. The lower slopes are also dissected by numerous gullies formed by fast, narrow streams flowing into the Vale. The course of many streams and gullies may be traced on the escarpment, as they are bordered by narrow belts of broadleaved woodland. These landscapes are better suited to agriculture and have been divided up into moderately sized fields. Improved pasture dominates although where conditions are suitable arable fields are also conspicuous. The lower slopes are generally softer and more intimate, with hedgerows, hummocky landform and woodlands providing shelter and limiting long distance views.

The presence of the Lias Group Marlstone Rock Formation has resulted in the formation of distinctive terraces and secondary escarpments, as at Stinchcombe. The Marlstone Rock terrace marks the spring line, and as a result numerous small settlements and farms have been established along it, together with dispersed development on the lower hillsides. Settlement is limited on the upper reaches of the escarpment due to landform constraints. Where present, villages and hamlets tend to be small, dispersed and linear and are often closely associated with preserved areas of ridge and furrow on the hillsides. These villages border east-west orientated roads, many of which may be ancient, and link ancient summer pastures on the high wold to winter pastures in the vale. Although linear settlements predominate on the escarpment, hamlets that have either a radial, organic or planned form also occur. Farmsteads and individual dwellings are also evident on the escarpment.

Physical Influences

Rocks forming the escarpment mainly comprise of the Lower Jurassic Lias Group and the Middle Jurassic Inferior Oolite series. The junction between the Lias Group and Oolitic Limestones is particularly well displayed at Leckhampton Hill. The Lias Group (sandstones, mudstones and clays, siltstones, shales and ferruginous limestones) represent the oldest rocks in the AONB and outcrop at the base of the Cotswolds escarpment and form extensive exposures along the escarpment north of Stroud. Soils derived from the Lias Group clays mudstones are heavy, cold and frequently water-logged and as a consequence agriculture at the base of the scarp slope is often limited to pasture.

Above the mudstones of the Blue Lias and Charmouth Mudstone Formations sits the Marlstone Rock Formation. This ferruginous sandy limestone is generally harder than the rocks above and below it and can be observed forming an often wooded terrace along the escarpment such as exists between Wotton-under-Edge and Dursley, and from Cheltenham to Chipping Campden. The Marlstone Rock marks the spring line that is evident along almost the entire length of the escarpment. Here, the Marlstone Rock and the Bridport Sand Formation above it, form a reservoir holding the water that seeps in from the surface. The water held in these strata is forced out as springs as it reaches the impermeable layers of Lias Group clay below. These often form fast flowing narrow 'anti dip streams' that flow into the vale and onward into the Severn. Interestingly many of the springs issuing from the Marlstone Rock are a rusty brown colour and have a high iron content. The Marlstone Rock is also responsible for creating the distinctive escarpment at Edge Hill.

The sequence of limestone formations within the Inferior Oolite Group generally forms the upper levels of the escarpment north of Stroud where it can be seen extending onto the High Wold and capping promontories such as Nottingham Hill and Haresfield Beacon. South of Stroud, these rocks form the bulk of the escarpment slopes along with the younger Great Oolite Group limestones.

The morphology of the escarpment is a consequence of the regional dip of the rocks, the steep west facing slopes forming the prominent strike face, and exposure of the succession of Lower and Middle Jurassic strata described above. Progressive erosion of the escarpment has resulted in its eastward retreat, with a series of outliers and fragmented and convoluted sections arising from the differential resistance of the rock units. The action of rivers and streams has also created the indented profile of the escarpment with rivers such as the Cam and numerous tributary streams forming impressive combs, embayments and promontories. Elsewhere, the line of the escarpment has been breached by major valleys such as the Frome, at Stroud.

Land cover on the steeper scarp slopes consist predominantly of grassland and broadleaved woodland. Much of the grasslands are unimproved and extensively un-managed, although improved grassland and occasional arable fields are present on flatter areas of Marlstone Rock or on landslips and at the base of the scarp at the junction with the vale. The scarp top is often unenclosed or is divided up into large enclosures. Typically, common land or rough grazing is prevalent and this may be seen rolling up over onto the high wold. In places the upper slopes / plateau transition has been cultivated, which interrupts the broad sweep of traditional grasslands. On the middle scarp

slopes small to medium sized pasture fields predominate. These are defined by a strong pattern of hedges, punctuated by hedgerow trees, which follow landform. Fields become larger and more regular at the base of the slope where they blur into the geometric Enclosure fields typical of the vale. Here, significantly more arable and intensive grassland for dairying is evident.

Scattered scrub occurs on the steepest upper slopes where it may often be seen fringing long established woodlands in gullies. Whilst this gives the landscape an unmanaged appearance, it can enhance the biodiversity interest of grasslands offering nesting and feeding sites for a range of invertebrate and bird species. Woodland ranges from beech hangers at the top of the scarp on the steepest slopes and thinnest soils, to ash and oak woods on lower slopes. A high proportion of escarpment woodlands has been identified as being ancient woodland. The beech hangers are a distinctive landscape feature and often make a dramatic silhouette against the skyline when viewed from the vale below. These beech woods are also of nature conservation value. For example the area of ancient beech woodland and unimproved grassland along the top of the escarpment between Birdlip and Painswick has been designated as a SSSI on account of the woodlands being amongst the most diverse and species rich of their type. These can often be observed forming a close relationship with unimproved grasslands on the steeper slopes and contribute to the landscape's semi-natural character. Whilst extensive woodlands are evident along some stretches of the escarpment, elsewhere a distinctly unwooded character is evident adding to the visual diversity of this landscape.

The steep slopes and thin soils, particularly on the upper scarp slopes, have protected grasslands from improvement. Two principal types exist: unimproved Jurassic limestone grassland and unimproved neutral grassland. These grassland sites are of national importance, based on their diverse flora and invertebrate fauna although diminished grazing threatens them with invasions of scrub and Tor grass. Wet grasslands also occur, particularly adjacent to springs on impermeable pockets of Fuller's Earth.

Human Influences

The escarpment landscape has been exploited for its dramatic form and wide viewing opportunities since Prehistoric times. The numerous Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows that line the upper fringes of the scarp attest to this and were probably sited here to mark the western limits of territories that extended deep into the Cotswolds. The symbolic power of such a dramatic landscape feature was further exploited in the Iron Age when numerous hillforts and ditched enclosures

were established along it. It is obvious that the steep slopes and wide panoramic views were strategically important for defence. Most hillforts are univallate and had considerable defensive structures consisting of a ditch and stone wall, possibly surmounted by a pallsade. Others were multivallate, notably Kimsbury on Painswick Beacon. Nevertheless, many sites only had minimal defences, and their siting on promontories and dramatic edge locations must also therefore have had some symbolic resonance, possibly to reflect the power and prestige of the community that built them.

Throughout prehistory the escarpment was obviously a symbolic frontier, but not a physical barrier, however. It is not unreasonable to assume that many of the hollow ways, preserved in the course of modern roads and tracks that climb the scarp, are remnants of ancient routes linking resources and communities in the vale to those on the uplands of the High Wold. One can be more certain that these routes were used in the medieval period to allow the free movement of sheep between summer pastures on the plateau of winter pastures in the vale. This practice is known as transhumance and was largely abandoned by the 14th century. Roads and tracks traversing the escarpment link more heavily trafficked roads that mark the upper and lower boundaries of the slope.

Beyond these dramatic and evocative landscape monuments, the escarpment displays little evidence of settlement, and exploitation beyond agricultural and forestry/silvicultural usage. By far the most obvious evidence of activity is in the form of field patterns such as the lynchets that run along the slope and form grassy terraces and Celtic field systems on Cleeve Common. Later field systems are marked by hedges and reflect enclosure of former common pastures. Field patterns also indicate that significant areas were assarted. Many fields are therefore irregular in shape although more regular Parliamentary enclosures are prevalent at the base of the scarp where they extend into the vale. Here, ridge and furrow fields are also evident and mark the former open fields that may date back as far as the Saxon period. On the upper scarp slopes remnants of once larger areas of common land survive. These may be the remains of landscapes that have been open and grazed since the Neolithic but were first recorded as common land in the Domesday survey and sometimes in Saxon charters.

Stone quarrying has also been an important agent in shaping the escarpment landscape and contributing to the appearance and prosperity of the wider Cotswolds. The varying colour and characteristics of the Cotswolds stone along the escarpment has had a major influence on this landscape type, through its use for dwellings, roofs, walls

and field boundaries. Other materials have also been extracted. For example Lias Group mudstones and clays, found at the base of the scarp slope, at the junction with the neighbouring vale make excellent bricks and were quarried at numerous sites, particularly in the Stour basin within the Vale of Moreton. The clay was also extracted to line mill pools that occupied the industrial sites that were strung out along many of the valleys draining the High Wold.

On the upper slopes the creamy buff coloured Oolite, and in particular the Freestone, has been extensively quarried and indeed these areas are often pockmarked by former and active quarry workings. Elsewhere, Fuller's Earth was extracted, for example at Minchinhampton. The mudstone horizon within this Formation provides an important clay layer, which was used as an agent for cleansing wool and felting cloth in the fulling mills that were established.

The steep scarp slopes are generally devoid of large-scale settlement although isolated farmsteads and small linear hamlets may be found nestled in sheltered locations adjacent to roads climbing the plateau. These are often surrounded by small to medium scale fields and closely associated with small deciduous woodlands. On the lower slopes, and on the Marlstone Rock terrace, larger dispersed linear villages and hamlets are sited. These often take advantage of sheltered locations, and the close proximity of a spring. Combes offer sheltered locations for larger settlements such as Winchcombe, while smaller villages and hamlets tend to be located mid-combe. The more heavily wooded north facing slopes are thinly settled²⁰.

A small number of designed parklands are sited along the escarpment, their location and layout usually designed to exploit the dramatic landscape and extensive views out across the vale. Dyrham Park, Dodington House and Radway Grange are all notable examples. Many are associated with towers and obelisks that form prominent local landmarks.

A number of open and public access sites are located along the escarpment. Examples include Tog Hill, Coaley Park, Painswick Beacon, Barrow Wake, Crickley Hill, Leckhampton Hill and Cleeve Common. These offer opportunities to access some of the most dramatic viewpoints along the escarpment.

²⁰ William Dreghorn (1967) *Geology Explained in the Severn Vale and Cotswolds*



Character Areas

2A

Bath to Beach Farm

The escarpment between Beach Farm and Bath is high and wide, and much indented with combs and gullies, adding significantly to landscape character. At Upton Cheyney the scarp slope rises gently from 40 m AOD to 235 m AOD providing a well-defined backdrop to landscapes in the Vale to the west. Steep slopes are also evident, particularly below Kelston Round Hill and Beckford's Tower where they rise dramatically from the outer limits of Bath.

The gentle slopes have allowed more intensive agriculture and much of the scarp has been cleared of woodland in favour of improved grassland. Small copses and woodlands do survive, however, particularly on steep slopes and lining gullies draining the slopes westwards into the vale. On westward facing slopes, fields are often moderately sized. Above Upper Weston, however, fields are extensive, with hedged boundaries following strong landform features. Less intensive practices here have allowed for the survival of extensive areas of calcareous grassland.

Significant local landscape features are Kelston Round Hill, a wooded knoll to the east of Kelston and Beckford's Tower, an impressive stone monument on the southern edge of Lansdown Hill which was built in 1827 for William Beckford to provide a retreat in which he could study and enjoy the commanding views of Bath from the Tower's Belvedere.



2B

Beach Farm to Hillesley

The escarpment between Beach Farm and Hillesley is narrow, gentle and low when compared to stretches of escarpment elsewhere in the AONB. It varies in height above the vale from just 50 m AOD in the north to 90 m AOD in the south, east of Wick. As a result, landcover is more typically improved pasture, with moderately sized fields enclosed with a network of neat hawthorn hedges.

Woodlands, although sparse, do contribute to local landscape character. Typically these ancient broadleaved woodlands are very narrow and occupy the upper scarp slopes, areas of steep landform and the course of brooks draining westwards into the Vale. Larger areas of woodland survive in parkland, however, as at Dodington and Dyrham, where parkland trees also make a significant contribution to landscape character.



As is typical, hillforts line the edge of the escarpment, the most notable being Little Sodbury, and at Hinton Hill where the course of the modern road through the site may mark the line of the ancient trackway linking the fort to the vale below.

Settlement is largely sited in the vale. However, the shallow nature of the slopes has allowed villages and hamlets to extend up the scarp some distance, generally comprising spring line villages and hamlets, and in the form of scattered roadside developments. The M4 is a significant feature. Despite occupying deep cuttings close to Springs Farm, it introduces noise and movement to this otherwise quiet rural landscape.

2C

Uley to Cooper's Hill



The escarpment between Uley and Stroud, and beyond the Frome Valley breach to Cooper's Hill is similar to the Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe character area to the north in that they share similar landform and landcover characteristics. Between the section from Stroud northwards to Cooper's Hill, the form of the escarpment is interesting, as it is narrow and not associated with High Wold or High Wold Dip-Slope. Instead, east of the escarpment top, the land falls into the Painswick Valley, the narrow watershed between the two being marked by the course of a winding country lane. At Cud Hill this watershed is almost breached.

As is typical of the escarpment, ancient broadleaved woodland marks the upper slopes and is often found in matrix with calcareous grassland as at Haresfield Beacon, Scottsuar Hill, and Huddinknoll Hill south of Stroud. The lower slopes have been divided up into a neat patchwork of regular fields. Hedgerows here are often overgrown and contain many mature hedgerow trees. Over much of



the area they combine with upper slope woodlands to contribute to the sense of a well-wooded landscape when viewed from the vale.

Many barrows and hillforts border the upper scarp slopes. Perhaps the most impressive monuments are the Iron Age hillforts at Uley Bury and Painswick Hill. The latter monument is close to Gloucester and is a popular local attraction. At these sites the escarpment effectively creates their defensive characteristics, strengthened by massive ramparts. A number of impressive viewpoints, much visited by ramblers and tourists are located along this stretch of the escarpment. At Cud Hill a small folly has been constructed from where dramatic views to Robinswood Hill and Gloucester Cathedral are possible, as well as views south eastwards into the Wash Brook Valley, a tributary of the Painswick Valley.

Despite the proximity of large urban centres, the landscape retains a strong rural character. However, Gloucester and Stroud do have a marked local influence. Indeed Stroud, Stonehouse and Leonard Stanley occupy the significant



breach created by the Frome as it emerges through the escarpment on its way to the Severn. These settlements are notable for their terraces of brick and stone houses and mills which are indicative of the area's industrial past

2D

Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe

This stretch of the escarpment forms a dramatic backdrop to the towns of Gloucester, Cheltenham and Bishop's Cleeve and limits their eastward expansion. The height of the escarpment gradually increases in a northerly direction. Thus at Cooper's Hill it rises from 100 m AOD to just over 200 m AOD. At the northern section, the escarpment rises from 80 m AOD to over 300 m AOD and forms the highest stretch of the Cotswolds escarpment. In the north of the character area the line of the escarpment terminates at Nottingham Hill, south west of Langley Hill.

Woodland cover is less extensive than in the neighbouring Winchcombe to Broadway character area and is limited to narrow bands of broadleaved woodland at the scarp summit. There are fewer ancient woodlands also, indicating more extensive clearance possibly as a result of the pressure exerted on woodlands in this location by the large urban population of Cheltenham. An exception is Dowdeswell Wood, a large area of ancient woodland associated with parkland at Dowdeswell Court, and the large woodland complexes at Witcombe between Cooper's Hill and Birdlip. Land use is characterised by large unenclosed areas of rough grassland on upper slopes and improved pasture in moderately sized hedged enclosures bordering the vale. Significant areas of calcareous grassland also exist. These are often on the upper slopes and form a close relationship to areas of existing broadleaved and felled woodland such as at Cold Slad, Barrow Wake and Leckhampton Hill. Large areas also survive on the upper slopes of the escarpment on Nottingham Hill and Cleeve Hill, where they mark the edge of extensively grazed common land.



As elsewhere on the escarpment, numerous important archaeological sites border the upper slopes, the most notable being those on Crickley Hill, Cleeve Common and Nottingham Hill. Despite this perhaps the most well known local landmark is the Devil's Chimney. This is a rock pinnacle formed of Lower Freestone that was left by 17th and 18th century quarrymen in the quarry at Leckhampton Hill and is visible from Cheltenham. Quarrying has been a significant influence on the local landscape and much of the Freestone quarried in the area helped build Regency Cheltenham. Despite the close proximity of large urban centres, settlement on the escarpment slopes is sparse and limited to scattered linear settlements bordering the many roads that link Cheltenham to villages on the High Wold, and Oxford further to the east.

2E

Winchcombe to Dover's Hill

The escarpment between Winchcombe and Dover's Hill is broad and relatively high, rising from approximately 100 m AOD to over 200 m AOD in places. There are many spurs, combs and embayments leading to a dramatic and varied landscape. The most significant embayment is that above Winchcombe which is thought to have been formed due to erosion along a line of weakness. The River Isbourne and the Beesmoor Brook and their tributaries drain the embayment northwards, through the town of Winchcombe, into the Avon.

Woodlands cloak much of the landscape, ancient broadleaved woods being the most dominant. Many are sizeable and stretch along the escarpment top, down to the mid and lower slopes, often along the line of brooks and gullies. Between these woodlands on the upper slopes, large unenclosed expanses of rough grassland predominate. On lower slopes, improved pastures, bounded by overgrown hedges reinforced with post and wire fencing is the most dominant land use. Calcareous grassland is not extensive. However, a large area at Horn



Hill Bank Farm above Stanway is notable as this occupies a large woodland clearing. Orchards are also conspicuous on the lower slopes. Orchards were at one time more numerous here and in the vale below.

The upper escarpment slopes / High Wold transition are marked by numerous archaeological sites including Belas Knap, the Snowsill Chambered Tomb and Beckbury Camp. All were sited in dramatic locations and to take advantage of wide views over the Vale of Evesham. Below Beckbury Camp are a series of well-preserved lynchets. Other historical sites include the Roman Villa at Spoonley Farm and the Grade I Medieval deer park at Stanway House, developed as a formal landscape in the late 17th and 18th centuries.

Broadway Tower is located on the summit of the escarpment above the town of Broadway, the second highest point in the Cotswolds. This is an important local landmark, built in 1797 by the 6th Earl of Coventry, George William, for his wife. The story associated with its construction is that she wanted an impressive tower on which she could place a beacon that could be seen from her house near Worcester, the hilltop having long been used as a beacon point. Broadway Tower is one of England's outstanding viewpoints and it is possible to survey an area that includes as many as thirteen counties.

The escarpment is sparsely settled, although the village of Broadway extends some way up the lower slopes.

2F

Dover's Hill to Mickleton

The short stretch of escarpment north of Dover's Hill comprises a spur of high ground separating the Vale of Moreton from the Vale of Evesham. The slopes here are shallow and gentler than elsewhere and are generally well wooded. Ancient woodlands are a noticeable feature of the crest of the slope where they form narrow skyline features. Improved pasture predominates although arable fields may be seen on the lower slopes extending into the vale. Neat hedgerows divide the landscape into a patchwork of regular fields that climb up the gentle slopes. Kiftsgate Court, a registered garden is a notable feature of the landscape and represents a 20th century plant and shrub garden surrounding a late 19th century house.

Dover's Hill is perhaps most well known as the site of the 'Cotswold's Olympicks', which were established by Robert Dover in the 17th century and located in a natural amphitheatre on the escarpment. The games were given Royal assent by James I and featured events such as shin-kicking and sword play. The games ended in 1851 when the common was enclosed although another explanation is that that the games were stopped due to public disorder caused by navvies who were constructing the nearby railway. The Dover's Hill Olympicks were revived for the Festival of Britain in 1951 and have been held annually since 1963.





2G Edge Hill

A distinctive stretch of escarpment is located at Edge Hill, in the north-eastern section of the AONB, to the east of the Vale of Moreton. Here the scarp slopes are generally steep but not high, rising from 140 m AOD to approximately 200 m AOD. Unlike the main Cotswold escarpment, which is capped by the Jurassic Inferior and Great Oolite limestones, the Edge Hill scarp is formed from Lias Group rocks capped by the harder ferruginous limestone of the Marlstone Rock Formation. It has also been an important local source of building stone, the high iron content in the Marlstone Rock giving the buildings in the area a distinctive warm brown colour. Interestingly the colour of the 'Ironstone' has led to local people referring to the part of the Vale of Feldon beneath Edge Hill, as "The Vale of the Red Horse". The name relates to the figure of a horse that was cut into the hillside above Tysoe, possibly during the Anglo Saxon period. The earliest recorded reference to a figure dates to 1607, although sketches of the horse made at various times suggest that the figure became overgrown and subsequently re-cut with an evolving outline over many generations. Indeed up until 1800 the landowner imposed a feudal obligation on the local peasantry to scour the horse each Palm Sunday. The horse no longer survives although it is preserved in local folklore, and the name of the vale.

The lower slopes are broad, gently sloping and agriculturally improved, becoming less improved and more extensively grazed on the steeper upper slopes where gappy hedges enclose large irregular fields. Rough grassland occupies the scarp crest. Beech woods, typical of the crest of the escarpment elsewhere in the AONB, are not found in this character area. This is due to the nature of the underlying geology creating a less base rich soil than the Oolitic limestones found on the escarpment slopes to the south and eastwest. Despite this, isolated trees are evident along hedge lines and often mark the crest of the scarp. In contrast to these open sections of the escarpment, large mixed woodlands are located along the upper steep slopes between Edgehill Farm and Radway Grange.

The lower slopes are generally improved and form a patchwork of regular hedged fields. Many retain traces of ridge and furrow. There is very little settlement on the escarpment, farms and villages such as Radway and Warmington tending to be located at the foot of the scarp.

The escarpment overlooks the site of the Civil War Battle of Edge Hill (1642), the event commemorated by the octagonal Radway Tower, located at the summit of the escarpment, and now part of the Castle Inn. It was built as a sham castle in the 18th century on the spot where King Charles raised his standard and is a prominent landscape feature when viewed from the vale below. The Tower also forms part of the setting of Radway Grange, an early 18th century landscape garden adjacent to a Gothic house, located in the village of Radway at the foot of the escarpment.

3 ROLLING HILLS AND VALLEYS

Character Areas

- 3A Ozleworth Bottom and Lower Kilcott
- 3B Stinchcombe and North Nibley



Key Characteristics

- Relatively enclosed and secluded 'secret' character in upper sections of valleys and narrow valley bottoms;
- broader and more open valley form and developed character where valleys meet the vale;
- steep sided concave valleys with steeper upper slopes often dominated by woodland;
- valleys drained by several tributary streams flowing into the Little Avon River before entering the River Severn;
- area principally under pastoral use, together with some scattered areas under arable cultivation, mainly within the valley slopes and bottom. Areas of rough scrubby pasture often evident on upper slopes;

- fields generally small-scale, mainly enclosed with hedgerows, with hedgerow trees being frequent on valley slopes;
- post and wire fences frequent throughout the landscape;
- contrasting settlement pattern with larger settlements with more pronounced urban influences at valley mouths, and smaller and deeply rural settlements along valley bottoms and stream sides, and upper valley slopes; and
- roads located along valley bottoms and sides with a number cutting across the slopes, often sunken between high banks.

Landscape Character

The Rolling Hills and Valleys comprise an area of valley complexes that are narrow at source, broadening when joining the surrounding Unwooded Vale and separated by relatively narrow, and often open spurs of land supporting areas of pasture and calcareous grassland. Between Hillesley and Uley a series of valleys encroach into and breach the escarpment. As a result, it is less well defined than other stretches to the north and south, appearing as a complex of rolling hills and ridgelines separating numerous deep valleys.

The valleys are drained by small, fast flowing pebbly streams that rise from springlines and wet flushes on the steep upper slopes and drain into the Severn Vale to the west of the AONB. Land use within the area is dominated by pastoral fields grazed by sheep, enclosed by a network of hedgerows with hedgerow trees, and on occasions, post and wire fences. Hedgerow trees contribute to the overall wooded feel of the valleys, which contain extensive woodland, particularly on the steep upper slopes and valley rims.

The settlement pattern within the Rolling Hills and Valleys is diverse, responding to topography and drainage, with the principal areas of development located in the broad valley mouths adjacent to the Vale, and also along the narrower valley floors exploiting the lower valley sides and close proximity to springlines. Development in these areas consists mainly of dispersed linear hamlets with occasional examples that are organic in form. Often the springline is also a location for medieval manor houses and associated villages, with scattered individual dwellings located along a network of minor roads on the lower valley slopes. A number of dispersed hamlets are also found on the valley sides and crests of the rolling hills and valleys.

This is an area of contrasting character although unified by the continuity of the valley form. The physical enclosure and remoteness of the upper sections of the valleys and valleys bottoms, sometimes accessible only on foot, impart a secluded and 'secret' character. In contrast, the lower sections of the valleys at the transition with the Vale have a more developed and urban character, with settlement encroaching onto the valley sides, as well as bottom.

Physical Influences

The alternating layers of Oolitic Limestone and sandstones, and underlying Lias Group, sandstones and mudstones, and Marlstone Rock Formation have been eroded by a dendritic river system to form distinctive concave valleys, which although narrow at source, broaden and open out onto the surrounding Vale landscape (Landscape Character Type 19: Unwooded Vale). The valleys have been cut into what would once have been the face of the escarpment to create a series of valleys surrounded by spurs of land extending from the surrounding High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope. Where the Oolitic Limestone and sandstone forms the upper valley sides, steeper slopes have formed creating an abrupt break of slope with the surrounding High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope. Deposits of alluvial clay, sand and gravel can be found along the floor of the tributary valleys.

Draining the Rolling Hills and Valleys are a number of tributary streams that flow in both a north-westerly and south-westerly direction to enter the Little Avon River before reaching the River Severn, west of the AONB. The steeper upper slopes and hill tops of this Landscape Type reach a height of up to 160m AOD and the valleys fall as low as 60m AOD where they meet the surrounding vale. The steep sides of the valley create a sense of seclusion, which diminishes in closer proximity of the vale.

Within the hills and valleys extensive woodland is characteristic, particularly on the steep upper slopes and



around the valley rims. In places, indigenous broadleaved woodland creates hangers with many of the areas also identified as Ancient Woodland.

Grazing pasture predominates with scrubby areas located on steeper slopes and occasional arable fields that are enclosed by a network of hedgerows and post and wire fences. Hedgerow trees are common, particularly on the valley slopes, increasing the wooded feel and sense of enclosure within the valleys. Fields under arable production are generally larger than those used for pastoral purposes and field amalgamation is apparent. The valley bottoms are typically unimproved or semi-improved pasture, often with rich streamside flora and lines of willow and alder, although surrounding pasture can be rushy in places. Significant blocks of calcareous grassland can also be found, both on the plateau areas of the hilltops and on the valley sides.

Human Influences

It is likely that within the Rolling Hills and Valleys, as with many other areas of the Cotswolds, that there has been continuous human habitation since the prehistoric period. The valleys with their plentiful supply of fresh running water, productive land and sheltered locations are likely to have provided ideal areas in which communities could



settle. The close proximity of numerous long barrows located on adjacent areas of High Wold reinforces the idea that such places have been inhabited for a significant time period. However, it is likely that much of the evidence of such settlement has been obscured by more recent development, with the exception of strip lynchets and motte and bailey castles that occur on the edge of the Landscape Type, for example at Newington Bagpath and Lasborough. A number of historic parks and gardens can also be found within the area including Owlpen Manor, Ozleworth Park, Newark Park and Stancombe Park.

The Rolling Hills and Valleys support a variety of settlement patterns. The distribution of settlement generally reflects topography and drainage with more dense development occurring at the mouth of the valleys where they open onto the surrounding vale landscape. In more rural areas, settlement tends to be concentrated towards the valley rims or gentler valley slopes. Both organic and dispersed linear settlement patterns are evident along the valley bottoms, although scattered dwellings are also located along valley roads.

The valleys are well served by communications, with many lanes twisting along the valley bottoms and valley sides. These ancient lanes are often sunken between high banks and surrounded by overgrown coppice and stone walls. The overhanging woodland often located along such roads forms characteristic tunnels of vegetation.

Character Areas

3A

Ozleworth Bottom and Lower Kilcott

This Character Area comprises one of the most sparsely populated sections of the Rolling Hills and Valleys Landscape Type. The area consists of two main valleys; Ozleworth Bottom which contains a main stream fed by



a number of smaller watercourses; and the valley in which Lower and Upper Kilcott are situated, again containing a main stream fed by several smaller tributaries.

The majority of the area is pastoral land and grazed by sheep. There are, however, scattered areas of arable land. Hedgerows create the most dominant field boundary with scattered hedgerow trees which become more frequent on the valley sides and when in close proximity to woodland blocks. In areas the hedgerows have been reinforced with wooden post fencing. Post and wire fences can also be found scattered throughout the landscape.



Woodland planting within the valleys is extensive, in particular on the valley rims and upper slopes, although in areas it also extends along the course of the stream such as in West Wood, Bangel Wood and Midger Wood, which is also designated as a SSSI. The majority of woodland contains broadleaved species, with the exception of a significant coniferous block at Wortley Hill and smaller areas around Alderley Wood and Lasborough Park. A large area of calcareous grassland can also be found within Lasborough Park. Lining the course of the fast flowing stream in the valley bottom are alder trees, contributing to the overall wooded feel of the valley.

Development and infrastructure within the Character Area is very limited. The valley bottoms generally contain the main communication routes, connecting dispersed linear hamlets and isolated dwellings primarily located along the course of the stream. A number of minor roads also cut up the steep valleys sides, however, providing access to small hamlets on the steep upper slopes such as Upper Kilcott and Newington Bagpath. There is also evidence of new development around Alderley Wood.

Some notable parks and gardens form distinctive features within the valleys, including Lasborough Park, Ozleworth Park and Newark Park, of which the latter is Grade II listed

with a 16th century deer park and house and 18th century landscaped grounds. Both Lasborough Park and Ozleworth Park occupy the lower valley slopes, although Lasborough Park also extends to the edges of the High Wold Dip-Slope. Newark Park, however, is located on the upper slopes with the house having expansive views over the valley. Motte and bailey castles on the edge of the Character Area, at Newington Bagpath and Lasborough, also overlook the valley. Their location may be indicative of a key historic route from the Vale to the High Wold.

3B

Stinchcombe and North Nibley



The Stinchcombe and North Nibley Character Area lies close to the western edge of the AONB around the settlement of Dursley, located outside of the AONB. Land use within the Character Area is similar to the Ozleworth Bottom and Lower Kilcott Character Area, comprising mainly pastoral land grazed by sheep with scattered areas of arable land and scrub, and enclosed mainly by a network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The two principal valleys of Tyley Bottom and Waterley Bottom, drained by several tributary streams, again display a comparable landform pattern. Within the broad similarity of character, differences arise from the disposition of settlements and woodland cover, and local features in the landscape.

Settlement within the Stinchcombe and North Nibley Character Area is more extensive, including the settlement of Wotton-under-Edge located where the valley of Tyley Bottom opens onto the Vale, and Uley, which has developed on the lower valley slopes of the most northern valley. Wotton-under-Edge has developed in a clustered form with small extensions along the valley floor such as Coombe. The settlement comprises traditional stone built dwellings together with modern infill development that cuts into the hillside. Uley, however, has developed as a linear

settlement along the northern valley side. There are also a number of small villages and hamlets within the Character Area such as North Nibley and Stinchcombe, dispersed along B4060, and situated on the break of slope below the escarpment and above the hummocky undulating land on the boundary of the area. Located along the same road are a number of individual dwellings and more minor roads leading to hamlets such as Forthay and Pit Courts located within the valley bottom. The network of minor roads extends not only along the valley floor, but also up the valley slopes onto surrounding areas of the High Wold. The only 'A' road within the area is the A4135, cutting through Folly Wood on the hilltop north of Waterley Bottom before descending down the hillside into Dursley.

Woodland in the Character Area is extensive with the majority containing broadleaved species with significant areas of ancient woodland, although coniferous planting is extensive in Westridge Wood. The hilltop plateaux generally remain open with no woodland cover and in areas such as Stinchcombe Hill calcareous grassland predominates, sections of which are also designated as a SSSI.

There are a number of features of interest in the area including historic parks and gardens such as Stancombe Park, a Grade I 19th century park and garden, and Owlpen Manor, a Tudor manor dating back to 1450 located within the secluded hamlet of Owlpen, adjacent to the springline. Other historic features include strip lynchets north of Holywell on the steep upper slopes of the valley side. Overlooking the area from the surrounding High Wold landscape, the Uley Bury Iron Age hill fort, and a number of long barrows, provide evidence that the hills and valleys have been settled for a significant time period. The Tyndale monument on Nibley Knoll is a prominent local landmark.



4 ENCLOSED LIMESTONE VALLEY

Character Areas

- 4A Cam and Wellow Brook Valleys
- 4B Bathampton and Limley Stoke
- 4C Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook Valleys
- 4D Lower By Brook Valley
- 4E Perrymead Slopes



Key Characteristics

- Moderately broad but enclosed river valleys with steep sides separated by areas of Low Limestone Plateaux and High Wold Dip-Slope;
- strong physical enclosure of valleys creates a secluded character;
- rural character with local influences from large urban centres;
- significant areas of woodland, of which a number are ancient semi-natural woodlands particularly on upper and steeper slopes;
- area under both arable and pastoral use, together with areas of rough pasture and scrub;

- fields of varying sizes, dependent on slope, mainly enclosed by hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees;
- road networks following valleys bottoms connecting settlements and ascending valley sides to more isolated dwellings;
- industrial heritage of the valleys signified by the presence of railways, mills and canal network within Avon Valley;
- impressive features of Victorian engineering; and
- surviving vernacular structures such as terraces of weavers' cottages.

Landscape Character

Distinct areas of the Enclosed Limestone Valley Landscape Type occur in the most southern section of the Cotswolds AONB, to the south, east and north of Bath, the southernmost valleys forming sections extending to the south and the west beyond the AONB boundary. The landscape type is represented by valley systems that form part of the network of watercourses that flow into the River Avon. A discrete area of the Enclosed Valley type also overlooks Bath. Here, the close proximity and views of urban areas influences local landscape character.

The Enclosed Limestone Valleys are characterised by moderately broad, steep sided river valleys separated by areas of Low Limestone Plateaux (Landscape Character Type 13) and High Wold Dip-Slope (Landscape Character Type 9). The physical enclosure of the valleys and relatively sparse settlement patterns has resulted in a secluded character. However, in some areas transportation routes along the valley floor give the valleys a busier and more developed character. Large settlements outside the

AONB boundary such as Bath, Batheaston, Bathampton and Bradford-on-Avon also exert a strong urbanising influence on local landscape character.

Land cover within the valleys is a combination of both arable and pastoral use, although arable land is more frequently found on lower slopes where growing conditions are more hospitable and soils are deeper. Areas of rough pasture and scrub are located on steeper slopes, together with significant woodland blocks that vary in size and form. Fields size also varies, and mainly enclosed by a network of hedgerows with frequent hedgerow trees.

The valley floors are generally flat or gently sloping, giving way to undulating valley sides that progressively increase in steepness. The present form of the valleys is a direct response to the nature of the underlying geology with the Oolitic limestone underlying the steeper upper slopes, and older Lias Group Clays forming the more gentle slopes. The steep valley sides and woodland create a sense of seclusion, and generally contain views along the valley. The upper slopes can be quite open, however, allowing views over the valley landform.

Hamlets and villages within the Enclosed Limestone Valleys are located on the valley sides, in particular on the upper slopes where they are generally dispersed and linear, with villages also extending along the valley bottoms adjacent to springlines. The close proximity of large settlements has an urbanising influence on the perimeter of the landscape type and particularly in the Perrymead Slopes Landscape Character Area, which rise above the eastern fringes of Bath. Predominant building materials include limestone with clay tiles and sometimes slate roofs and rendered finishes, with a number of dwellings dating from the Georgian period. In the Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook character area Oolitic Limestone is a particularly characteristic building material used for both buildings and walls. A network of meandering roads connects villages along the valley floor, and also to other minor routes leading up the valley sides to dwellings on the upper slopes. Such lanes are typically within deep-set cuttings resulting in characteristic sunken lanes or holloways, with old hedge banks and tall hedgerows creating a sense of enclosure.

Physical Influences

The underlying geology within the Enclosed Limestone Valleys generally comprises Middle Jurassic Oolitic Limestones and Lias Group sandstone and limestone occurring at the tops of the valleys, and valley sides consisting of Lias Group Clays. A band of Fuller's Earth outcrops locally between the Inferior and Great Oolite. More recent deposits of alluvium occur in the valley bottoms alongside the watercourses. The juxtaposition of limestone above the more unstable clays has given rise to occasional rotational slippage on the valley sides, and along with the effects of weathering and erosion, has resulted in their rounded and undulating landform. The principal soils within the valleys are calcareous clays that are typically used for grazing, and occasionally for arable use, in particular on more gentle slopes.

The valleys form part of a wider radial system of watercourses that feed into the River Avon. The north-east flowing Cam and Wellow Brooks meet at Midford to form the Midford Brook, which subsequently joins the River Avon east of Monkton Combe in the vicinity of the Dundas Aqueduct. At the southern edge of the AONB a network of small watercourses feed into the north flowing Frome, which joins the River Avon east of Freshford and Limpley Stoke. This short section of the Frome Valley that lies within the designated area, together with the west and then north flowing Avon valley forms a well-defined physical unit. The Kennet and Avon Canal follows the valley bottom, parallel to the course of the river. To the north of Bath the rivers flow southwards, joining the Avon at Batheaston. This complex system of incised valleys has resulted in a series of convoluted limestone plateaux between the valleys. The rivers and brooks that meander across the valley floor can be quite deep in places with steep sides, and are often marked by groups of willow or alder. The valleys range in height, with their highest point at approximately 200m AOD (below Bathampton Down), and at their lowest point adjacent to the watercourses at approximately 30m AOD.

On the steeper slopes of the valley sides and valley tops, there are some significant blocks of woodland, which in some areas extend down the valley sides creating a sense of enclosure within the valley. The blocks vary in size and form considerably, and are primarily deciduous plantations, although a number of coniferous blocks can be found. A large proportion of the woodland is registered as ancient woodland, with a limited number also being designated as SSSI. Also located on the steeper slopes are areas of scrub and rough pasture, together with some areas of calcareous grassland, giving way to improved pasture and arable land on lower and gentler slopes. The pattern of sizes vary from larger fields on the slopes to smaller fields on the valley

floor and are mainly enclosed by a hedgerow network which is maintained to varying degrees, to include well maintained, clipped hedgerows and tall, overgrown boundaries. However, local variations in this broad pattern exist. For example in the Bathampton and Limpley Stoke character area medium sized fields on the valley floor are characteristic and in the Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook character area a significant number of small fields are evident on the valley sides. Hedgerow trees are frequent and contribute to the overall wooded feel of the valleys. Stonewalls occur most frequently in the northern section of the character type, replacing hedgerows which predominate in the south. Located on the upper slopes are areas of calcareous grassland, although they also extend onto the lower slopes in areas. There is evidence of a decline or change in agricultural practices in some areas with a less manicured and managed appearance arising from lack of hedge maintenance and outgrown hedgerows. In contrast, hedgerow removal has occurred in some areas of the valleys, most notably where arable farming is practised, resulting in the opening up of the landscape and enabling wider views across and along the valleys.

Human Influences

In common with other parts of the Cotswolds, it is likely that there has been continuous human habitation within the valleys since the prehistoric period and they form part of a wider network of communication routes. Indeed recent excavations in the meadows near Bathampton have revealed occupation from at least the Iron Age through to the Roman and Medieval periods. The suitability of the lower valley sides for cultivation, the sheltered location, and a plentiful supply of water, would have been attractive to early man. However, the main evidence of human occupation is the remnants of industrialisation, and the significant influences that occurred during the 18th to 20th centuries. Located along the valley bottoms are a number of mills, Brunel's Great Western Railway which dates to the middle of the 19th century, and two canals comprising the Kennet and Avon Canal (built by John Rennie and completed in 1810), and the Somerset Coal Canal (authorised in 1794 and surveyed by John Rennie with help from William Smith, the 'Father of English Geology'). The canals were promoted by the mine owners of the North Somerset coalfields as a cheaper means of transporting their coal to markets in Bath and the surrounding area rather than by pack horses, or horse and cart.

Whilst railways and canals form important communication routes, there are also a number of significant roads running through the landscape, although they are primarily confined to the valley bottoms. Smaller, minor roads set within deep cuttings run up the valley slopes and connect village

settlements and isolated dwellings. The use of Cotswold stone is prevalent throughout the landscape type, influencing the appearance and sense of unity within the small-scale historic settlements that occur within the landscape type. Villages and smaller hamlets constructed primarily from limestone with stone slate roofs as well as some red clay tiles are generally located on the hillsides and steeper upper slopes and can be quite dense in areas, although linear villages and hamlets extend along the valley floor. Scattered farmsteads and isolated dwellings, often nestled in sheltered wooded locations, are frequently situated adjacent to minor roads along steeper valley sides.

A significant number of rights of way cross the area, with many focused along the valley bottoms, although a number also run along and up the steep valley sides.

Character Areas

4A

Cam and Wellow Brook Valleys



This Character Area to the south of Bath comprises the valleys of the Cam and Wellow Brooks which run from west to east joining at Midford to become Midford Brook. Separating the two moderately wide and steep valleys is an area of low limestone plateau. Land use within the valleys is a mixture of arable, improved pasture and short term ley, and permanent pasture, with generally an equal proportion of each, although arable tends to be in more localised blocks on gentle slopes. Fields can be small and irregularly shaped, although larger ones located on the higher and shallower slopes are more regular in shape. The valley is moderately wooded primarily with deciduous species in significant woodland blocks such as Cleaves Wood, which is an ancient woodland and a SSSI. In areas around Combe Hay and Tucking Mill, woodland extends

down the valley creating irregular shaped blocks. However, a number of smaller scattered areas of woodland are more regular in shape.

There are a number of features of interest within the area including Midford Castle, a Grade I listed building located on the valley side, north of Midford Brook. Adjacent to the Brook is the Limestone Link, a long distance footpath that utilises the line of the former railway and provides access along the length of the Cam Valley to Midford and beyond to the River Avon in the adjacent Bathampton and Limpley Stoke Character Area (4B). Further reminders of the area's industrial past are the remnants of the Somerset Coal Canal. The line of the Wellow Brook formed part of the Stop Line Green, also known as the Bristol Outer Defence Line, an anti-tank defence set up to protect Bristol during the Second World War.

4B Bathampton and Limpley Stoke



In the vicinity of Bathampton and Limpley Stoke the River Avon valley, and a short section of its tributary the Frome, is characterised by a broad yet steep, and often well-wooded valley. Woodland blocks within the valley are significant, cloaking the upper slopes and valley tops creating a wooded backdrop to surrounding Landscape Types and Areas. In many areas the woodland extends down the valley sides, although only reaches the course of the Avon or Kennet and Avon Canal in limited areas. A large proportion of the woodland is deciduous, although some coniferous blocks can be found at Friary Wood, Conkwell Wood, Warleigh Wood and woodland west of Claverton Down, with many hectares being designated as ancient woodland.



Whilst there is generally an even proportion of arable and pastoral land within the Enclosed Limestone Valleys, in the Bathampton and Limpley Stoke Character Area pastoral land predominates, although large sections of arable land are present, in particular south of Bathford. Many of the field patterns throughout the valleys reflect more recent adjustment of earlier enclosures. However, areas of medieval enclosure can be found alongside the River Frome and the River Avon, between Claverton and Bathford. Evidence of late medieval enclosures of steep sided cultivation terraces can also be found, for example below Warleigh Wood. Fields are generally enclosed by hedgerows, with mature oaks and other trees being common features.

A number of distinctive structures are also associated with the rivers, canals and railway notably the Dundas Aqueduct, completed in 1798 and the Claverton Pumping Station, constructed in 1813. Brown's Folly located on the edge of Farleigh Rise provides a prominent feature within the landscape and there are a number of World War II remnants throughout the area, in particular pillboxes that can be found at Woodside near Freshford.



Whilst much of the landscape in the character area is rural, large settlements beyond the AONB boundary (Bradford on Avon, Bathampton and Batheaston) exert a strong influence on local landscape character. Major transportation routes and associated transportation architecture, which occur in a corridor along the base of the valley, also exert a subtle influence on rural landscape character.

4C

Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook

The valleys are drained by two main watercourses, the Lam Brook to the west, and St Catherine's Brook to the east both of which are fed by a number of small tributaries arising from springlines on the steep upper valley slopes, and creating a complex indented valley landform. The valleys steeply dissect the surrounding areas of the High Wold Dip-Slope plateau and are separated by a residual area of High Wold Dip-Slope comprising Charmy Down and Henley Hill. The main valleys of the Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook have steep sides, with the tributary valleys being smaller in scale and narrower than the main channel. These valleys are also remote and secluded near their source, although the upper reaches of the Lam Brook, comprising the Hamswell valley, forms a broad open bowl. A number of reservoirs are located along the valley bottoms, including Monkswood Reservoir and at Chilcombe Bottom, located within tributary valleys to the west of the St Catherine's Brook valley.

Land use within the valleys is predominantly pastoral on the steeper slopes, with areas of both arable and pastoral land on lower valley sides and the valley floor. Fields are generally small to medium in size cutting across the valley sides and are irregularly shaped, especially on steeper slopes. Enclosing the fields are hedgerows that are both overgrown and gappy, and well trimmed often creating a square profile. Where hedgerows are particularly gappy, especially on steeper slopes, post and wire fences can be found reinforcing the boundary. Post and wire fences also occur as boundary features adjacent to roadsides.

Within the St Catherine's Brook valley woodland cover provides an important feature and is mainly confined to the steep upper slopes or along watercourses. The majority of woodland is broadleaved, with the exception of a large coniferous plantation east of St Catherine's Court; large proportions are also ancient in origin. Hedgerow trees and wooded cloughs on the valley sides, together with areas of scrub encroachment on steeper slopes contribute to wooded areas within the valleys. In contrast to the heavily wooded St Catherine's Brook Valley, the Lam Brook Valley is notably more open, particularly in its upper reaches. Extensive areas of calcareous and mesotrophic grassland create a matrix of



land uses within the woodland blocks, and are likely to have developed in areas where woodland clearance has occurred, making way for the establishment of diverse grasslands. The diversity and importance of grassland within the St Catherine's Valley and around Monkswood has been recognised through their designation as a SSSI.

Settlement pattern and form is largely dictated by landform with villages such as Langridge and Northend running along valley sides frequently close to springlines. Other dwellings include isolated farmsteads and hamlets that are spread along the slopes, again close to springlines. Despite the valleys having an intimate relationship with the City of Bath and Batheaston, they remain relatively rural in character, with the upper reaches distinctly isolated. Urban influences such as light industrial development including storage yards can, however, be found within St Catherine's Valley. Oolitic Limestone is particularly evident and a characteristic construction material used in numerous buildings and stone walls.

With the exception of the A46(T) dividing the two valleys, the remaining roads within the character area comprise a network of minor roads extending along the valley bottom and lower slopes and up the valley sides, often in shallow depressions onto the High Wold. There are a number of footpaths extending down the valley sides and along the valley floor including the Limestone Link, which is a 58km (36 mile) route linking the limestone areas of the Cotswolds to those of the Mendips. Created in 1989 by the Yatton Ramblers, parts of the route may coincide with an old stone transport route into Bath.

There are a number of historic features of interest within the valleys. Little Solsbury Hill is a flat topped domed promontory rising to 100m AOD situated between the two valleys, with extensive views over Bath and the River Avon. Located on the summit of the hill is a Bronze Age and Iron Age hill fort. Surrounding the hill on the upper slopes is a band of calcareous and mesotrophic grassland. St Catherine's Court provides another interesting feature within St Catherine's Valley. It comprises a Grade II* manor house and gardens dating from the late medieval period to early 17th century, with terraced gardens and planting dating from the 19th century. Evidence of ancient field systems can be found in the most northern point of the Lam Brook Valley along with a tumulus, west of Tadwick.

4D

Lower By Brook Valley



The Lower By Brook Valley Character Area is located to the east of the Lam Brook and St Catherine's Brook Character Area. The valley is drained by the Lower By Brook, which flows south-westwards to join the River Avon at Batheaston. Smaller tributaries such as Lid Brook flow into the watercourse creating an indented landform. The main valley is fairly broad, with narrower tributary valleys.

Land use is a combination of both arable and pastoral land, although the latter predominates. The medium sized irregular fields are enclosed with hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees in some areas. Woodland within the valley is sparse, although where it does occur it is generally confined to the upper slopes and valley rims. Broadleaved species dominate with the exception of an area of coniferous planting west of Kingsdown. Around a third of the woodland is also ancient in origin. Calcareous and mesotrophic grassland is restricted within the area, with only a small area located east of Batheaston.



Although it is likely that settlement pattern was once restricted by landform, it has now extended up the valley slopes. The settlements of Box, Box Hill and Ashley have developed along the valley slopes south of the A4 and are connected by a network of minor roads along which scattered dwellings are also located. Development north of the A4 is less extensive and consists mainly of scattered dwellings along a network of minor roads criss-crossing the valley side. As well as extending along the lower and mid valley slopes, settlement is also located on the valley rims, for example at Kingsdown and the outer edges of Colerne.

Along with the A4, which largely follows the course of the By Brook, the A365 extends up the valley side from Box. Other routes within the valley consist only of minor roads. Travelling through the character area is the main line railway which that enters the area north of Box before continuing along the valley floor into Batheaston and then Bath.

Features of interest in the valley include Shockerwick House and grounds, which are Grade I listed and include 18th century parkland. The House is located south-west of the village of Middlehill overlooking the By Brook. Underground quarries can also be found within the area, most notably at Box. Perhaps the most impressive landscape feature, however, is the Box Tunnel. The two mile long tunnel was Isambard Brunel's most difficult engineering problem when building the London to Bristol line. The tunnel was completed in 1841 and is so straight that it has been said that on some days the sun shines through the complete length of the tunnel.

4E**Perrymead Slopes**

This Character Area is a continuation of the Bathampton and Limpley Stoke Landscape Character Area and is located on the eastern edge of Bath and separated into two discrete areas by the outer edges of Bath and the University campus. Despite some areas being undeveloped, views over Bath and the influence of suburban sprawl, have had a significant influence on local landscape character.

Bath lies in a valley where the River Avon cuts through the limestone plateau of the southern Cotswolds. The encircling hills have been influential in the development of the city and provide a dramatic backdrop to the buildings. Conversely the hills around Bath provide vantage points from which the dramatic architecture and its relationship to the wider landscape can be appreciated. The international importance of Bath is recognized by its inscription as a World Heritage Site.

Located to the south east of Bath centre is the southern section of the Character Area, which comprises the eastern slopes of the valley in which Bath has been developed. Land use on the valley sides consists of pastoral land with scattered blocks of deciduous and mixed woodland, of which the latter is confined to the eastern edge with a section also identified as ancient woodland. Limited areas of calcareous grassland also occur in the south-eastern corner of the Character Area.



Settlement within the southern section consists of a number of dwellings along minor roads and whilst it is limited, the urban influence of Bath is significant. Cutting through the area is the main A3062 and a number of minor roads that roads which connect Bath with areas of the High Wold Dip-Slope. A notable landscape feature is Prior Park and College. Within the boundaries of the 18th century landscape garden, pasture predominates,

although there are areas of ornamental planting. The gardens, inspired by the entrepreneur and philanthropist Ralph Allen from 1734 until 1764, lie in a dramatic steep valley that runs to the very edge of Bath. The mansion in Prior Park was built around 1740 and now contains a college. On the upper slopes of the valley rough pasture with scrub and woodland are also characteristic.

The northern section of the Perrymead Slopes consists of pastoral land with areas of scrubby pasture and deciduous woodland in roughly equal amounts. Around half of the woodland is ancient. Although there is no settlement, and only a minor road crosses the area, again the influence of Bath is significant.

5 SETTLED VALLEY

Character Areas

- 5A Nailsworth
- 5B Frome Golden Valley and Stroud



Key Characteristics

- Steep sided, concave narrow valleys with upper sections forming an abrupt break of slope with the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope;
- strong sense of enclosure;
- predominantly pastoral land use with scattered areas of arable land enclosed by a network of hedgerow boundaries;
- relatively well wooded with deciduous species predominating, with a large proportion of ancient woodland;
- stonewalls are common features within the valley bottom, particularly surrounding settlements;
- sequence of settlements along the valley bottoms and sides resulting in a settled character;
- close proximity of large urban areas beyond the AONB boundary;
- strong evidence of industrial past from communications infrastructure and mill development confined primarily to valley floors;
- areas of development dominate the valley floor and sides with significant urban influence from surrounding settlements;
- extensive road network within the majority of valleys connecting settlements and areas within the valleys to the High Wold; and
- isolated and deeply rural character in remoter tributary valleys.

Landscape Character

The Settled Valleys comprise an area of relatively narrow, high sided valleys of the River Frome and its tributaries which dissect the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope. Along the valley floor the urban settlements, which originated at river crossing points, have now merged to form a dense ribbon of urban development with scattered industrial sections, although these primarily occur on the outer edges of the AONB with dispersed villages and hamlets being located within the designated area. The textile and woollen mills associated with the area's industrial past are located within the valleys, primarily due to the occurrence of running water in close proximity of sheep rearing areas, providing optimum conditions for wool and cloth production. These distinctive buildings with their chimneys often dominating the urban skyline, are a landmark in the landscape. Development extending up the valley sides in terraces, and communication routes concentrated on the valley floor, are characteristic of this landscape.

This is a contrasting landscape with areas that are highly developed and others that remain inaccessible and are dominated by farmed or parkland landscapes, increasing pressure for development to extend into such areas from surrounding urban centres. Pastoral land dominates the valley sides interspersed with scattered areas of scrub, rough pasture and arable land. Woodlands dominated by deciduous species cling to the valley sides creating a sense of enclosure in smaller tributary valleys and combine with the hedgerow network to create, in areas, a relatively well wooded character.

Physical Influences

The alternating geological layers of limestone, Fuller's Earth, mudstone and alluvial clay have been eroded by the rivers flowing along the valley to form distinctive concave narrow valleys. Where the resistant Oolitic Limestone forms the valley sides, distinctive steep upper slopes have formed. Capping the top of the valley sides is a combination of Fuller's Earth and Limestone that extends to underlie the surrounding High Wold landscape.

The incised valleys, which dissect the High Wold and High Wold Dip-Slope, are cut by the River Frome and its tributaries. The River flows in a westerly direction to converge with the Slad Brook, outside of the AONB and drain into the Severn Valley. A number of tributaries feed into the river from surrounding hills. The valley sides are typically 200m AOD in height with a narrow valley floor that drops to around 60m AOD along the course of the River.

Soils derived from the underlying geology have given rise to a combination of materials including a sticky wet soil from the Fuller's Earth, often marked by patches of woodland and delicate, thin, light calcareous loams from the Oolitic Limestone which are particularly suitable to permanent pasture. However, during the last century the light soils have been able to accommodate conversion to arable land through agricultural improvements and the increased use of fertilisers.

The location of Fuller's Earth within the Settled Valleys has led to the establishment of woodland blocks, which in areas are quite substantial in size and extend for the length of the valley. A pattern of woodland that responds to the landform prevails, with the majority of plantations dominated by broadleaved species, although a number of coniferous blocks are scattered throughout the valleys. A large proportion of the woodland is ancient woodland.

Land use within the valleys is dominated by pasture, with areas of both improved and rough pasture with some scrub encroachment. Areas of mesotrophic and calcareous grassland are mainly confined to steeper valley slopes with scattered areas also found on lower slopes. Field sizes vary, although they are generally smaller on the lower slopes and valley bottom and larger on the upper slopes and valley tops. Interspersed with woodland on the upper slopes, are extensive areas of horse pasture, which has resulted in the poaching of many fields. Enclosing the field pattern is a network of hedgerows with many hedgerow trees, creating a well wooded character when extending from woodland blocks. Whilst stonewalls are a common feature along the valley bottoms surrounding settlements, there are generally less frequent on the valley sides.

Human Influences

In common with other parts of the Cotswolds, it is likely that there has been continuous human habitation within the valleys since the prehistoric period. The suitability of the lower valley sides for cultivation, the sheltered location, and a plentiful supply of water would have been attractive to early man. However, the main evidence of human occupation are the remnants of industrialisation and the significant influences that occurred during the 18th to 20th centuries which are likely to have masked any remnants of pre industrial settlement and land use. They include the early communications infrastructure of the railways and canals and the distinctive vernacular architecture of the textile industry; the large mills and chimneys; and the rows of terraced housing. The valleys and plentiful supply of

running water lent itself naturally to the production of woollen cloth, water being used to power mills and in many cloth manufacturing processes. The close proximity of Fuller's Earth also assisted in the development of the woollen industry as it was used as an agent for cleansing wool and felting cloth, activities undertaken at fulling mills. The weaving industry within the area evolved throughout the period between the Middle Ages and the 19th century. Although originally people exploited the water power of the rivers, particularly in the steep side valleys, coal became an increasingly important source of energy, and resulted in factories being concentrated in the main valley floor where major transportation routes were developed and the existing labour force could be exploited.

The urban landscapes generated by the process of industrialisation are one of the special and significant features of these valleys. Urban areas, which were confined by topography, tended to grow along the bottoms of the valleys and have encroached into the edges of the character type. This has resulted in both dispersed villages and hamlets primarily linear in form, although they are also radial and organic along the valley floor in streamside locations. Whilst once confined to such locations, development can now also be found on the valley sides. Associated with a number of settlements are the mill buildings, although many of them have now become redundant or have been converted to new uses, including houses, workshops and offices.

Connecting settlements along the valley floor is a road network of both major and minor roads. Whilst the main roads are confined for the majority of their length to the bottom of the valley, the minor road network extends along the lower slopes and in areas as far as the upper valley slopes and onto the High Wold. A number of small tributary



valleys are inaccessible except on foot. The network of footpaths, however, is extensive within the Settled Valleys providing access to what would appear to be remote areas.

Character Areas

5A

Nailsworth

This is the largest of the Character Areas within the Settled Valleys Landscape Type, located to the south of Stroud and centred around the settlement of Nailsworth, located outside the AONB boundary. Four small tributary valleys adjoin the main valley around Nailsworth, which then flow into the River Frome at Stroud.

The valley slopes are dominated by pastoral land with only scattered areas under arable production. Fields are enclosed mainly by hedgerow boundaries, although stone walls become frequent features around settlements on the valley floor. Woodland within the valleys is extensive, particularly in smaller tributary valleys and consists mainly of ancient deciduous species, although large areas of coniferous plantation can be found within Woodchester Park, an area owned by the National Trust. Four lakes have been created within the valley bottom in Woodchester Park, their waters discharging into the main valley, north of Nailsworth. Whilst larger woodland blocks predominate on the valley bottom, they frequently extend up the valley slopes, although it is smaller woodland copses that dominate the upper slopes. Small areas of calcareous and mesotrophic grassland can be found within the valleys, and despite the majority of areas being located on the upper valley slopes adjacent to areas of the High Wold, limited areas can be found in the valley bottom south of Box and around Newmarket.

Development within the Nailsworth Character Area is located mainly along the valley bottom, although in areas it has extended up the valley sides to join areas of the High Wold, particularly around Houndscroft, St Chloe, Box and Avening. The settlement of Minchinhampton located within the High Wold also extends beyond the Character Type and onto the upper slopes of the Settled Valley, east of Box. The extension of the settlement mainly in a linear form along the valley bottoms and up the valley slopes, along with scattered dwellings and small villages has resulted in the main valley and a number of smaller tributary valleys being extensively developed. Although large proportions of development have traditional characteristics, the close proximity of large urban centres has had a significant influence and many dwellings are modern in character. A significant built element in the landscape, and a clear indication of the valley's industrial past, is Longfords Mill. Records indicate that a mill was

on this site from c1300 and that both fulling and corn grinding were being carried out here by the mid seventeenth century. The existing mill complex, which is dominated by a tall stone chimney and four storey mill buildings, is currently being converted to luxury flats.

A number of 'B' roads, confined mainly to the valley bottoms, connect development along the valleys. A large number of smaller roads also extend up the valley sides, and in places onto the valley tops and High Wold, beyond the area. There is a limited section of the A46 south of Nailsworth, the only 'A' road within the area which extends from the town centre up the valley slope to the High Wold. Whilst the majority of tributary valleys are highly accessible, the two valleys west of Nailsworth containing Woodchester Park and Bowlas Wood and High Wood cannot be accessed by any public roads. In contrast, the footpath network within the valleys is generally extensive. However, the area around Woodchester Park has no public rights of way.

5B

Frome Golden Valley and Stroud



The Frome and Golden Valley Character Area is the most northern of the Settled Valleys and is located to the south east of Stroud.

Land use within the valley is again dominated by pastoral land with limited areas under arable production. Areas of common land can also be found on upper slopes along with evidence of horse pasture that has led to poaching in a number of areas. Although limited, there are scattered areas of calcareous and mesotrophic grassland mainly along the valley tops with a number of areas on lower slopes. Fields are enclosed by both hedgerow and stonewall boundaries with common land frequently having no boundary elements. Moderately sized deciduous woodland blocks, a significant number of which are ancient, such as those at

Far Thrup and on the southern slopes of the Golden Valley at Chalford and Brownshill, are scattered along the valley, both on the upper slopes and along the course of the River.

Development within the valley is extensive, although is partially absorbed in areas by scattered trees and woodland. The valley sides below Rodborough Common are dominated by ad hoc squatter development and modern housing development connected by meandering minor roads. At Burleigh, Brimscombe and Chalford, development can also be seen to extend up the valley sides onto areas of the High Wold, and again is connected by a significant number of minor roads cutting across the valley sides. A combination of both modern and Victorian development dominates settlement on the valley sides.

The main communication routes are confined to the valley bottom and include the A419, railway and River Frome. Mill buildings located along the valley floor also illustrate the use of the valley as an important resource in past years. Canals are also a feature of note within the valley. Those running through the Golden Valley to the Severn date to the mid to late 18th century, the earliest canal constructed being the Kemmett Canal from Framilode to near Stonehouse (built between 1759 and 1763). This was superseded by the Stroudwater Canal, built between 1775 and 1779, and linking Framilode to the Wallbridge lock near Stroud.

The construction of the Thames and Severn Canal linked the Wallbridge lock eastwards to the Inglesham Lock near Cirencester, hence providing the link between the Thames and Severn Rivers. This canal extended through the Golden Valley to the Daneway where 28 locks over seven miles took vessels to the Sapperton Tunnel, which provide a navigable route through the 'high ground' between the Severn and the Thames systems. This eastern section of the canal within the Upper Frome Valley, including the Sapperton tunnel, is located in Landscape Character Area 8A (Toadsmoor, Holy Brook and Upper Frome Valleys), forming part of the sequence of High Wold Valleys.

6 IRONSTONE HILLS AND VALLEYS

Character Areas

- 6A Whichford Hills and Valleys
- 6B Ratley Hills and Valleys



Key Characteristics

- **Complex topography of steeply sided convoluted valleys and rolling rounded ridgelines and hills;**
- **intermittent isolated rounded hills;**
- **mainly fertile iron-rich red-brown loams interspersed with occasional bands of calcareous soils derived from intermittent outcrops of limestone bedrock;**
- **distinctive local vernacular with buildings constructed in the 'warm' brown 'Hornton Stone' derived from the iron bearing Marlstone Rock Formation;**
- **settlement pattern of intermittent nucleated hamlets, isolated farmsteads, and individual buildings;**

- **area principally under arable cultivation, together with some improved and permanent pasture, mainly on the valley slopes and bottoms;**
- **medium to large scale regular rectilinear fields, mainly enclosed with hedgerows, with frequent hedgerow trees;**
- **limited woodland cover with exception of occasional larger stands of ancient woodland;**
- **linear network of local roads following ridgelines and dropping down into valleys to connect rural settlements; and**
- **evidence of long period of occupation of the area.**

Landscape Character

Two small areas of Ironstone Hills and Valleys Landscape Type are located in the north-eastern part of the Cotswolds AONB. The larger area extends from the perimeter of the village of Long Compton north-eastwards to Epwell and Shenlow Hill, and immediately to the east of the Edge Hill escarpment. A smaller area of Ironstone Hills and Valleys surrounds the village of Ratley and its wider setting. This is the north-eastern limit of the AONB, with the Edge Hill Escarpment forming a well-defined western and northern limit to the Ironstone Hills and Valleys. .

These fragmented sections of the Ironstone Hills and Valleys form part of a broader character area that extends eastwards beyond the AONB boundary. Through observation of the wider character area, a more informed understanding of the setting of the AONB can be gained, along with the potential effects arising from landscape change and development. To guide this understanding, the descriptions below are also applicable to the wider area of Ironstone Hills and Valleys Landscape Character Type that extends beyond the AONB.

The Ironstone Hills and Valleys comprise an upland area of rolling hills and valleys, including a number of distinctive rounded isolated hills. In common with the Oolitic Limestone that underlies the main part of the Cotswolds AONB, the underlying geology has had a profound and unifying effect on character. Here, the Lias Group rocks, and particularly the iron rich Marlstone Rock Formation, with its relatively greater resistance, has had a significant influence on the landform; it has also determined the distinctive 'red-brown' of the fertile soils. The ironstone is also an important source of building stone. Extracted over many years from quarries within the area, the warm-brown of the 'Hornton Stone' has had a unifying effect on the distinctive local vernacular throughout the villages as well as the many isolated farmhouses and barns.

This is a tranquil rural area with a generally remote character. Unspoilt Ironstone villages on upper valley slopes adjacent to spring lines, or within more sheltered valley bottoms, nestle into the folds of the landscape. The area is principally under arable cultivation but areas of pastoral landscape also occur, principally within the more secluded valley bottoms. There are some occasional larger areas of woodland, including some remnants of ancient woodland, but mainly they are confined to small plantations and copses. The principally rectilinear, medium to large-scale fields, are contained by well-maintained hedgerows with intermittent hedgerow trees.

Physical Influences

The complex topography of the area is a direct response to the differential strength and characteristics of the underlying rocks. A succession of Lias Group rocks outcrop within this north-eastern part of the AONB. Faulting and uplifting of the area has further affected the complexity of the area. For example, outcrops of Chipping Norton Limestone, and White Limestone of the Great Oolite Group are present above or in juxtaposition with older rocks of the Lias Group. Generally, however, there is a progressive succession from the mudstones of the older Charmouth Mudstone and Dyrham Formations of the Lias Group, above which lies the distinctive and harder band of Marlstone Rock. This ferruginous, sandy limestone is rich in limonite, hence the term 'Ironstone'. The elevation of much of the area is a consequence of its relative resistance to erosion; it also forms the capping to some of the hills. In other areas it is the younger Lias Group Sandstone that is the capping stone, notably on the series of small but distinctive isolated rounded hills to the north of Epwell.

The drainage of the area is of particular interest. The source of the Sor Brook, a tributary of the Cherwell, and in turn the Thames, rises in the extreme north-eastern part of the AONB, together with a series of other watercourses that eventually join Sor Brook. Within the western section of the area, however, streams flow westwards to join the Stour and Avon, and eventually into the Severn. This major watershed therefore defines the central spine of 'Middle England'.

Soils derived from the Marlstone Rock are particularly fertile producing light, iron-rich clay-loams that are excellent for corn-growing. As a result, arable production tends to be predominant throughout this farmed area.

Larger areas of woodland within the area are limited. Whichford Wood in the west of the area is of significance, both in terms of its scale and impact as a landscape feature, and its classification as ancient woodland. Other areas of woodland are generally small, rectilinear and related to planting that has taken place since the 18th and 19th Enclosure period, as well as planned and ornamental planting related to estates.

Unlike the Oolitic limestone, the local stone is less commonly used for walling and as a consequence many of the field boundaries are enclosed by hedgerows, with a mix of management regimes ranging from neatly clipped to out-grown hedges. Hedgerow trees are common, mainly Ash and Oak. Valley bottoms often support denser areas of indigenous vegetation including pollarded Willow, and stands of Alder.

Human Influences

In common with other parts of the Cotswolds, it is likely that there has been continuous human habitation within this area since the prehistoric period. The dry ridges and hills, together with the plentiful supply of water, would have been attractive to early man. Within the AONB section of this landscape type there is evidence of Iron Age occupation, eg the Nadbury Camp in the extreme northern part of the area. Beyond the AONB, a series of Iron Age camps occur further east on prominent hill tops, together with evidence of Roman occupation. Settlement of the area increased in Saxon times in response to the favourable soils, and evidence of settlements dating from this period is identifiable in place names, many of which end in 'ton'. Evidence of a mixed agricultural community during the Middle Ages is provided in the many examples of ridge and furrow that established on the open field system, such as the land immediately to the east of Winderton.

Parliamentary enclosure of the 18th and 19th centuries has had a major influence on the appearance of the landscape today. The patchwork of medium to large-scale rectilinear fields that now covers the area dates from this period. Although some field amalgamation has taken place, the distinctive regular pattern is largely unaltered. Loss of ridge and furrow has also occurred as a result of modern ploughing methods.

Settlement pattern within the area mainly comprises dispersed linear and nucleated hamlets, which for centuries have provided the focus for farming communities. Such villages were commonplace before isolated farmsteads established in conjunction with enclosure of the land. Today, many are now dormitory villages, with residents prepared to travel long distances to work in order to enjoy the peace and seclusion of these distinctive Ironstone villages. A significant number of individual buildings are also scattered throughout the Ironstone Hills and Valleys, mainly on the valley sides, although they also occur on the hill crests and ridges.

The local vernacular of the Ironstone villages is particularly distinctive. The Marlstone Rock is an important source of building stone, and gives buildings in the area a distinctive 'warm' brown colour, varied by dark olive and purple stones, and an occasional frosting caused by white lichens. Whilst displaying many of the characteristics of the Cotswolds vernacular, the colour of the building stone ensures that villages on this north-eastern sector of the Cotswolds contrast strongly with those built from the Oolitic limestone to the south and west.

Although lying outside of the AONB, the presence of a series of large scale and now mainly disused local quarries have influenced the adjacent landscape. Hornton Quarry at Edge Hill is still operational, whilst former quarries include those such as Shenington / Alkerton. For some years the Shenington / Alkerton Quarry has been used for landfill, although there is limited impact on the AONB.



Character Areas

6A

Whichford Hills and Valleys

This Character Area comprises one of the more sparsely populated sections of the Ironstone Hills and Valleys landscape type. Only a few villages are present, although there are numerous isolated farms and dwellings. The landform is a typical succession of valleys and ridges together with occasional but very distinctive isolated hills. Along the western perimeter of the area, and rising to summits of 180m AOD, Mine Hill and Windmill Hill are notable features, further emphasised by a summit transmission mast, and restored windmill, respectively. The series of rounded hills to the north of Epwell, capped by Northamptonshire Sandstone, rising to over 225m AOD are also notable, their steep summit slopes further emphasised by scrub and gorse. With the exception of the small stream that rises above and to the west of Epwell, all of the drainage is westwards to the River Stour and its tributaries.



Much of the area is arable farmland, although improved pasture also occurs together with some permanent pasture in valley bottoms. The overall character, however, is that of an intensively farmed landscape within a strong rectilinear field pattern, typical of the 'parliamentary enclosures' period. Whichford Wood is a particularly notable feature in view of the generally sparse woodland cover.

There are a number of features of historic interest. Part of the eastern boundary of the character area, and indeed the AONB, is followed by Ditchedge Lane, an ancient trackway dating back to the Neolithic Period. The section which follows the Oxfordshire/Warwickshire border forms part of The Jurassic Way, (also followed by the Macmillan Way) and provides an appropriate link to the more extensive Jurassic limestone areas within the remainder of the Cotswolds AONB beyond.

The historic Jacobean manor of Compton Wynyates is located in the northern part of the area, in a small valley below Windmill Hill. Set in a wooded parkland setting, this remarkably well-preserved house is a locally distinctive building, albeit occupying a secluded location. In the extreme west, the planned parkland landscape of Weston Park is also notable, from which there are expansive views across the Vale of Moreton towards Ebrington Hill.

6B

Ratley Hills and Valleys

The Ratley Hills and Valleys area lies close to the north-eastern tip of the AONB, extending up to the northern projection of the Edge Hill escarpment at an average upper level of 200m AOD. This small character area is in two separate sections, incorporating the slopes below the Edge Hill Ironstone Plateau area of the High Wold.

The southern section is strongly convoluted and incorporates formal planned planting and lakes associated with the Upton House Estate (National Trust).

The northern area is focused around the Ironstone village of Ratley, which extends across the upper steep valley slopes. The core of the village is constructed almost entirely in the local ironstone, and includes a medieval Motte and Bailey (SAM), which is testimony to the early origins of the settlement. Even earlier, however, is the nearby Iron Age earthwork of Nadbury Camp, which occupies a focal position above and at the northern limit of the Edge Hill escarpment. The area is dissected by a deeply incised valley within which rises the Sor Brook, a tributary of the Cherwell, and hence Thames.



7 HIGH WOLD

Character Areas

- 7A Nymphsfield and Kingscote Plateau, & Minchinhampton Common
- 7B Bisley Plateau
- 7C Cotswolds High Wold Plateau
- 7D Rissington Plateau and Milton Downs
- 7E Rollright and Chastleton Plateau
- 7F Over Norton Plateau
- 7G Edge Hill Ironstone Plateau



Key Characteristics

- Broad, elevated, gently undulating plateau area dissected by a network of dry valleys with distinctive convex profile valley sides;
- expansive long distance views across the open plateau, and to distant hills beyond the Severn Vale;
- elevated areas of plateau surrounded by deeply incised valleys;
- predominantly arable land use with some improved pasture/grass leys, and very limited permanent pasture mainly confined to valley bottoms;

- large scale, regular fields mainly enclosed by dry stone walls, together with hedgerows with very occasional hedgerow trees, and post and wire fencing;
- small to moderate size geometric farm woodlands, many comprising small coniferous and broadleaved plantations and shelterbelts, and plantations bordering roads;
- settlement limited to small stone built villages and hamlets, generally within valleys, and isolated farmsteads and individual dwellings;
- network of mainly linear roads following ridge tops, and linking settlements;
- evidence of long period of occupation of the land;
- seasonal rotation of arable cropping patterns and improved grassland interrupts otherwise homogenous and simple land cover;
- remnants of once more extensive commons survive on the fringes of the escarpment;
- occasional active and disused limestone quarries located across the High Wold; and
- use of locally quarried stone for both walls and houses, frequently constructed in distinctive local vernacular.

Landscape Character

The High Wold landscape type comprises the plateau landscape to the east of the escarpment. The principal area of High Wold extends from the north of Stroud and then sweeps north-eastwards to Chipping Campden and to the west of Bourton-on-the-Hill. There are, however, a number of smaller and physically separate sections of High Wold where the plateau has been deeply dissected by valley

systems leaving smaller fragments of a once more extensive expanse of plateau. Thus, a plateau area extends across Nymphsfield and Kingscote, with a smaller fragment at Minchinhampton, and a further area extends northwards from the Frome Golden Valley to Birdlip. Further remnants of the plateau area occur to the east of the main expanse of High Wold, in the vicinity of Rissington and Milton Downs, between the Windrush and Evenlode Valleys, and to the east and west of Chipping Norton.

The High Wold plateau is generally an expansive, large scale, windswept landscape. Its elevated position allows long distance views over wide areas, and in areas of limited woodland cover a sense of exposure persists. Locally, however, tree cover provides some seclusion and limits views across the plateau and beyond to neighbouring landscape types. Despite being fragmented by the deeply incised valleys that have been cut into it, long views over them give the impression of a cohesive plateau.

The principal section of the High Wold is characterised by an extensive upland plateau with a level or gently undulating landform dissected by a network of predominantly dry valleys with distinctive convex form valley slopes. The plateau lies at approximately 250m AOD but localised high points rise to over 300m AOD on the western perimeter of the High Wold, close to the escarpment edge. The smaller detached sections to the south-west and east of this main plateau are physiographically part of the High Wold, and share similar characteristics to the main expanse of wold plateau. Nevertheless there are local variations, particularly in the east. These are addressed in the Character Area descriptions. The descriptions below in respect of landscape character, and physical and human influences, principally apply to the main plateau.

Land cover is predominantly arable farmland with some improved pasture, and more limited areas of permanent pasture. A pattern of large-scale regular fields extends across the area mainly enclosed by a network of dry stone walls, together with hedgerows but few hedgerow trees, and post and wire fences. Many sections of the stone walls on the plateau are in poor state of repair, often exacerbated by the presence of hedges that have naturally regenerated adjacent to stone walls, obscuring the presence of stone walls, and contributing to their progressive collapse. Hedgerows are most frequent in the network of dry valleys, but they are also found across many areas of the plateau. Occasional limited areas of common land remain, supporting calcareous grassland, along with other limited areas of calcareous grassland scattered across the High Wold.

There is a pattern of small to moderate size geometric woodlands across the High Wold, many comprising coniferous copses and shelterbelts and frequently located within or on the perimeter of the valleys. Plantations bordering roads also occur, together with occasional larger plantations. Very few of the woodlands are ancient. Where present the woodlands provide a sense of enclosure and a backdrop to the wide panoramas.

Large areas of the High Wold have a sense of elevation and openness, with expansive views across the countryside. Indeed from the highest point on the High Wold at Cleeve Common views are possible beyond the Malverns to the Wrekin and Titterstone Clee 72 km (45 miles) away. Despite the intensive arable farming of the area, there is a sense of remoteness and space, enhanced by the dominance of sky within the broad vistas.

Settlement within the High Wold is sparse, and confined mainly to small villages and hamlets of a dispersed character within the more sheltered valleys. The exception is the small town of Stow-on-the-Wold, which is located on the High Wold plateau and has been a favoured meeting place since the Roman times. Across the more open plateau settlement is confined to a pattern of isolated farmsteads and individual dwellings. A network of direct roads crosses the area, generally following ridge tops and linking the principal settlements.

The presence of long and round barrows on the western perimeter of the High Wold is evidence of occupation of the land since the Neolithic period. These may have once been more widespread, but many may have been destroyed by antiquarians, or 'ploughed out'. More recent features that have an influence on landscape character are remnants of both large and small scale disused quarries, as well as a few active quarries. The open plateau has favoured the establishment of large commercial horse stables and associated gallops, while at settlement edges the presence of more domestic scale horse management is evident. The elevated land has also resulted in the siting of occasional but prominent telecommunication and other infrastructure features.

The underlying geology has had a fundamental effect on the High Wold's character and sense of unity, determining not only the landform, drainage pattern, soil characteristics, and hence land use, but also expressed in the colour and local source material for the stone walls and buildings. This close interrelationship has created a strong sense of harmony. Within the muted golden hues of the limestone, however, the agricultural land use has superimposed a mosaic of seasonal change of colours and textures derived from the rotation of ploughed land and

arable crops. Despite the distraction of these verdant and colourful tones, the unifying effect of limestone and expansive scale is still dominant.

Physical Influences

The principal section of the High Wold is underlain by the Inferior Oolite Series of the Middle Jurassic, and comprises the denuded remnant of the upper section of the uplifted and gently tilted Jurassic 'whaleback' dome, with strata dipping south-easterly at a very gentle 1-2°. In the extreme north-eastern section of the AONB, the Oolitic Limestone is replaced by older rocks of the Lias Group. Here, the resistant Marlstone Rock Formation underlies the distinctive but narrow section of High Wold plateau that extends eastwards beyond the Edge Hill escarpment.

The main section of the High Wold forms a broad plateau at approximately 250m AOD but localised high points close to the escarpment edge rise above these general levels to 330m AOD at Cleeve Common, for example, and 319m AOD east of Snowhill. In contrast to the broad expanses of the Limestone High Wold, the Marlstone Rock High Wold Plateau in the north east is lower, at approximately 200m AOD.

Numerous streams have dissected the plateau to form a complex network of convex interlocking hills and dry valleys, forming the upper reaches of the more substantial river valleys that flow in a generally south-easterly direction across the Dip-Slope and Dip-Slope Lowland. The valley systems can be attributed to processes in action during the cycle of Quaternary Ice Ages when glacial melt waters from the retreating ice sheets dissected the plateau area and Dip-Slope creating deep valley forms.

Soils derived from the Oolitic limestone are thin and light calcareous loams. They are often full of stones, hence the term 'stone brash' used by 18th century agricultural specialists. The permanent pasture that once extended across much of the plateau was well suited to such soils, but during the last century the light soils have been able to accommodate the conversion to arable farming, and focus on grain production and oilseed rape, with productivity reliant on the application of fertilisers.

The thin calcareous soil has also influenced the tree and woodland pattern. Seldom is there sufficient soil depth on the High Wold for self-sown saplings to establish, and almost all trees in the landscape have been planted. Indeed many date from the previous two centuries and the period of enclosure, resulting in a 'planned' character. A pattern of geometric and linear plantations and shelterbelts prevail, many of which are coniferous. Smaller copses at field

corners and coverts also occur, some surrounding former quarry sites, together with boundary planting adjacent to roads. Hedgerow trees are uncommon. Some of the older plantations and copses are declining with little evidence of management. While small areas of broadleaved and ancient woodland are present, these are generally within more sheltered valleys and on steep slopes, or in association with isolated patches of calcareous grassland.

As a result of the extensive agricultural 'improvement' and ploughing up of much of the High Wold, old pasture and calcareous grassland is now confined to a few dry, deep valleys, and commons on the edge of the plateau such as Cleeve Common, Charlton King's Common, Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons, and Selsey Common. Where the High Wold borders the steep slopes of the escarpment, remnant calcareous grassland merges with rough grazing. These grasslands are often noted for the various species of flora and fauna that they support, and many contain important rarities such as orchids and the Cotswold Pennycress.²¹

Human Influences

Archaeological evidence suggests that the High Wold has been extensively cleared of trees since the Neolithic. A series of Neolithic long barrows and chambered tombs, such as Belas Knap and Hetty Peglar's Tump, together with later Bronze Age round barrows, are located along the top of the escarpment within and on the perimeter of the High Wold. It is generally considered that these were established as highly visible symbols and territory markers for communities that were probably living in the more sheltered valleys of the High Wold and Dip-Slope to the east. Clearance of the woodland to ensure visibility of these features, as well to enable cultivation of the land to support these early sedentary, farming communities, would therefore be in progress.

Valleys with permanent springs within the High Wold would have been favoured areas for permanent settlements. While evidence of these early settlements no longer exists, the assumption is that they are simply buried beneath contemporary Cotswolds villages and hamlets that continue to take advantage of the favourable shelter and sources of water. Dispersed villages and hamlets occur most frequently across the High Wold, although examples of more compact settlements can also be found. The form of settlements does, however, vary greatly to mainly include linear, radial and organic developments.

²¹ Josceline Finberg (1977) *The Cotswolds*

Both large and small scale quarries, existing and disused, are significant features of the High Wold and testimony to the importance of the bedrock as a source of building material over many centuries. The creamy buff coloured Inferior Oolite has historically been quarried for buildings stone and can be observed in numerous villages on the High Wold where it has weathered to form gold and grey buildings which are mottled with white and yellow lichens. Freestones and Peagriffs provide particularly good building stone especially the Yellow Guiting Stone, which weathers to a rich golden colour. This was quarried at Coscombe Quarry above Stanway, and Bourton-on-the-Hill.

As well as the remains of larger quarries, the landscape is covered with numerous small-scale local quarries or 'delves' comprising surface excavations, and often no more than a shallow depression, and providing material for stone walls and perhaps a few local buildings. Today, small copses or plantations often mark the location of a former quarry, with names such as 'Slatepit Coppice' and 'Limekiln Plantation', west of Salperton.

The combined effect of the progressive introduction of lifehold tenancies for farmers, and the 18th and 19th century Enclosure Acts and parliamentary division of the landscape, is central to interpreting the current pattern of farmsteads, field pattern and woodlands within the High Wold. With enclosure of large tracts of open 'common land', and the establishment of a new rectilinear field pattern, and 'enclosure' roads, farmers were able to consolidate their holdings, build or extend farmsteads and establish woodlands for shelter. The principal pattern of woodland and roadside planting therefore dates from this period, although newer plantations have been introduced in more recent years. Effectively the present day High Wold landscape dates to this time, although in the early years following Enclosure, the landscape would have been much bleaker, as newly planted shelterbelts and copses would have been in their infancy.

Despite almost total enclosure of the landscape, areas of common land have survived, largely along the escarpment, on high land too exposed or steep for tillage. Their importance to local people cannot be underestimated. At Bisley, for example, enclosure was resisted in 1733 by handloom weavers who kept a horse or donkey to carry yarn or finished cloth to and from the mills on the common. These remained as open, unenclosed landscapes and are often noted for their ecologically important grasslands and well-preserved archaeological features, such as hillforts and barrows. Their good condition is a result of their not being ploughed for arable farming.

Today, a mechanised, and in parts, industrial scale farming dominates the landscape. Earlier evidence of the unenclosed landscape is largely gone except for a few remnant commons. Settlement and farmstead locations are largely unchanged.

Character Areas

7A

Nympsfield and Kingscote Plateau, & Minchinhampton Common



The area of High Wold to the south-east and north of Nailsworth comprises a narrow and gently sloping plateau in two sections, separated by the Nailsworth Valley. The western section in particular has a very convoluted form projecting up to the edge of the escarpment, and enclosing a number of distinctive and deeply incised valleys.

The larger western section extends as far west as Nibley Knoll, with its prominent monument in memory of William Tyndale. Further 'fingers' of the plateau contain the Uley, and Tyley and Ozleworth Bottom valleys and surround the settlements of Uley and Wotton-under-Edge, while to the east of this section further 'fingers' contain valleys to the east of Nailsworth. One of these, comprising the secluded and deeply wooded Woodchester Park, is particularly notable. (LCA 5B)

There is considerable evidence of former occupation of the area, with a succession of long barrows, and forts hugging the high wold edge along the perimeter of the escarpment. The spectacular Iron Age fort at Uley Bury is particularly notable.

This western area is generally sparsely populated although two plateau top villages occur at Nymphsfield in the north and Kingscote to the south. A simple line of ridge top roads crosses the area. A single wind turbine is also notable at Lynch Knoll, east of Nymphsfield along with a prominent communications tower north east of Wotton-under-Edge. Woodland cover is generally sparse although fields are expansive and predominantly under arable cultivation.

The eastern section of this Character Area comprises a narrow section of elevated plateau between the Nailsworth Valley to the west, and Frome Valley to the east above Brimscombe. This flat-topped plateau area, rising to just over 200m AOD, is small in size. It is of considerable importance, however, in view of the areas of remnant common land, comprising Rodborough, Littleworth, and Minchinhampton Commons that are located across the plateau. These support nationally important remnants of calcareous grassland, as well as areas of pasture parkland. Nearly all of the common land is in National Trust ownership, with open access, and an important recreational focus. There are extensive views from the numerous public footpaths that cross the Commons.

7B

Bisley Plateau

Similarly to LCA 7A the Bisley Plateau has a complex and convoluted form, extending across the upland plateau to the west and north of Stroud and as far north as Birdlip. The plateau projects extended 'fingers' of elevated and gently sloping land between a series of steep sided valleys. Unlike LCA 7A, however, the plateau is detached from the main Cotswold escarpment by the re-entrant strike valleys of Painswick and Slad. (LCA 8A) Generally rising above 200m AOD, there are a number of higher 'summit areas' across the plateau, eg 267m AOD north of Bisley, and 303m AOD south of Birdlip. The area has a distinctive open character and although there are a number of nucleated plateau top villages, notably Bisley, Whiteway,



Brimpsfield and Birdlip, it is generally sparsely populated in character. However, located on the edge of the character area, the village of Bussage does have an urbanising influence on the High Wold due to the development of football pitches, schools, allotments and horsiculture. There is much evidence of former occupation of the area including a number of tumuli and long barrows.

A prominent telecommunication mast is located at the extreme western limit of the plateau overlooking the town of Stroud below.

7C

Cotswolds High Wold Plateau



The Cotswolds High Wold plateau comprises the largest section of the High Wold extending immediately east of the head of the Miserden Valley near Birdlip north-eastwards across the plateau to above Chipping Campden and west of Stow-on-the-Wold. The area embraces all the characteristics of the High Wold. Here, the influence of the underlying geology is particularly strongly expressed, from the dramatic, gently undulating, and expansive upland plateau landform, dissected by dry valleys, and light stony soil, through to the harmonious relationship between the network of limestone walls and buildings with their surroundings. The sense of scale and openness is particularly apparent, as well as the effects of an intensive managed agricultural landscape.

Arable farming predominates although improved pastures grazed by cattle and sheep are also in evidence. Fields on the plateau tend to be large and geometric in shape; many are enclosed by dry stone walls and hedgerows, although hedge loss and dereliction of stretches of walls gives the landscape a neglected appearance in places. Indeed in many areas, weakened boundaries are reinforced with post

and wire fencing. Silage bales wrapped in black plastic, and large industrial style sheds close to enclosure period farmhouses, are also a sign of modern agricultural practices and the intensification of agriculture on the High Wold.

Despite the predominantly managed character of the plateau, remnants of former agricultural practices still remain. Cleeve Common is a notable feature of the landscape and is recorded as common land as far back as the Saxon period although it may have been continuously grazed and open from as far back as the Neolithic period. The common represents the largest single area of unimproved limestone grassland in the AONB and has been designated as a SSSI for its botanical and geological importance. A particularly interesting feature is the proximity of calcifuge plants to calcicole species. This is a result of a localised area of sandy soils derived from the underlying Harford Member sandstone, which are acidic in nature and have therefore resulted in an area of heather becoming established. Although once extensive, the cover of heather is now limited.

As is characteristic of the High Wold, woodland cover is not extensive and restricted to small deciduous plantations, walled corner copses and shelterbelts close to farms. Many were obviously planted at the time of the enclosures and are an integral part of the landscape. However, a significant number are modern coniferous plantations and offer little to landscape character. Perhaps the most evocative plantings are those of beech and pine although many are apparently nearing maturity. Few of the woodlands on the Cotswolds High Wold are ancient indicating a long history of clearance and farming. A notable exception, however, is the large area of Guiting Wood, which extends across the plateau into the neighbouring Upper Windrush Valley.



Linear belts of woodland along the enclosure roads are also a characteristic feature. A fine example is the linear belts of woodland bordering the A424, known as Five

Mile Drive in this location. The road dates to 1730 and was constructed over the Bourton Downs. It is a good example of an enclosure road, the main carriageway being bordered by grass verges and low dry stone walls. The stone for building the roads was often quarried from alongside the carriageway and many verges show the humps and hollows left by the diggers. Older routes are also apparent on the High Wold. Many may have their origins in the Prehistoric period although others, such as the Salt Way, originate in the medieval period and were used to transport salt from Droitwich to the Thames.



Within the managed agricultural landscape small areas of rough grassland are apparent, sometimes made more visible by beech plantations. These 'islands' mark the site of upstanding Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows and are a significant feature of the Cotswolds High Wold. These sites are scattered across the landscape but are most often located on sites that overlook neighbouring valleys or the escarpment. Many have been eroded and degraded; fine examples such as Belas Knap (Beacon Hill), however, are well-preserved and particularly evocative features. Other prehistoric sites, notably hillforts and boundary ditches such as those on Cleeve Common, are important remnants of the pre-enclosure landscape.

Settlement of the Cotswolds High Wold Plateau is sparse. Enclosure age farmsteads are located throughout the landscape, often some distance from villages and hamlets, and generally located within the shelter offered by valleys draining the plateau such as Notgrove, Shipton and Sevenhampton. A number of deserted medieval villages are also located on the plateau. Abandonment may have occurred for a number of reasons, although the clearance of the high wold landscape to make way for sheep, and also the effect of the plague during the medieval period, are significant factors that may have led to the loss of entire villages.

Telecommunication masts dominate some sections of the High Wold close to the escarpment edge. The cluster of towers south of Cleeve Hill is particularly prominent, and similarly at Shab Hill north-east of Birdlip. The tall structures affect the perceived scale of the escarpment. Pylon lines are also intrusive features across this part of the High Wold, notably on the plateau to the east and south of Cheltenham.

7D

Rissington Plateau and Milton Downs



Rissington Plateau and Milton Downs comprises the plateau top of an area of elevated land contained between the wide valleys of the Evenlode and Windrush rivers. The River Dikler, a tributary of the Windrush, further isolates this area, its north-south course paralleling the Evenlode to the east. Although much smaller than the Cotswold High Wold Plateau to the west, it nevertheless shares many of the characteristics of this Landscape Type, notably the open elevated aspect, with large scale rectilinear fields and limited woodland cover confined to geometric plantations.

Dry stone walls are evident within this area but many are broken or tumbling down, showing evidence of poor management.

The infrastructure and military housing associated with the decommissioned Upper Rissington Airfield is a notable feature. Part of the airfield has now been developed as a Business Park, and occupies a prominent location across the summit of the plateau, together with the new 'village' of Upper Rissington. The Wyck Beacon telecommunication mast at Icomb Hill, at the northern limit of the plateau, is particularly visible in the setting of Mangersbury Hill, and views from the south of Stow-on-the-Wold. A further mast at the eastern limit of this area at Langley is also notable. These features detract from an otherwise quiet rural character.



7E

Rollright / Chastleton Plateau

The north-east / south-west aligned Chastleton and Rollright Plateau is limited in extent, forming a small section of the High Wold plateau between two parallel valley systems. Lying at an average height of 220m AOD, and rising at one location to 247m AOD, land use across the plateau is predominantly open arable fields with some limited mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland blocks. There are very few stone walls, and many of the fields are enclosed by hedges, or post and wire fences. Hedgerow trees are more common in this area of the High Wold.

Two very distinctive archaeological features are located within this area, comprising the impressive Iron Age hill fort of Chastleton Barrow with its circular rampart planted with trees, and to the west, the Rollright Stones. This remarkable Bronze Age Stone Circle is made up of over seventy stones of Great Oolite, and much eroded and damaged. A detached King's Stone marks the location of the rising sun. The area was obviously held in high regard by the local prehistoric communities as the remains of a Neolithic long barrow, and a denuded Bronze Age burial chamber known as the Five Whispering Knights, are in close proximity. This consists of four orthostats and a single great capstone.



A telecommunication mast located on elevated land at Whichford Hill is a locally prominent feature within the wider landscape. A further mast on the spur between Little and Long Compton is also notable, although partly screened by woodland.

The former Cross Hands Quarry adjacent to the A44, which crosses the plateau, is currently in use as a landfill site. Peripheral earth mounding screens much of the working areas from view. The nearby Rollright Quarry to the north-west is now mainly worked out, but advertised as a supply for walling stone. In both cases surrounding woodland provides some amelioration of their impact.

7F

Over Norton Plateau



The High Wold to the north and south of Chipping Norton comprises two very small sections at the eastern limit of this Character Type. Both areas lie at approximately 225m AOD forming a gently sloping plateau above the tributary valley to the north-west that drains into the Evenlode Valley. The area to the south is typical of the transitional High Wold, with an open agricultural landscape and a strong pattern of regular fields defined by a mix of hedgerows and stone walls.

Although topographically part of the High Wold, the area to the north is centred around the plateau edge village of Over Norton, and is less typical in that much of the area forms part of the setting, and planned planting and woodland associated with Over Norton Park. The area is also dissected by the headwaters of the Evenlode tributary. The proximity of the adjacent large settlement of Chipping Norton is also influential in this northern area in that it contains transitional uses and development typical of the urban fringe.

7G

Edge Hill Ironstone Plateau

In contrast to other areas of High Wold, the Edge Hill Ironstone Plateau extends across the Marlstone Rock Formation, forming a narrow but distinct plateau area above the Edge Hill escarpment. The land is very flat at a height of 215m AOD. The iron rich fertile soils on the plateau support mainly arable farming although areas of pasture also occur. Fields are rectangular and defined by mainly clipped and well-managed hedges with intermittent hedgerow trees. In common with the adjacent Ironstone Hills and Valleys (Landscape Character Type 6) the underlying ferruginous ironstone is very evident in the soil colour and local building stone. Upton House, an impressive National Trust property, is also located within this Character Area. The mature woodland associated with this planned estate influences local landscape character, and provides a sense of enclosure within an otherwise open landscape.



8 HIGH WOLD VALLEY

Character Areas

- 8A Toadsmoor, Holy Brook and Upper Frome Valleys
- 8B Painswick and Slad Valleys
- 8C Upper Churn Valley
- 8D Upper Coln Valley
- 8E Upper Windrush Valley
- 8F Upper Dikler Valley



Key Characteristics

- Predominantly dry or ephemeral flow headwater valleys with generally broad valley form and shallow slope profiles;
- incised valley form below heads of valleys with often steep, convoluted valley sides dissected by minor watercourses and distinctive convex profile at transition with the High Wold;
- sections of pronounced valley form meanders with distinctive interlocking spurs, disproportionate to size of rivers and streams;
- extensive areas of predominantly broadleaved woodland cloaking sections of the valley sides, particularly across the steeper sections;

- areas of open pastoral farmland extend between the wooded slopes, and along valley bottoms, together with pockets of arable land, particularly on the shallower slopes;
- pasture predominantly comprises improved grassland, together with occasional remnants of unimproved and calcareous grasslands;
- intermittent stone built villages occupying secluded locations in valley bottoms, often in association with a bridging point, and on valley sides;
- occasional farmsteads and isolated buildings within the more open valley sections linking to farmed areas on the adjacent High Wold;
- occasional private parklands and gardens associated with country houses;
- limited road network within valleys, generally confined to a single valley bottom road, or routes that cross the valley;
- deeply incised and inaccessible wooded slopes extending across some valley sections; and
- sheltered, visually contained and intimate setting of remote upper reaches of valleys.

Painswick and Slad Valleys

- Wider and complex valley form to Painswick Valley and its tributaries, but with steep and convoluted slopes, separated by intermediate ridges that project into the main valley form;
- rich pastoral and secluded rural character with intermittent consolidated areas of arable land; and

- **significant areas of registered common land and ancient semi-natural woodland in the upper reaches of the Painswick and Slad Valleys.**

Landscape Character

A series of rivers rise in the High Wold, and flow across the plateau within distinctive valley formations. Although they share a common source area for their headwaters, the rivers belong to the two separate catchments of the Thames and Severn. As a result, the valley alignments display a radial progression from south-east as they flow towards the Thames, through to south, south-westwards and westwards towards the Severn.

The sequence of Thames tributaries comprises the Rivers Churn, Coln and Windrush, and its tributary the Dikler. These all flow in broadly north-west / south-east aligned valleys. The River Leach is also a Thames tributary, its course located between the Coln and the Windrush. Its headwaters are insubstantial within the High Wold, however, with the valley form only becoming significant within the adjacent landscape type of High Wold Dip-Slope. (See Landscape Character Areas 10E and 12C)

To the west of the Thames tributaries a series of tributaries flow south and south-westwards into the River Frome, and eventually to the Severn. These comprise the south-west aligned Painswick and Slad Valleys systems on the western limit of the main area of High Wold, and the sequence of more confined mainly south flowing valleys of the Toadsmoor, Holy Brook and Upper Frome Valleys that rise on the perimeter of the detached Bisley Plateau section of the High Wold (Landscape Character Area 7B). The east-west aligned section of the Frome valley above Chalford, into which the smaller watercourses connect, is also included within this landscape type.

The river valleys generally share the same pattern of incised valley form with often steep, and occasionally very steep valley slopes, and gentle convex profiles at the junction with the High Wold. The valley sides are further dissected by secondary valleys that link into the main river, some of which are dry. In contrast, some of the upper sections of the valleys, particularly at the head of the Thames tributaries, display a broader and more gently sloping valley form. Although physiographically a High Wold valley, the Painswick Valley, is also distinguished from the other valleys in this landscape character type by its deep but much broader form separated by distinctive intermediate ridges that project into the main valley. In common with the other valleys, it displays the same pattern of convoluted valley sides.

The valleys have a sheltered, and secluded character distinct and separate from the more open and extensive High Wold that define their limit. The valleys display a mosaic of land uses, with a mix of predominantly broadleaved, and sometimes ancient, woodland clothing the steeper slopes and forming a backdrop to the areas of predominantly pasture land. Arable land is present, generally in small consolidated holdings and principally occurring on the shallower valley slopes, or connected to farms occupying the High Wold edge. Within the Painswick Valley, however, mixed pasture and arable is more prevalent, with a rich mosaic of hedged fields and copses providing enclosure. While woodland is present it is principally confined to extensive stands at the head of the valley, and on the intervening ridges.

Although not extensively settled, a number of stone built villages and hamlets occupy the valley bottoms, such as Duntisbourne Leer. Both clustered and dispersed settlements occupy the valley bottoms and hillsides, together with dispersed farmsteads that often connect onto holdings on the High Wold. Settlement is more prevalent within the broader Painswick Valley, although absorbed by the scale of the valley system.

The sheltered location has also favoured the establishment of large country houses and associated parkland and these occur within many of the valleys.

Physical Influences

The High Wold Valleys generally rise on the Inferior Oolite, with river erosion cutting through these strata to expose older rocks including the Lias Group. Within the river valleys to the east of the Frome, erosion of the Inferior Oolite, together with the general south-easterly dip of the strata, has resulted in the exposure of progressively younger Middle Jurassic strata with a narrow band of Fuller's Earth separating the Inferior from the Great Oolite Series. Although limited in extent alluvial deposits are important within the valley bottoms creating richer soils within the localised flatter areas of land. The western valleys are mainly confined to the Inferior Oolite. Outcrops of harder bands of the Oolitic limestones, as well as exposure of the older Marlstone Rock, has resulted in the formation of locally prominent benches, particularly within the Painswick Valley.

Geological faulting and fold structures have further influenced the course and form of the river valleys. The Painswick Stream has exploited the axis of the Painswick syncline, while in other valleys the alignment of the river course deflects from the general south-easterly trend across the Dip-Slope to follow pronounced fault lines, such as in the Upper Churn.

The present valley morphology that characterises the High Wold valleys, and indeed the lower sections of the river courses in the case of the Thames tributaries, is considered to be attributable to the effects of conditions prevailing during and at the end of the cycle of glacial periods. Although ice did not extend as far south as the Cotswolds, superficial deposits indicate that it extended into the Vale of Moreton, and permafrost conditions would have been extensive. At each retreat of the ice caps, the considerable increase in river discharge arising from glacial meltwater streams would have scoured the existing valleys within the relatively smooth surface of the Dip-Slope and carved deeper and more incised valley profiles. The distinctive valley form meanders that are evident today, particularly within the Thames tributaries, are attributable to the erosive capacity of these more substantial rivers. While the incised valley forms and pronounced valley meanders remain, they are now occupied by 'underfit' rivers and streams with a much depleted discharge capacity. Indeed, many sections of the rivers, particularly to the east, show evidence of ephemeral flow.

As a consequence of the valley formation, distinctive interlocking spurs, steep incised valley sides and rounded convex slope profiles at the transition onto the High Wold are recurrent features. The limiting effect of the steep slopes has precluded extensive agricultural use, except in the Painswick Valley where a mosaic of mixed pasture and arable covers the valley slopes and basin feature. The shallower sloping sections of some of the upper reaches of the Thames tributaries are also able to support more extensive areas of arable cultivation as well as pasture, and merge with land uses typical of the surrounding High Wold. Elsewhere, many sections of the valley sides are clothed in woodland, much of which is broadleaved, including some notable stands of ancient woodland, although coniferous plantations also occur. The dense woodland cover is particularly notable within some of the smaller and more incised valleys.

In addition to remnants of ancient woodland, the valleys also support intermittent areas of calcareous grassland generally associated with valley bottoms, but also at the transition areas onto the High Wold forming remnants of former commons. The calcareous grassland at Cranham Common, and at Sheepscombe in the Painswick Valley, is particularly noteworthy.

Human Influences

It is highly probable that the High Wold valleys have been favourable areas for occupation for a long period as a consequence of the locational advantages offered by the combination of a more sheltered location, the availability of water, and ease of access onto the more open and easily cleared High Wold. Furthermore, although the extent of flatter land is limited within the valley bottoms, the presence of deeper and richer soils derived from alluvial deposits also provided areas for cultivation and grazing.

Although physical evidence of occupation within the valleys from the early periods of occupation is limited, the occasional long barrows, pillow mounds and tumuli that occur within a number of the valleys confirm that man was present from as early as the Neolithic, and it is probable that small settlements were established within the valleys from this period, many relating to spring lines as well as the main river source, and also fording points across the rivers. The evidence will have been obliterated, however, by successive periods of occupation building over previous settlements. Settlements within the valleys now mainly comprise dispersed villages and hamlets that are primarily linear or radial. Farmsteads and individual dwellings are also frequent occurrences within the landscape type, and as with the villages and hamlets, are most frequently found on the valley bottoms, terraces and hill crests of the valley slopes.

The shallower upper sections of the Thames tributaries and the broader basin of the Painswick Valley would have been suitable for cultivation and grazing from the earliest period of occupation of the Cotswolds. In contrast to this, the sections of very steep slopes that occur within many of the valleys will have always been a major constraint to clearance and development, both from these early phases of occupation and indeed through to the present time. Much of the woodland within the valleys is associated with these steep slopes, and includes intermittent and sometimes substantial stands of ancient woodland within all of the valleys. While the tree cover is likely to have been felled and replanted as an ongoing process of woodland management, it is nevertheless probable that woodland will have clothed some of the steepest slopes almost continuously.

A number of designed parklands and historic buildings are located within the valleys, their location and layout taking advantage of the sheltered microclimate of the valley, deeper soils, and a secluded wooded setting.



Character Areas

8A

Toadsmoor, Holy Brook, and Upper Frome Valleys

In common with other High Wold valleys the Frome and its tributaries rise close to the escarpment, with a cluster of springs feeding into the Frome to the north of Brimpsfield, approximately 1.5 km (1 mile) east of the escarpment at Birdlip. At the head of the valley, slopes are shallow and the valley form wide, but this is soon replaced by a deeply incised valley with slopes averaging 1 in 5, and locally steeper up to 1 in 3, for the length of its course south to Sapperton and west to Chalford. Likewise, the Frome's subsidiary valley that extends up to Climperwell Farm, east of the Cranham Wood section of the escarpment, and the courses of the Holy Brook tributary and Toadsmoor Valley to the west, also display deeply incised valley form below the initial more gently sloping heads of the valleys.

Woodland cover is a notable feature of these valleys, and the Upper Frome together with its upper tributaries, have a particularly extensive cover of woodland throughout their courses. While intermittent open sections occur, the overall character is that of a deeply wooded and secluded valley. Similarly the Holy Brook valley to the west supports an extensive network of woodland although the east facing slopes of the valley are generally open, presenting a notable contrast between the two sides of the valley. Extensive woodland also cloaks many of the slopes of the shorter Toadsmoor Valley, and in contrast to Holy Brook Valley, is mainly confined to the west facing slopes. Much of the woodland is broadleaved, although coniferous stands do occur.

There are some notable areas of ancient woodland, eg east of Frampton Mansell to Pinbury Park within the Frome, and also within the Toadsmoor Valley. Intermittent areas of calcareous grassland also occur, the majority of which are designated as SSSIs.

There is a notable absence of settlement or roads within the Upper Frome and Holy Brook valleys, imparting a strong sense of seclusion. Apart from Caudle Green located near the head of the Frome Valley, occasional small settlements hug the upper slopes of the valley, such as Sapperton, Edgeworth and Miserden, and Waterlane and Througham in the Holy Brook Valley. Where they do occur, roads cross rather than follow the valley bottom and many sections are only accessible by footpath. In contrast, the valleys of the Frome to the west of Sapperton, together with the Toadsmoor Valley, have a more settled character. Settlements extend along the valley bottom and sides such as Oakridge and Frampton Mansell within the Frome Valley, and Eastcombe within the Toadsmoor. Roads also follow sections of the valley bottom and sides. Nevertheless, the concentration of woodlands within these latter valleys continues to absorb the settled character and retain a sense of seclusion.



There are a number of parks within the Frome Valley the most notable being the Registered Garden of Misarden Park. Located to the east of Miserden village, Misarden Park occupies a secluded location, surrounded by extensive woodlands that extend across the valley slopes and bottom. In addition to the designed gardens, a series of valley bottom lakes have been created within the course of the Frome. The Park contains a number of important archaeological features notably a motte and bailey, a tumulus and pillow mounds, which together are indicative of a long period of occupation. Other Registered Gardens that occur within the valleys comprise Pinbury Park and part of the Edgeworth Estate within the Frome, and Lypiatt Park within the Toadsmoor Valley.

The eastern section of the Thames and Severn Canal extends through the Upper Frome Valley. To cross the high ground, Sapperton Tunnel was constructed. This impressive feat of engineering was completed in 1789, and at 3,109m

long, it is one of the longest transport tunnels in the country. However, the prohibitive cost of maintaining the tunnel led to its closure in 1911. The entrance at its western side is framed by the imposing Gothic style Daneway Portal, carefully restored in 1996 by the Cotswold Canals Trust.

8B

Painswick and Slad Valleys

In contrast to the other High Wold Valleys the Painswick Valley is much broader in form with major secondary embayments that extend close to the escarpment.

The major folded structure of the Painswick syncline has had a significant influence on the valley morphology. The Painswick Stream has exploited the syndinal structure and eroded back through the Oolitic Limestone to create a bowl like valley, the headwaters cutting back almost to the escarpment edge. Secondary headward erosion by the Wash Brook, a tributary of the Painswick Stream, has resulted in two principal valley heads, while a third smaller re-entrant occurs to the east at Sheepscombe. No High Wold exists on the western boundary of the Painswick Valley. Instead there is a notable ridge between these two landform units defined by Scottsquar Hill, Huddinknoll Hill and Cod Hill and eventually to High Brotheridge. The Painswick Stream and the Wash Brook are separated by a prominent projecting ridge that extends southwards from Painswick Hill on the escarpment edge at 283m AOD down to the settlement of Painswick. The ridge is underlain in part by the more resistant Marlstone Rock Formation that outcrops below Painswick and forming a notable bench. To the east, the Wickridge Hill ridge, rising to 232m AOD, separates the Painswick Valley from the Slad Valley.



In addition to the principal watercourses within the Painswick Valley catchment, numerous springs emerge along the middle valley slopes from which a myriad of minor watercourses further dissect the valley slopes creating a complex rolling and locally folded landform.

Much of the Painswick Valley is under mixed, mainly improved, pasture and arable production within both irregular enclosed fields particularly to the north-east of Painswick, and more regular medium scale fields to the west, particularly below Cud Hill where arable is more dominant. Such field patterns reflect the response to 18th and 19th century parliamentary enclosure of both unenclosed cultivation patterns and former common pastures. Fields are enclosed by a mix of hedgerows and stone walls which together with the numerous hedgerow trees and field copses provides a sense of rural intimacy.

The principal settlement within the Painswick Valley is Painswick itself occupying a distinctive elevated position on the lower slopes of Painswick Hill ridge. Other villages and hamlets are scattered through the Valley, notably Whiteshill, Pitchcombe, Edge and Sheepscombe. The majority of buildings within the Painswick valley are constructed from locally quarried limestone that weathers to a silvery colour making the local buildings particularly distinctive.

While woodlands occur throughout the Valley, the valley slope woodlands are the most notable feature, particularly those at the head of the valley surrounding Cranham at Buckholt Wood, Saltridge Hill and Sheepscombe further south. Together these form notable skyline woodlands from within the valley. The Painswick Hill ridge also supports notable stands of woodland. Much of these more extensive areas of woodland are classified as ancient woodland.

The woodlands at Buckholt Wood, and continuing round the valley head to Sheepscombe, are designated as a National Nature Reserve in recognition of the considerable ecological importance of both the ancient woodlands dominated by beech with some ash, pedunculate oak and sycamore, and some areas of calcareous grassland. Much of this is also designated as a SSSI.

The Registered Garden of Painswick House, including the restored Painswick Rococo Garden, is set within an impressive parkland setting and woodland overlooking the Wash Brook Valley, and is a notable feature immediately to the north west of Painswick.

The south-west aligned Slad Valley is located to the east of the Wickridge Hill ridge. The valley is deeply incised throughout its length, but it is at the head of the valley that the incised nature is particularly pronounced. Here a series of subsidiary streams, including the Dillay Brook, feed into the Slad Brook, to form a remarkable network of deeply dissected valleys, with much of the very steep slopes clothed in broadleaved woodland. The secluded network of 'Upper Slad' valleys are only accessible by foot, and examples of some of the more isolated and hidden parts of the Cotswolds. Further woodlands occur within the main valley, with an almost continuous cover of woodland on the upper north-west facing slopes of the valley.

Below these woodlands much of the valley slopes are under agricultural cultivation with a predominance of improved pasture within regular fields.

The Slad Valley is the setting of Laurie Lee's 'Cider with Rosie', which records the author's childhood days growing up in the village of Slad before the Second World War. The images portray a pastoral retreat. Since this period the valley has experienced some changes to the sense of peace and tranquillity, not the least being the effects of traffic on the B4070, which connects Stroud to Birdlip and follows the valley bottom and upper slopes. Despite these influences, the valley retains a quiet and remote character.

8C

Upper Churn Valley

The River Churn rises in the Inferior Oolite at vicinity of Seven Springs, close to the section of the escarpment between Hartley Hill and Wistley Hill. The cluster of springs the feed into the river are at approximately 215m AOD and considered by some to be the true source of the River Thames since Thames Head to the north of Kemble is at a lower elevation at approximately 115m AOD. The col between the south flowing headwaters of the Churn, and the north flowing Lilley Brook that dissects the escarpment,

is a mere 100m in width. Here, the High Wold plateau that would have once separated the two river catchments has been eroded. To the east and west of the Churn, however, the High Wold plateau defines the limit of the Upper Churn catchment, with its series of watercourses that feed into the main river, and extend southwards to the village of Rendcomb at the transition to the Dip-Slope.



The general trend of the catchment is typical of the Dip-Slope valleys with a general north-west / south-east alignment. Above the village of Colesbourne and close to the confluence with Hilcot Brook, the Churn's principal tributary, the main river assumes a distinctive east-west course. This is attributable to its exploitation of a fault line, the pattern repeating further upstream where minor tributaries feeding into the river follow a similar course

The upper reaches of the Churn from Colesbourne to Seven Springs is generally more open and with a gentler valley form profile than in the lower section of the valley, particularly on the eastern / northern side of the valley. There is extensive pastoral land throughout the valley, interspersed with valley bottom woodland copses and riparian vegetation. The stone built villages of Coberley and Cowley are notable settlements on the lower valley slopes. A series of lakes have been created along the course of the Churn at Cowley, which together with designed parkland planting extending across the west facing valley slopes above Cowley Manor, form a notable feature. To the east of Coberley the sites of the lost medieval villages of Coberley and Upper Coberley are visible as humps and hollows within a small tributary valley.

The north-south flowing Hilcot Brook flows within a steep-sided valley. Although there are areas of pasture within the valley, the dominant land use is woodland forming part of an extensive commercially managed woodland estate. The intermittent valley pastures are therefore enclosed by dense woodland. There is a general absence of settlement

with a few isolated farms. The overall character of the Hilcot Brook Valley is that of a very secluded, remote and peaceful wooded valley.

Below Colesbourne, and the confluence of the Churn and Hilcot Brook, the river follows a north-south alignment within an enclosed valley form. The land use is a mixture of predominantly pastoral farmland, together with extensive areas of woodland. There are extensive areas of ancient woodland throughout the valley notably at Old Park, Clifferdine and Iffcomb Woods to the south of Colesbourne, at Hilcot Wood above the smaller tributary valley, and Cowley Wood in the upper reaches.

Parklands and estate managed land is also a notable feature of the Upper Churn valley, notably to the east of Cowley Manor, at Colesbourne Park within the Hilcot Brook Valley, and the Marsden Manor and Rendcomb Estates in the lower reaches of the character area. The imposing stone built Rendcomb College, set amongst a parkland setting on the upper west facing slopes of the valley above the village of Rendcomb, is a particularly notable local feature within the valley. These areas of parkland and estate managed woodland planting, together with the mosaic of extensive woodlands, imparts a well-managed character.

8D

Upper Coln Valley



The Coln rises in the vicinity of Brockhampton to the south of the Winchcombe embayment. This upper section of the valley through the villages of Sevenhampton and Syreford is deeply incised, but southwards through Andoversford it assumes a much broader valley form. This uppermost reach of the Coln has been included within the High Wold, and only to the south of the settlements of Foxcote and Shipton is the more expansive form of the valley considered in detail



as a separate valley character area. South of Withington the river flows across a succession of Inferior and Great Oolite strata in a narrow, steep sided valley.

The northern portion of the character area is significantly less wooded when compared to the south. North of Withington the most significant areas of woodland occupy the upper valley slopes, steep landform and riverside locations. These tend to be ancient broadleaved woodlands although coniferous planting is also significant. Between these limited areas of woodland, particularly on steeper landform poorly suited to intensive grazing, linear tracts of calcareous grassland are evident. South of Withington, woodland cover is more extensive, with Withington and Chedworth Woods cloaking much of the valley sides above the level of the floodplain. These represent extensive areas of ancient broadleaved woodland and are dominated by broadleaved species although areas of mixed woodland and coniferous plantations are also evident, and indeed dominant in some views.

Between areas of woodland the valley sides are managed as improved pasture and divided up by a network of hedgerows. On areas of gentler landform arable farming is also evident although this is not prevalent. The floor of the valley is flat and represents a narrow alluvial floodplain through which the Coln meanders gracefully. These areas are managed as seasonal pasture and are subject to periodic flooding. As a result, post and wire fences are used to divide up fields rather than hedgerows.

Numerous Neolithic and Bronze Age barrows are located within woodlands on the upper slopes indicating that the Colne valley was extensively settled in prehistory. Later sites of historic interest include the impressive remains of Chedworth Roman Villa and those of a further villa site at Compton Grove. To the east of Cassey Compton a lost medieval village is visible as humps and hollows beneath closely grazed riverside pastures above the level of flooding on the northern bank of the Colne. A more recent landscape feature preserved as earthworks runs along the

base of the valley, and within Chedworth Woods. This linear feature is a disused railway. Its course through the woods has been protected as a Nature Reserve due to the fine rock exposures and fossils along its route and the variety of grassland and woodland flowers that have colonised it.

The landscape retains a strong rural character. The main settlements in the area are Withington, which straddles the Coln, and Compton Abdale, located at the head of one of its main tributary valleys. Beyond these settlements the landscape is sparsely settled with a small number of isolated farms located throughout the landscape. These are generally sited along lanes off the main arterial routes through the valley.

8E

Upper Windrush Valley



The physiographic source of the River Windrush is close to Oat Hill, south of Broadway Combe, where a broad and shallow sloping valley penetrates close to the escarpment edge. The valley is dry throughout this upper section, however, and not until a small secondary tributary near Taddington joins the valley to the north of Taddington is there a surface watercourse. The entire river valley southwards from the village of Ford, and then south-eastwards to Bourton-on-the-Water, displays underfit characteristics, with the wavelength of the valley meanders out of proportion to the small scale of the river. Indeed, secondary small-scale meanders are evident along the course of the river. The distinctive asymmetrical valley profile in the section between Temple Guiting and

Naunton is also a classic example of uniclinal shifting with steeper west facing slopes resulting from the tendency of the river to cut sideways as a result of the dip of the underlying strata.

With a few notable exceptions woodland cover within the Upper Windrush Valley is sparse and confined to sections of some of the steeper valley slopes. The extensive and predominantly broadleaved woodland to the west of Kineton is notable, and classified as ancient woodland. Similarly the section of Guiting Wood that lies within the Upper Windrush Valley catchment is also ancient woodland although now largely replanted with conifers. Areas of calcareous grassland are scarce, but there are linear patches along some sections of the valley bottom.



Land use within the Upper Windrush is a mix of improved grassland for grazing, and arable, the latter particularly prevalent to the west of Kineton where large-scale rectilinear fields extend down to the valley bottom. The effect of the parliamentary enclosure pattern is evident throughout the valley due to with the majority of fields being regular in shape.

Settlement is principally confined to the valley bottom and lower slopes thus occupying secluded and sheltered locations close to water. A network of roads traverses the Upper Windrush Valley, and although some sections of the valley remain isolated, much of the catchment is served by a local road network connecting the string of villages within the main valley, and also the settlements at the head of the tributary valleys at Hawling and Guiting Power. The name 'Guiting' is frequent in the upper reaches of the Windrush. The name derives from the Anglo-Saxon 'gute' meaning to flood indicating that settlements were prone to seasonal flood waters. Fords are frequent crossing the slow shallow river; many are marked by an old stone farmhouse. The medieval packhorse bridge close to Guiting Power is also a notable landscape feature.

There are limited surface features of archaeological interest but the site of the medieval village of Lower Harford, adjacent to a fording point across the Windrush, is of interest and designated as a SAM.

Two notable recreational paths pass through the character area comprising sections of the Windrush, and Wardens' Ways.

8F

Upper Dikler Valley

The River Dikler is the principal tributary of the River Windrush, rising close to the escarpment in the vicinity of Broadway Woods. In its upper reaches the valley form is broad and open, and slopes are shallow. The connecting watercourses that feed into the headwaters of the Dikler are also insubstantial and in many instances dry. Within a kilometre or so, however, the valley assumes a narrow and very incised form, the section between Jockey Stable Cottages southwards to Hinchwick Manor being particularly notable.

South of The Warren the valley is dry throughout the remainder of this character area, and noticeably broader. North of The Warren the river flows across the relatively less permeable Cotswolds Sand, but near The Warren, an east-west fault across the valley has lowered the outcrop of the Inferior Oolite so that it forms the bedrock to the river course. As a consequence of the more permeable nature of the rock, the watercourse passes underground. Two substantial and incised valleys link into the Dikler from the west, south of Bourton Down and west of Hinchwick, both of which are dry



The effect of underfit valley morphology is particularly well displayed in this upper reach of the Dikler (see description under Physical Influences). Pronounced valley meanders are evident in the section from Jockey Stable Cottages south to The Warren. In contrast the watercourse is small and insubstantial.

Woodland cover is particularly extensive in the northern section of the valley, and includes areas of ancient woodland, much of it hugging the steep valley slopes and extending into the tributary valleys. A further concentration of woodland occurs in the vicinity of The Warren at the confluence of the dry tributary valleys. Although predominantly broadleaved, there are also stands of coniferous plantations especially within the Hinchwick Hill tributary. To the south of The Warren, however, the valley is more open with occasional geometric and mainly coniferous woodlands. The land use beyond the woodland areas is mainly improved grassland although arable land also extends into the valley bottom in the southern section where slopes are gentler and the valley bottom widens. Linear patches of calcareous grassland also occur in these valley bottoms.

Settlement and roads within the valley is sparse, emphasising the secluded nature of the valley, confined to intermittent individual properties and farm holdings. Occasional local roads cross the valley but much of the upper section is inaccessible, with limited footpaths.

An isolated Registered Garden is located at Spring Hill House, hidden within the folds of one of the upper tributaries. The 'planned' woodland structure is notable but not visible in longer distance views. Other features of greater antiquity comprise a group of tumuli within woodland south of Hinchwick Manor Farm, and the line of the Roman Road Ryknild Street which crosses sections of the tributaries, including the grounds of Spring Hill House.

A number of small, disused quarries occur within the valley, but are insignificant features. The now disused military camp at the head of the valley adjacent to the A44 next to the Cross Hands junction is contained by woodland, and its impact is therefore confined to close distance views.

9 HIGH WOLD DIP-SLOPE

Character Areas

- 9A Sulis Manor Plateau
- 9B Bathampton and Claverton Down
- 9C Lansdown
- 9D Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope
- 9E Wychwood Forest
- 9F West Enstone Uplands



Key Characteristics

- Soft, gently undulating rolling landscape dissected by a series of predominantly south-east flowing rivers;
- transitional landscape displaying many of the characteristics of the neighbouring High Wold and Dip-Slope Lowland landscape character types;
- network of dry valley systems;
- large scale open arable fields with little tree cover, as well as a more complex mosaic of smaller scale arable and pasture contained within a strong framework of hedges and woodland;
- stone walls less prevalent than on the High Wold, but notable adjacent to roads and in vicinity of settlements;

- intermittent long distance views towards the high wold and across neighbouring lowlands;
- sparsely settled with intermittent isolated farmsteads and dispersed hamlets, many marking fording or bridging points;
- evidence of small scale quarrying in shallow delves, often overgrown by trees and scrub;
- grain of landscape patterns often aligned along the course of Roman roads that cross the area;
- intermittent occurrence of airfields on shallow sloping elevated landscapes;
- distinctive pattern of large estates and associated planned parkland landscape and woodland are evident across the Dip-Slope Lowland; and
- significant areas of ancient woodland, and evidence of assarting in Wychwood Forest and Cirencester Park.

Landscape Character

The High Wold Dip-Slope comprises the gently rolling landscapes that generally fall south-eastwards away from the areas of the High Wold plateau to where they merge into the Dip-Slope Lowlands landscape character type. Within the southern sections of this landscape type, however, drainage is generally to the north east. The landscape shares many key characteristics with both of these neighbouring landscape types and therefore represents a transitional zone between the two.

The High Wold Dip-Slope may be identified extending beneath the High Wold from the West Enstone Uplands in the far east of the AONB in an arc to the outskirts of Bath in the south. In this location the High Wold Dip-Slope is bordered to the west by the escarpment.

The landscape is characterised by gently rolling landform with an elevated and open character, but distinctly more sheltered and intimate when compared to the High Wold due to the Dip-Slope landform limiting views to the north-west. The gentle south-easterly dip in the landform is perceptible from many locations with long distance views over the Dip-Slope Lowlands possible from many locations. In these wide south-facing panoramas, the Dip-Slope landform is often clearly identifiable. Within the Dip-Slope the High Wold plateau to the north and west can often be viewed on the horizon.

The landscape is dissected by an increasing number of deep dry valleys and tributary streams when compared to the High Wold creating more discrete and intimate landscapes than are present on the plateau. These valleys are generally wider as they proceed downstream and further reduce the perceptions of exposure and elevation that is more characteristic of landscapes to the north-west.

Intensive arable farming predominates on the Dip-Slope, giving the landscape a productive and well-maintained character. The impression is one of a large-scale landscape that is simple and smooth in texture. Improved pastures are also evident, but mainly sited within the valley systems, resulting in a lush appearance. The large fields are separated by stonewalls, some of which are obscured by overgrown regenerating vegetation and hedges, together with neat hedgerows, and post and wire fencing. Although evident, the dry stone walls are less common than on the High Wold plateau.

The thin, dry calcareous soils over limestone result in generally sparse woodland cover although large areas of woodland are associated with the ancient Wychwood Forest and parklands such as Cirencester Park.

Settlement patterns are similar to the High Wold with dispersed villages and hamlets predominating. However, villages tend to be a little larger and more frequent, particularly along the valleys. Whilst barrows and hillforts are still an important feature of the landscape, they are fewer in number and are perhaps less of a characteristic feature than the adjacent High Wold.

Physical Influences

The northern section of the High Wold Dip-Slope is underlain by the Great Oolite Limestones. However, along the eastern fringes of the landscape bordering the Dip-Slope Lowlands, particularly in the vicinity of Wychwood and south of Daglingworth, Forest Marble Formation predominates.

Great Oolite would have at one time covered the whole of the Cotswolds, but subsequent tilting of the Cotswolds massif has led to denudation of its eastern flank. The south-easterly tilt of the Dip-Slope is between 1 and 2 degrees and conspicuous across much of the landscape. It has dictated the drainage pattern of the landscape, and to a lesser extent the layout of roads and settlements.

The landform is gently undulating and generally occurs between the 210 m AOD and 150 m AOD contours. However, the landform change between the neighbouring landscape types of both the High Wold, and the Dip-Slope Lowland, is subtle and the boundary between these landscape types is therefore transitional.

The drainage pattern of the Dip-Slope represents a continuation of that present on the High Wold, and as on the High Wold, the Dip-Slope is dissected by a number of rivers such as the Windrush and Coln. However, these occupy a much broader valley form, and often perceived as undulations in the wider landscape. (See Landscape Character Type 16). Smaller, narrow valleys with convex slopes also occur, however, often comprising dry valleys that were carved during the Ice Age by glacial melt waters. A fine example is the valley to the west of Barnsley, and Barnsley Wold Wood.

Arable farming predominates on the Dip-Slope with large fields cloaking the countryside and offering seasonal variations in colour and texture. These are enclosed by a combination of hedgerows and sometimes dry stone walls although where the boundary pattern is breaking down, post and wire fencing is increasingly being used. Where present, stone walls are an important indication of the underlying geology, the material often locally sourced by farmers from narrow quarries at the edge of the fields they were enclosing or picked from the fields.

Similar to the High Wold, woodland cover is sparse and restricted to small deciduous and mixed plantations many of which date to the period of enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries. In contrast to the High Wold, however, larger areas of ancient woodland survive. Large blocks are particularly evident forming the wider parkland setting of Cirencester Park and at Wychwood, which is the remains of an ancient Royal Hunting Forest. In the vicinity of these large woodlands the landscape adopts a more intimate and human scale, with wide panoramas interrupted by trees.

Human Influences

In common with the High Wold and Dip-Slope Lowland, the enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries impart the dominant landscape pattern. Beneath this, and in contrast to the close association of the High Wold with prehistoric features, the Dip-Slope landscape may be regarded as being most heavily influenced by the Romans. The Dip-Slope is criss crossed by numerous major Roman Roads including long stretches of the Fosse Way and the Ermin Way. Their course still dominates areas of the landscape and dictates the alignment of later field patterns and ownership boundaries, and may often be perceived in the line of modern roads, hedgerows and footpaths. Monuments of the prehistoric period are still evident in the landscape but are less numerous and have less of an impact on the character of the wider Dip-Slope landscape.

Historically fewer quarries were worked on the Dip-Slope than on the High Wold, and where present, they were often shallow workings, visible today as shallow grassy depressions known as delves. Many are hidden from view by scrub growth and tree copses.

A conspicuous feature of the Dip-Slope Lowland landscape is the many airfields and landing strips that are located across it. These range in size from the extensive airfield and barracks on the eastern fringe of Minchinhampton to the single landing strip to the west of Badminton Park. Many military sites were established or greatly expanded during the Second World War. They utilise the extensive areas of flat or gently undulating landscape and would have had many different functions. Colerne, for example, was constructed in 1940 as an RAF fighter base. Many still retain structures associated with their wartime functions such as barracks, hangars and control towers; however, many have been modernised or adapted for new uses. Colerne is now an RAF training base and is used to hold motor-sport events.

The wider settings of large designed landscapes such as west of Badminton Park, and Cirencester Park have a perceptible influence on the High Wold Dip-Slope landscape. These are often subtle and include significant linear woodlands, such as the Seven Mile Plantation to the west of Badminton Park, and the large woodlands to the west of Cirencester Park. At a more local scale, their influence may also be seen in the architectural detailing of buildings in the landscape such as the castellated farm house to the west of Worcester Lodge which marks the entrance to Badminton. Features associated with the designed and planned landscapes exert an influence well beyond the extent of the estate parkland into the surrounding agricultural landscape. For example, the

notable planned woodlands of the Centre Walk Avenue and the Seven Mile Plantation provide strong physical and historic links to the Badminton Estate located within the Dip-Slope Lowland landscape character type to the east.

Settlement patterns are similar to that on the High Wold, with scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings occurring across the landscape. The more frequent occurrence of dispersed villages and hamlets indicates that the landscape is more hospitable than on the exposed areas of the High Wold. Settlements are located in the shelter offered by valleys and some, such as Tormarton and Hawkesbury Upton, gain shelter from being sited beneath areas of raised landform that protect them from northerly winds.

Many settlements are located off the main routes that pass through the area. The orientation of the principal routes mirrors the situation on the High Wold with roads running north eastwards such as the A46 (T) and A429. Either side of these, a network of minor roads link villages and towns to more isolated farms and hamlets. These tend to run down the Dip-Slope at right angles to the main arterial routes, often fringing the upper slopes of Dip-Slope Valleys.

Character Areas

9A

Sulis Manor Plateau

The Sulis Manor Plateau is a discrete area of plateau fringing the southern limits of Bath's suburbs and the valley landscape of the Cam Brook. The plateau rises to 150 m AOD above Week Farm although a general plateau of 170 m AOD can be identified around Sulis Manor.

Landcover is primarily improved pasture together with some arable, with fields being divided by a network of well-maintained hedgerows interspersed with hedgerow trees. Calcareous grasslands, more typical of the steep upper slopes of the neighbouring Broad Limestone Valley, are also present on the plateau and indicate limited improvement of some pastures. Woodland within the area is sparse, consisting of small deciduous blocks or linear plantations of young trees along the top of the valley slopes.

Settlement is also very limited, the area marking the outer limits of Bath's southernmost suburbs. These have a significant influence on the landscape, with built development, and in particular the communications mast to the north of Sulis Manor having an urbanising influence on views northwards across the landscape. Sulis Manor is the most significant built element of the landscape. It is notable for its fine 1930s gardens.

The principal feature of historic interest within the Character Area is the Wansdyke. This massive linear bank and ditch earthwork is a significant landscape feature, running eastwards along the AONB boundary from Sulis Manor for approximately 1000 m. The Wansdyke is a major landscape monument and in the wider landscape stretches eastwards for 18 kilometres from Morgans Hill to Savernake Forest near Marlborough, near the southern edge of the Marlborough Downs. It was constructed as a defensive earthwork by the Anglo Saxons to defend from attacks from the north, as the ditch is located on the northern side of the bank. Later it became a traffic route for drovers bringing their flocks and herds to the great stock fair on Tan Hill, located to the north-east of Devizes in Wiltshire. It remained a traffic route well into medieval times, and is now a public right of way for most of its length.

9B

Bathampton and Claverton Down



The Bathampton and Claverton Down Character Area represents a detached area of Dip-Slope landscape. The downs rise to 204 m AOD dipping southwards to 150 m AOD. Many thousands of years ago, this area was contiguous with the Dip-Slope landscapes extending across Lansdown and onto the Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope. However, powerful rivers such as the Avon and By Brook have eroded deep valleys that almost encircle it, and leave the area as a detached remnant of the Dip-Slope landscape.

The close proximity of Bath has had a profound influence, with Bath University, schools and large housing estates all exerting a strong suburbanising influence on the character of the local landscape. Despite this, farming is evident and a significant area of the landscape is devoted to arable and pasture farming. Fields are generally divided up by neat hedgerows, often containing mature hedgerow trees. Woodland within the character area is limited to small areas of woodland, mainly in the south, north west

of Combe Down, and extending along the road, south of Claverton Down. A significant area of calcareous grassland exists in the north of the University campus.

To the north of the University, overlooking the heart of Roman and Regency Bath, sits a large enclosure named Caer Badon comprising of a mound and ditch. No evidence has been found for occupation, and it is widely thought to represent a large stock enclosure. There is also evidence for extensive Celtic field systems on the hills, and earlier barrows, obviously sited on a dramatic location overlooking the Avon valley.

Quarrying of the local limestone (Bath Stone) has been undertaken since Roman times. However, the stone here is of poor quality and enterprises were therefore short lived.

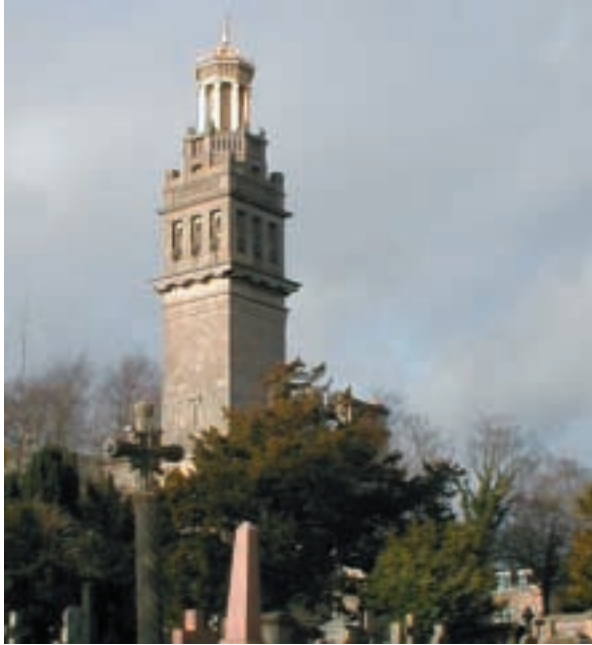
9C

Lansdown

The Lansdown Character Area comprises a gently rolling plateau which has become separated from the main area of the Dip-Slope landscape character type by the steep landform associated with the escarpment north of Bath, and the valley of the Lam Brook, and the series of tributary valleys, including the Piple Stream valley, which together define the eastern perimeter of the plateau.

The rural landscape is generally devoted to improved pasture farming, and large fields are bounded by stone walls and hedgerows. Hedgerow trees and woodlands are uncommon and some wide expansive views are therefore possible. A sense of elevation and exposure is also characteristic. Much of the pasture land is improved, but remnants of calcareous grassland survive close to ancient woodlands on the upper slopes of the escarpment and plateau at The Tumps and Hanging Hill. Indeed





a significant area has been designated as a SSSI due to the herb rich calcareous grassland communities that are present on areas of the varied topography of humps and hollows marking the site of former quarrying activities.

Lansdown Road, a minor but very busy road, passes along the centre of the plateau linking the small village of Lansdown to Bath in the south. Numerous developments are located alongside this road, including a large complex of Government offices, car parks and sports pitches in the south, and a golf course and Lansdown Racecourse in the west. These features exert a strong suburbanising influence on the landscape.

The landscape contains a number of important historic sites. An Iron Age site overlooks the Vale to the west of the racecourse, and as is typical, sits at the edge of the Escarpment. The far north of the area is part of the site of the Battle of Lansdown Hill (1643), a Registered Battlefield. The battle was a major confrontation of the English Civil War where Parliamentarian lines defending the hill met Royalist troops who were positioned on Freezing Hill to the north. The open grazed grassland over which the battle was savagely fought still remains, and the centre of the battle is marked by a monument, built in 1720, commemorating the Royalist general Sir Bevil Grenville.

A further impressive landscape monument is located in the south of the character area, within a large cemetery that was once part of a grand mile-long designed landscape. Beckford's Tower is an impressive neo-classical Italianate tower built in 1827 for William Beckford as a retreat, and which housed part of his art collection.



9D

Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope

The Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope landscape is an extensive character area stretching in a wide arc from Freezing Hill in the south to the north of Charlbury in the north-east of the AONB. The southern extent of the character area is marked by a dramatic beech stand, its close regimental formation mirroring the ranks of Royalist troops that were positioned here prior to the Battle of Lansdown Hill in 1643. Although reminiscent of the troops that occupied the hill prior to battle, it is not known whether these trees were planted to commemorate the battle.

Land cover and land use is typical of the High Wold Dip-Slope with a predominance of arable farming and occasional pasture fields in valley locations. The differences to the neighbouring landscape types are subtle. However, the transition is best appreciated when travelling through the Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope character area from the High Wold into the Dip-Slope Lowlands along the south-east orientated roads. Landform is gently rolling and wide valleys are often perceived as part of the rolling





landscape. Narrow valleys also occur. These are often dry, such as at The Warren on Ampney Down and west of Barnsley. Where streams occur these are frequently crossed by fords, in association with adjacent farms, or small hamlets such as at Middle Duntisbourne.

From a number of locations the absence of large woodlands allows for wide views over the neighbouring lowlands and northwards to the hills. The Dip-Slope landform can be particularly well appreciated from the wide panorama obtained from the Knollbury Hill Fort.

In this extensive landscape, landmarks and landscape features are numerous. The earliest historic sites include funerary monuments from the Neolithic and Bronze Age and Iron Age hillforts such as the impressive enclosure at Old Sodbury and Hinton Hill. These are indications of the long history of settlement on the Dip-Slope. However, the overriding character of the landscape is derived from the parliamentary enclosures and farms that date from the 18th and 19th centuries. The influence of designed woodlands is also of significance, for example the extensive planned linear woodlands and avenues that form part of the wider estate landscape associated with Badminton Park to the east within the adjacent Dip-Slope Lowland landscape type.

Roads passing along and down the Dip-Slope give the landscape a distinct grain. Many of these have ancient origins. More modern communication routes also have a significant impact on local landscape character, good examples being the course of the M4, and the line of air shaft turrets associated with the rail line that passes beneath the Dip-Slope between Old Sodbury and Acton Turville.

Place names indicate that many settlements on the Dip-Slope were established or consolidated in the Saxon period. Many are located in valley locations and contain ancient churches such as Duntisbourne Rouse. The extensive use of Cotswold stone throughout the numerous villages and hamlets is a defining characteristic of this area.

War-time links are also perceptible across the Cotswolds High Wold Dip-Slope character area in the numerous landing strips and former airbases in the area. The largest is at Colerne where hangars and former military buildings exert a strong influence on local landscape character.

9E Wychwood Forest



Wychwood Forest is a discrete landscape character area in the far east of the AONB occupying the high ground between the valleys of the Windrush and Evenlode. Interestingly, much of the character area boundary shares its alignment with the boundary of the wooded area at the time of the Domesday survey.

The landscape is smoothly rolling and underlain by Forest Marble, from where the rock formation gets its name. At Leafield and Ramsden, however, localised cappings of Oxford Clay and glacial drift mask the underlying limestone. These have a localised influence on vegetation character and give rise to islands of poorer soil. It is possible that these were some of the first areas to be cleared for settlement in the forest. As is typical of the Dip-Slope, the area has an elevated and expansive character with long sweeping views from higher areas of land punctuated by occasional copses. Land cover is typically large-scale arable farmland with field patterns largely dating from the times of enclosure. Walls and hedgerows are evident. Hedgerow removal is conspicuous in some areas, however, weakening the pattern created by field boundaries. To the south of the main Forest the land use is mixed, with concentrations of irregular field pattern boundaries, and pockets of woodland and mature hedgerow trees that may have evolved from the process of assarting where fields were carved out of areas of woodland. Despite the broad similarities of the open landscape with other areas of the Dip-Slope, the Wychwood Forest character area is distinguished by the presence of extensive areas of broadleaved woodland.

The woodlands of the Wychwood Forest are a particularly valuable natural habitat and a significant area of the Forest west of Cornbury Deer Park has been designated as a SSSI, and represents the largest continuous area of ancient broadleaved woodland in Oxfordshire. Areas of limestone grassland and a number of old marl lakes, which are nationally rare, are also important features of the designated area. The Forest is mostly oak-ash woodland and much of it was formerly managed as coppice with standards although it is now high forest. There is also an unusual example of forest with maple occurring as standards over an understorey of hawthorn or hazel coppice. Over 360 flowering plants and ferns have been identified in the area with particularly uncommon species found in the glades and rides. The area also supports a diverse invertebrate fauna and includes many uncommon species.

The site's historic associations underlie much of its character. Its name is thought to derive from Hwiccewudu, 'Hwicce' referring to a Saxon tribe that inhabited the area that was later absorbed into Mercia. Wood from the Forest was an important commodity in the Saxon period and provided a source of fuel for the Droitwich salt industry, where Hwicce princes had a monopoly. By the time of the Domesday survey the area was part of a well-established royal hunting forest that stretched across west Oxfordshire, a royal hunting lodge being established under the reign of Ethelred II (978-1016) at nearby Woodstock. As with other forests of the type, it was administered using Forest Laws and was not continuously wooded. Indeed, Wychwood was divided into eighteen parcels with one cut back each year.

Place names confirm that although termed 'Forest', the area was not necessarily cloaked in woodland. 'Shipton' indicates that there was an area of sheep pasture within the forest. By the 12th and 13th century the pressures of a growing population led to increasing demands for land. Many of the forest villages date from these centuries with Ramsden first recorded in 1146 and Leafield in 1213. These villages are often quite straggling in form, reflecting their origins as assarted fields cleared from woodland. Many of them did not have village churches until the 19th century. Local place names such as Asthall Leigh and Field Assarts are also clear signs of clearance and occupation within areas of woodland.

Interestingly, the large number of barrows in the landscape indicates that during the Neolithic and Bronze Age, the landscape was cleared of much of its woodland, as these monuments were meant to be seen. This implies that the Forest may have naturally regenerated prior to the establishment of the royal hunting forest in the Saxon period.

9F

West Enstone Uplands

The West Enstone Uplands occupy a high limestone plateau in the far east of the AONB north of the Evenlode. The landscape may be seen stretching further to the east beyond the AONB boundary as far as Middle Barton. In this wider landscape may be found the River Glyme, the town of Enstone, Heythrop Park and a large disused airfield.

Across much of the area the underlying limestone has formed a smooth, rolling plateau with a distinctly elevated and open character. Thin dry calcareous soils are free draining and well suited to arable farming and indeed much of the landscape is characterised by large fields enclosed by stone walls or low, clipped hedges and a sparse natural vegetation cover. Woodlands are restricted and no ancient woodland exists in the area. The largest woods comprise a linear shelterbelt along the A361 and a rectangular copse of newly planted trees to the west of Knollbury.

Settlement is sparse and restricted to a small number of isolated farms and individual dwellings. Their regular distribution suggests that many were the product of parliamentary enclosure when the open grasslands and wastes were parcelled into individual farming units centred around a new farmhouse. Roads are also infrequent and radiate out from Charlbury and Chadlington in the Evenlode Valley through the landscape to the B4026, which forms the AONB boundary in many places.

There are few landmarks or sites of historic interest in this landscape except for the impressive Knollbury Fort and the Hawk Stone, both sited to take advantage of views over the Evenlode Valley.