LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Landscape Character Assessment: Gloucestershire and Forest of Dean

Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment

FINAL DRAFT REPORT

November 2002

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1.1 Appointment and Brief

In February 2002 the Countryside Agency, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and Forest of Dean District Council, appointed Landscape Design Associates (LDA) to carry out a desk based landscape character assessment of the county of Gloucestershire and a full landscape character assessment of the Forest of Dean District.

The overall study consists of three separate reports, comprising the County Scoping Study, the Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment and the Forest of Dean District Landscape Strategy.

This report represents the first full landscape character assessment of the district within the framework provided by the Gloucestershire County Landscape Typology and employs the most up-to-date methodologies for landscape character assessment.

1.2 The Scope and Context of the Study

The study area is shown on Figure 1. It includes the entire administrative district of the Forest of Dean. A separate townscape assessment has not been undertaken as part of this project, and the built up areas of the district are therefore, regarded as an integral part of the landscapes they occupy.

A future programme of townscape assessment would allow for further analysis of the distinctive character of the district's urban areas and major towns, and their capacity to accommodate change. This programme of work could supplement work already completed within the district as part of the Gloucestershire County Council Market Towns initiative.

The Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment uses as a framework the emerging county landscape typology (Figure 2), which itself used, as a starting point, the Countryside Agency's Character Map of England, and the emerging National Landscape Typology for England. Wherever possible reference has also been made to earlier landscape character assessments carried out within the district, and in neighbouring county and district authorities and study areas.

The assessment includes a description of the physical (geology, landform, drainage and soils), natural (trees, woodland and land cover) and cultural (archaeology, history, land use, enclosure patterns, settlement patterns and building styles) attributes of the landscape. Past and present perceptions of the area, including those of national and local artists, musicians and writers have also been explored to investigate the more subjective dimension of landscape character.

1.3 Parallel Projects and Surveys

The Forest of Dean is currently the focus of a Countryside Agency national pilot Integrated Rural Development Project (IRD) project that aims to ensure effective protection and enhancement of the district's landscape and heritage, whilst promoting and supporting sustainable regeneration. The IRD project is being informed by a number of important studies and The Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment has benefited from a number of these.

These projects are ongoing and the full results are, as yet, unavailable. Representatives of the various projects have, however, made an important contribution, through a series of formal and informal consultations, and further informed the appreciation of how the district's landscape is perceived, and key elements of its biodiversity and heritage. The various projects are introduced below. Details of these projects are also contained in Appendices 2 to 4.

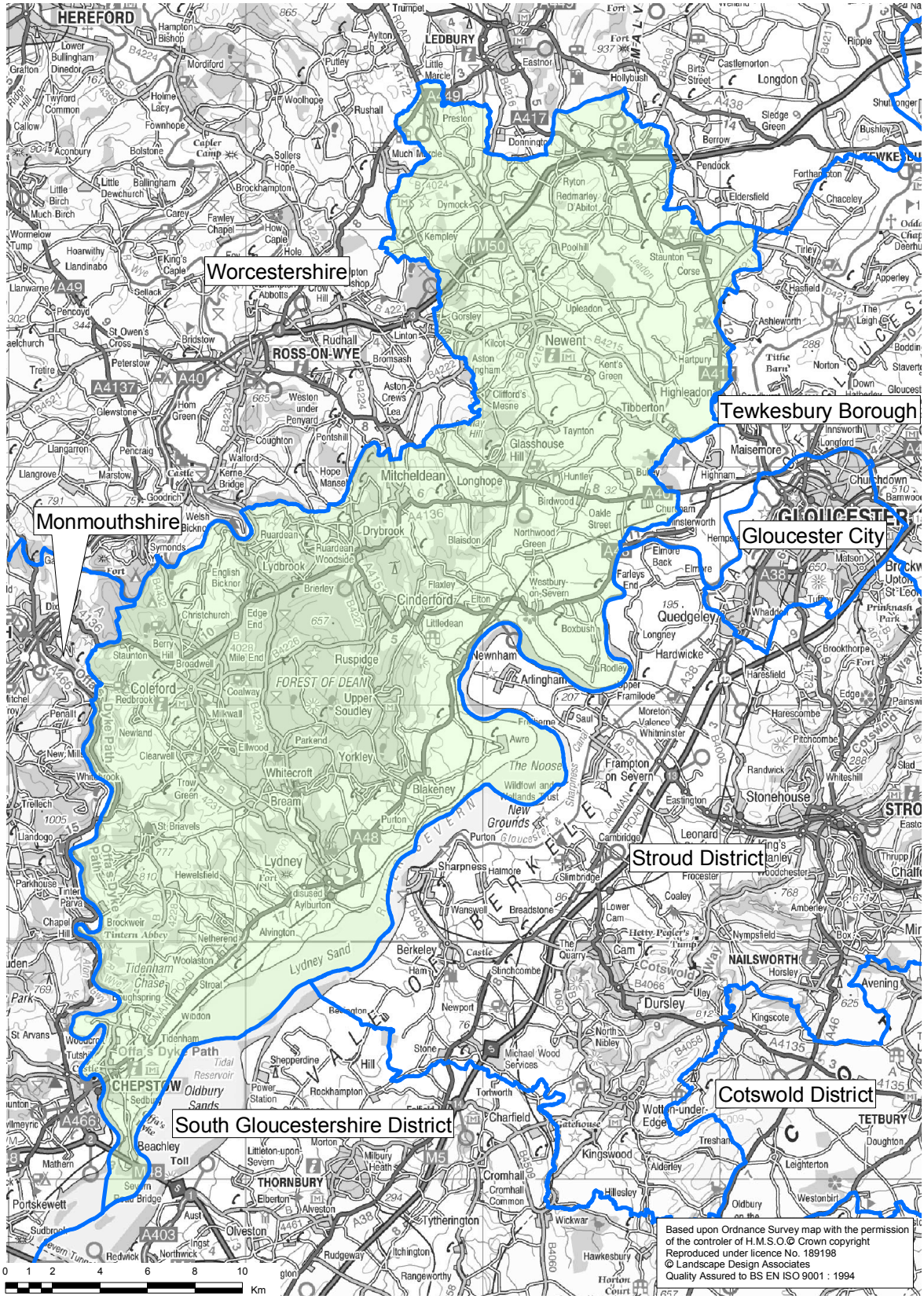
By Definition

The By Definition Project is an important parallel study which aims to contribute the views of stakeholders and community groups across the Forest of Dean District, to a study whose working title is 'The Forest of Dean Landscape and Heritage Study'.

The By Definition team are employing a range of techniques to canvass stakeholder opinions in response to the central question 'What makes the Forest of Dean Special?' These techniques include:

- A photography project across all parishes
- A public survey through the use of a standard questionnaire

Study Area



District and County Boundaries

Forest of Dean District

Figure 1

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CHKD.	SJD	APP.	IH	DATE	November 2002
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Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment

County Landscape Character Types

- Gloucestershire County Boundary
- 1, Wooded Valleys
- 2, Limestone Hills
- 3, Limestone Plateau
- 4, Wooded Scarp and Lower Scarp Slopes
- 5, Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Margin
- 6, Unwooded Vale
- 7, Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh
- 8, Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops
- 9, Undulating Farmland
- 10, Ridges and Valleys
- 11, Wooded Hills
- 12, Floodplain Farmland
- 13, Vale Hillocks
- 14, Low Hills and Orchards
- 15, Undulating Hill Farmland
- 16, River Meadows
- 17, Wooded Outlier
- 18, Settled Unwooded Vale
- 19, Farmed Slopes
- 20, Clay Vale
- 21, Broad Valley Floor Farmland
- 22, High Wold
- 23, High Wold Dip Slope
- 24, Dip Slope Lowland
- 25, River Basin Lowland
- 26, Escarpment
- 27, Secluded Valleys
- 28, Escarpment Valleys
- 29, Low Sandstone Hills
- 30, Low Limestone Ridge
- 31, Gently Undulating Lowland Farmland
- 32, Low Wooded Hills
- 33, Urban

North

0 1.5 3 6 9 12 15 Km

Figure 2

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- A range of arts based projects
- A video survey in local schools

The project has provided a range of inputs into the landscape character assessment. At a technical level, the By Definition team have provided background information, photographs for inclusion within this report and advice on a number of specific issues where a high degree of local knowledge has been required.

In addition, the conclusions of the project, particularly the views and opinions expressed by the public in respect of landscape, have been incorporated into the relevant sections of the report, notably within Section 3.0, which discusses cultural perceptions of landscape.

Details of this project can be found in Appendix 2.

Forest of Dean Biodiversity Project

The Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment has been informed by the Biodiversity Survey of the Forest of Dean. This survey is being carried out by the Gloucestershire County Wildlife Trust in partnership with English Nature, and on behalf of, the Countryside Agency. The Biodiversity project supports the wider Integrated Rural Development Project and will provide data necessary to securing the effective protection and enhancement of the district's natural heritage.

The project is at a relatively early stage and currently focused upon the retrieval of data and its incorporation into a series of GIS layers, details of which are provided in Appendix 3. At this stage, all available and relevant information has been fed into the characterisation process and used to inform both the area boundaries, and the supporting descriptions.

Forest of Dean Archaeological Survey

Although independent organisations such as the Dean Archaeological Group have previously undertaken a considerable amount of work in the district, there has been little large-scale systematic investigation of the district's archaeological potential. To address this, The Forest of Dean Archaeological Survey commenced in January 2002.

This is a major long-term project funded by English Heritage, the Countryside Agency, the Forestry Commission and the County Council. The results of the survey will not be available for several years and therefore it has not been possible to incorporate the findings of the study into this assessment at this stage.

However, consultation with the project team has yielded a great deal of information about the evolution of the district's landscapes and Section 2.0 of this report has been agreed as an accurate summary of the historical evolution of the Forest of Dean. Further details of the survey can be found in Appendix 4.

Other Studies

Two further assessments have made a significant contribution to the landscape character assessment. The CEH Land Cover Map 2000 illustrates the distribution of particular habitats and land use types across the district, and the Gloucestershire Historic Landscape Character Assessment reveals how the present landscape is a palimpsest of landscapes which are a consequence of a number of historic processes. The findings of these independent studies were made available at an early stage of assessment and were invaluable in the mapping of landscape character types and landscape character areas.

1.4 Purpose of the District Landscape Character Assessment

This landscape assessment adopts an holistic approach and considers the Forest of Dean as a mosaic of different landscape types and character areas, each with particular characteristics and subject to particular forces for change. The overall aim of this assessment is to provide a detailed understanding of the district's landscapes, the forces that have shaped them in the past and those that continue to shape them. This understanding will inform a series of strategies to help direct future management of the landscape.

The landscape character assessment has four main objectives:

- to provide an assessment of the cultural and natural heritage resources which have shaped the landscapes of the Forest of Dean;
- to identify and describe the district's component landscape character types and landscape character areas; and
- to summarise the key characteristics associated with each landscape type to provide the principles to guide landscape change.

The assessment also fulfils a wider remit by:

- helping to test and demonstrate the Countryside Agency's new landscape character assessment guidance;
- providing a basis on which to advise Gloucestershire County Council about the resource implications for extending the Forest of Dean District Character Assessment methodology across the rest of the county; and
- helping to promote awareness of landscape character in the district and the importance of landscape conservation and enhancement.

1.5 Approach and Methodology

The study has been completed in accordance with the most up-to-date methods of landscape character assessment . The main tasks were:

- familiarisation with the study area through information gathering, GIS interrogation, overlay mapping and compilation of field survey forms (a list of the core data sets used is attached as Appendix 1);
- background research into the physical and cultural attributes of the landscape and ongoing forces for change and development pressures;
- site survey including completion of field survey forms for landscape character types and landscape character areas, mapping of landscape character types and landscape character areas and preparation of a photographic record;
- consultation with stakeholders to assist the team in understanding local perceptions of landscape character;
- incorporation of the results of all relevant existing and parallel studies from the Forest of Dean; and
- report and digital map preparation.

Characterisation is the practical process by which areas of distinctive character are classified, mapped and described. In this assessment landscape character types and landscape character areas have been identified. Landscape character types are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, drainage patterns, vegetation, and historical land use and settlement pattern. By comparison landscape character areas are single, unique areas and are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type.

For example, the Unwooded Vale landscape character type is characterised by gently rolling, intimate agricultural landscapes on extensive drift deposits. Within this type, areas of distinct character may be identified such as The Leadon Vale and Severn Vale. Whilst these are unique and geographically discrete, they share characteristics of the broader type to which they belong.

An important feature of the assessment is that it is objective; no judgment of a particular landscapes value or quality is made. However, particular attention is given to identifying characteristics that are distinctive, rare or special.

1.6 Structure of the Report

Further to detailed analysis of the district's geology, landform and the evolution of patterns of land cover, land use and settlement, this report presents up to date findings on landscape character, diversity, and key characteristics. It will provide an invaluable source of information for all those with an interest in the Forest of Dean landscape and those responsible for land management and planning in the district.

The landscape patterns evident today have evolved gradually over thousands of years both through natural and human forces. Section 2 describes the principal influences that have shaped the landscape in the district in recognition of this. Important geological, cultural, historic and natural features are recorded and their distribution across the district is described.

Section 3 introduces some of the principal associations the district has with poets, writers, artists and musicians identifying those whose work has been significantly influenced by the district's landscapes.

Section 4 presents a review of landscape character across the district, and a classification of landscape character types and landscape character areas. Particular attention is given to characteristics that are distinctive, rare or special although an important feature of the approach adopted is the recognition that all landscapes matter and not just those which are designated or are regarded as being of higher quality than others. Written descriptions avoid value-laden terminology such as beautiful, bland, attractive and degraded. In this way, the descriptions can help to raise awareness of an area's

distinctiveness and encourage appreciation of variations in character across the district.

For each landscape character type a descriptions of key characteristics, physical and human influences, and buildings and settlements have been prepared. It is important to acknowledge that it is only through a detailed understanding of landscape character, and characteristics such as landscape scale, public perceptions, geology, habitats, field and settlement patterns, historic land use patterns and vernacular building styles, that guidance on how the landscape may be able to accommodate future change can be prepared.

The report concludes with a glossary of key terms, and a list of core references. The acknowledgements section identifies members of the steering group, and stakeholders and individuals who made a valuable contribution to the study.

2.1 Introduction

The intricate interplay of numerous physical (geology, geomorphology, pedology and biogeography) and human factors have shaped the landscape as it is experienced today. An understanding of these influences is central to the assessment process and provides a sound basis on which to define and describe landscape character.

2.2 Physical Influences

Geology

As is the case with all landscapes it is the juxtaposition of contrasting rocks and relief that forms the basic structure of the landscape. It is on this framework that the action of weathering, erosion and deposition has altered the form of the landscape, influenced drainage patterns and soils, and in turn patterns of vegetation, land cover and land use.

The geological framework of the Forest of Dean District is complex and diverse, illustrated by the wide range of the rocks that are present. Although not always apparent on the surface, the nature of the underlying geology can often be observed in the distribution and variety of building materials and by identifying diagnostic landscape features such as sink holes on limestone geology and redundant mines on coal measures.

Within the Forest of Dean District, rocks from seven main geological periods are represented (Figure 3). The oldest rocks in the district are the Ordovician mudstones that may be found at the foot of the southern extent of the Malvern Hills along with Permian sandstones.

Various Silurian rocks also occur within the district. These include the alternating fossiliferous limestones and shales that underlie the gentle terrain of the lowlands that extend into Herefordshire. At the base of these rocks, the famous Ludlow Bone Bed is found. This is a fine sandstone containing fossil remains of early fish, crustaceans, anthropods and brachiopods. By contrast, the upland areas are formed from two distinct forms of Silurian sandstone: the May Hill Sandstone Group that forms the foot slopes of the Malverns, and the Huntley Hill Sandstone formation that creates the upper slopes of May Hill.

Old Red Sandstone of the Devonian period occurs in the Wye Valley where it extends as far as Hereford in the north and also defines low ridges on the eastern edge of the Forest of Dean. These rocks were derived from the erosion of a vast continent lying to the north of Britain 395 million years ago, the eroded deposits having been laid down in lakes, inland seas, deltas and desert plains. In the west of the district the Quartz Conglomerate is dominant and is well displayed in Buck Stone, Suck Stone and Hearkening Rocks near Staunton. On the eastern limits of the Forest of Dean, St. Maughan's formation rocks form a distinctive ridge line. These rocks contain fossil fish and invertebrate fragments as well as sedimentary structures and fossil burrows, indicating that they were laid down in a river delta.

Carboniferous rocks include the limestones which form the heart of the forested syncline, the plateau to its west, and ridges to the east, and are also responsible for the fine river scenery where the Wye has cut into the landscape between Redbrook and Brockweir. Iron ore was formerly quarried and mined in the Forest and especially from the Crease Limestone band within the Carboniferous Limestone that outcrops between Drybrook and Upper Soudley, and between Hearkening Rock and Lydney Park.

Within the syncline can be found the Carboniferous Coal Measures. These deposits have been folded to form three main ridges running north-south and were the basis of much former industrial activity in the region, the folding having brought Coal Measures close to the surface for extraction in shallow pits and deep mines.

A discreet area of Jurassic Limestone and mudstone occurs within the district as upstanding hills in the lowland vale. Areas of Jurassic geology are more extensive to the east of the Severn where they form much of the Cotswolds.

The youngest rocks in the district are the Triassic mudstones which extend into the Severn Vale and northwards to the east of the Malvern Hills. These rocks form the soft vale landscapes that run parallel to the Severn.

Throughout the district, the geological strata are covered by layers of Quaternary sediments. Where extensive, these superficial deposits form a skin which in places is of sufficient

thickness to eradicate all visual clues as to the nature of the underlying solid geology. Silty clays dominate the intertidal flats in the Severn estuary, giving way to extensive clay deposits further inland bordering both the Severn and a multitude of streams draining the Forest of Dean and the Severn and Avon Vale.

The district has a range of nationally, regionally and locally important geological and geomorphological sites. These include sites which demonstrate the geological make-up of the Dean, sites that contain the fossil remains of numerous plant and animal groups and evidence of early inhabitants, and sites that demonstrate the past and continuing evolution of the landscape particularly the formation of river valleys and gorges.

Landform

The district's landform closely reflects the underlying geological framework (Figure 4). The major landform features have been formed by the effects of a series of orogenies (mountain forming episodes) and by subsequent weathering. The Hercynian orogeny is the most recent, dating to 280 million years ago, and formed the main features of the district, notably the main downfold or syncline of the Forest of Dean.

From west to east through the district variations in geology and landform is revealed through a sequence of contrasting landscapes.

The transition from the steep sided gorge of the Wye Valley to the undulating limestone plateau occurs in the west of the district. An intimate landscape of remote riverside meadows and steep wooded gorges, where views are contained by dramatic rock faces and dense woodland, strongly contrasts with the adjacent elevated limestone plateau, with its predominantly open and expansive character. These wide areas of rolling farmland, interspersed with large blocks of coniferous tree planting and isolated rural settlements, are characterised by a sense of exposure, a perception enhanced by the large expanse of sky and long distance views.

This plateau blends seamlessly through a fringe of forest settlements into the distinctive forest core - a basin (or syncline) of Carboniferous Coal Measures occupied by a

mosaic of various types of woodland interspersed with small clearings, settlement, riverside meadows and picnic areas which provide a popular recreational landscape. Small areas of ancient forest farmland survive on the fringes of the woodland core, assarted woodlands and fields being a particular characteristic of the northern and eastern forest fringe.

The forest basin is defined to the east by distinctive sandstone ridgelines and hills although these dramatic topographic features are only apparent where woodland cover is less dominant. Further to the east, the dramatic ridges and hills give way to a softer landscape of Triassic rocks covered in thick drift deposits. These are characterised by undulating farmland, rolling vales and flat riverine farmland interspersed with small wooded hillocks. More significant hilly areas occur in the far north of the district where the foothills of the Malverns extend into the lowlands.

Biodiversity

The distribution of landcover wildlife habitats and natural features throughout the landscape is determined by the nature of the underlying geology, landform, past land use patterns and the cultural history of individual areas (Figure 5).

English Nature has divided England into a number of Natural Areas, each with a characteristic association of wildlife and natural features. They provide a way of interpreting the ecological variations in terms of natural features and illustrate the distinctions between one area and another. Each Natural Area possesses a unique identity resulting from the interaction of natural and human influences. Natural Areas provide a framework for planning and implementation of nature conservation objectives and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets . Many Natural Areas share boundaries with the Countryside Agency's Countryside Character Areas (for example the Severn and Avon Vales), whilst others, such as the Dean Plateau and Wye Valley Natural Area encompasses two or more Countryside Character Areas.

The following table identifies Natural Areas within the Forest of Dean District.

Table 2.1 Natural Areas in the Forest of Dean District

Natural Area	Key Characteristic Habitats
Dean Plateau and Wye Valley	• *Exposures of Silurian, Devonian and Carboniferous rocks and fossils.* • *Links between geology, scenery and industrial heritage in the area.* • *Spectacular gorges and incised meanders of the Wye.* • *Extensive areas of lowland oak and mixed deciduous woodland.* • *Significant stands of lowland beech and yew woodland.* • *Widespread lowland wood pasture and parkland.* • *Some wet woodland in the river valleys.* • *Upland mixed ash and upland oak wood.*
Severn and Avon Vales	• *Tremadoc, Llandovery and Wenlock rocks and fossils.* • *Exposures of Quaternary sediments including river gravels and glacial deposits.* • *Some areas of lowland oak and mixed deciduous wood.* • *Some wet woodland in the river valleys.* • *Several areas of lowland wood pasture and parkland.* • *Unimproved neutral grasslands, especially old meadows and pasture.* • *Important areas of lowland hay meadows and dry neutral grassland.* • *Small areas of lowland heathland.*
Central Herefordshire	• *Extensive lowland oak and mixed deciduous woodland.* • *Remnants of once extensive wet woodland.*
Malvern Hills and Teme Valley	• *Important areas of wet woodland on the valley sides.* • *Extensive areas of lowland oak and mixed deciduous woodland.* • *Some areas of lowland wood pasture and parkland.* • *Localised stands of upland mixed ash woodland.* • *Significant lowland dry acid grassland resource.*
Severn Estuary	• *Substantial Areas of saltmarsh.* • *Substantial areas of intertidal sandflats and mudflats.* • *Extensive areas of highly mobile sandbanks.* • *Extensive subtidal reef of Sabellaria alveolata*

It is clear, therefore, that the Forest of Dean District has a rich wildlife resource. The complex and diverse geology combined with a long history of changing agricultural, forestry and industrial land use results in a wide range of semi-natural habitats and manmade habitats supporting a wealth of species

The main features include:

- Extensive woodland habitats of both native and non native types include some of the most natural and important woodland in England (for example rich ash, lime, beech and yew woods of the Wye Valley and oak, alder and birch woods of the Dean);
- Species rich grassland habitats of varied character (acid, basic, neutral, floodplain and estuarine) supporting important plant, invertebrate and bird populations;
- Rivers and streams and associated wetlands with important populations of birds, water vole, otter, crayfish and migratory fish;
- Remnant heathlands and associated mire and wetland bog habitats supporting important populations of birds, invertebrates and reptiles;
- Ancient hedgerow networks of vital importance for the movement of wildlife through the landscape; and
- Extensive man made underground mine systems supporting internationally important horseshoe bat populations.

The importance of the wildlife resource is reflected in the abundance of designated sites which include sites of international (Ramsar), European (Special Protection Area [SPA] and candidate Special Area of Conservation [cSAC], National (Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI]) and County (Key Wildlife Site) importance.

Appendix 5 provides an overview of nature conservation interest in the district and provides details of BAP habitats and BAP species within each of the 15 landscape types.

Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment

Geology

- Forest of Dean District Boundary
- Ordovician
- Permian
- Silurian
- Devonian
- Carboniferous
- Jurassic
- Triassic
- Quaternary Drift
- Coastline

Source: British Geological Society

North

0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Km

Figure 3

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Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment

Landform

- Forest of Dean District Boundary
- 0 - 50m
- 50 - 100m
- 100 - 150m
- 150 - 200m
- 200 - 250m
- 250 - 300m

North

0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Km

Figure 4

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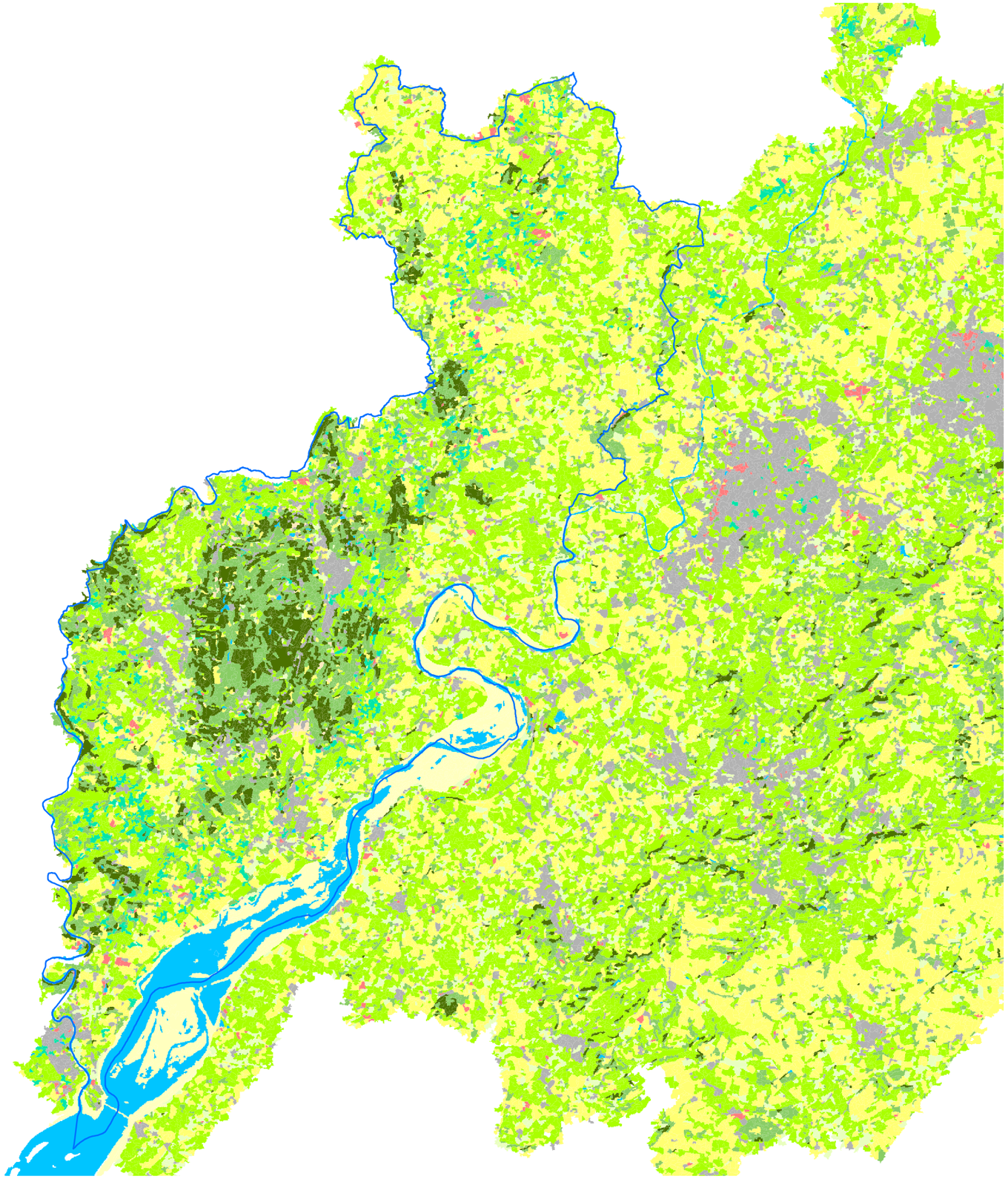
Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment



Landcover

- Forest of Dean District Boundary
- Broad-leaved Woodland
- Coniferous Woodland
- Arable and Horticulture
- Improved Grassland
- Neutral / Unimproved Grassland
- Calcareous Grassland
- Acid Grassland
- Open Water
- Inland Rock / Quarry
- Built Up Area
- Littoral Sand

Source: CEH Landcover Map 2000

North

0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Km

Figure 5

LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES

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2.3 Human Influences

Many of the landscapes and landscape features found within the district are a direct result of the interaction between humans and their environment.

For example, the spatial distribution of natural resources across the district, such as coal, iron, water power, building stone and timber, has had a profound influence on the development and distribution of industry, agriculture, settlement and infrastructure, all of which are key elements defining landscape character. However, certain events and activities have left more visible traces than others. For example, the effects of hundreds of years of Anglo Saxon settlement, agriculture and ritual activity are largely invisible in the landscape whereas the course of Offa's Dyke, built over a relatively short period in the late 8th century presents perhaps the most potent and visible historic landscape monument in the district.

Archaeological investigation yields a wealth of information about the evolution of the landscape. However, the Forest of Dean has fewer known archaeological sites for most periods than any other part of Gloucestershire, with the district encompassing approximately 20% of the county land area and yet only containing 7% of the county's Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The low density of sites may be explained by limited settlement and exploitation. However, a more likely cause is that the district has been under-researched for some time, in part caused by dense woodland restricting field walking, aerial photography and geophysical survey.

Despite the relatively limited archaeological record for the district, a great deal can be understood about the evolution of the district's landscapes by observing elements of the past that survive as above ground features today. The concept of 'time depth' indicates the successive trends of landscape change and acknowledges that the modern landscape is a palimpsest of the historic events and processes of the past. In many instances modern development and landscape management have eradicated all evidence of what has gone before. However, elsewhere evidence of past land use and activity is preserved. A typical example might include the remnants of

small irregular assart fields (perhaps Medieval in origin) surviving alongside large rectilinear fields from the parliamentary enclosure movement of the 18th and 19th centuries, or ridge and furrow surviving in the manicured areas of turf in Lydney golf course.

The Gloucestershire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is currently in draft form but has been a significant reference point in understanding the evolution of the district's landscapes and landscape character. The HLC is being carried out by Gloucestershire County Council and identifies a number of Historic Landscape Types which represent surviving fragments of past activity in the modern landscape.

Palaeolithic (c.500,000- 8,000 BC)

Palaeolithic culture flourished during the Pleistocene when glaciations were interspersed with long periods of more hospitable climate. Britain was still joined to the continent at this stage enabling populations to move south during periods of intense cold such as the last glaciation 25,000 - 12,000 years ago. Despite this it is known that forays were made into the area of present day Britain as humans followed herds of grazing animals and sought shelter in naturally formed caves and rock shelters.

The most notable evidence for Upper Palaeolithic activity in the area was discovered in the Mammoth Layer of deposits in 'King Arthur's Cave', located just beyond the Forest of Dean District boundary. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that Palaeolithic hunters extended their search for food into the district. Indeed, an Upper Palaeolithic blade, on display in the Dean Heritage Centre, was found at Drybrook and indicates that a Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer was active in the area.

Mesolithic (c.8,000 - 4,000 BC)

At the end of the last Ice Age around 8,500 BC the climate improved, resulting in a retreat of the glacial ice sheets that stretched over much of Wales to the west, and the permafrost that had covered the district. Sea level rise at this time resulted in the separation of Britain from the Continent, and at a more local level the widening of the Severn estuary. Gradually a thick cover of woodland established across the

landscape. At first this would have been dominated by birch although gradually the 'wildwood' of climax species developed. This would have been comprised from a complex mosaic dominated by oak and lime on the upland areas with alder bordering the Severn and other wet and riverine landscapes. Un-wooded areas would have been restricted to particularly steep slopes, rock outcrops or unstable landscapes such as river banks . The high occurrence of Mesolithic implements along river valleys may indicate that the less densely wooded river valleys were preferred as routes for travelling through the district . Mesolithic footprints found in the intertidal sediments downstream from the Forest of Dean at Uskmouth may be evidence of this.

It was in these dense woodlands that Mesolithic communities established seasonal hunting camps and exploited migrating herds of large herbivores. These communities, no longer cave based, moved through the hills and valleys between the Severn and the Wye in search of food and suitable places to shelter. These nomadic peoples represent the first significant agents for landscape change as it is believed that areas of the wildwood were burnt to create clearings to encourage and attract grazing animals such as red deer which they could hunt using bows and arrows and spears.

Due to the ephemeral nature of their temporary dwellings, little evidence for Mesolithic occupation survives in the archaeological record. Often the only clue to the presence of Mesolithic communities in the district has been in the form of flint and chert implements, used as tools and weapons, discovered in plough soil. Other tools of wood, bone and antler were also used. However, these only survive under certain waterlogged conditions, such as in peat layers, and as such are rare in the district. The finds of flint, whilst providing a clue as to the pattern of Mesolithic movement and settlement in the district, also represent a clear indication of well established trade and exchange networks. High quality and easily worked flint is found more than a hundred miles to the east of the Dean and so implements such as the early Mesolithic flint core found close to the village of Woolaston indicate that trade or bartering over great distances was taking place. It is likely that cores rather than finished tools were traded. A site on the lower slopes of May Hill supports this

hypothesis. Here, twenty seven imported cores and core fragments and around five hundred flints, indicate the presence of a camp or flint processing centre.

Neolithic (c.4,000 - 2,500 BC)

The Mesolithic - Neolithic transition saw the gradual change from hunting and gathering towards settled agrarian lifestyles, the shift being likely to represent the adoption of agricultural practices as a result of trade with the continent rather than colonisation of Britain by farming communities. In the archaeological record, the Neolithic transition is often identified by the occurrence of new artefact types such as querns, sickles, pottery and polished stone axes. Environmental remains also mirror the change in food procurement practices, large scale woodland clearance and the introduction of domesticated sheep, cattle and cereals being identified in the archaeological record.

As is the case for the Mesolithic, settlement sites are difficult to identify in the district, the ephemeral nature of the remains and the high occurrence of pasture, woodland and areas covered by thick riverine deposits disguising archaeological remains. However, the activity of Neolithic communities is more readily identified in the landscape as a result of their beliefs and burial traditions, with megalithic monuments representing a clear indication of Neolithic activity in the Forest of Dean. As yet, no chambered tombs or long barrows have been identified in the district although this may reflect the nature of modern land cover and land use rather than an absence of these burial practices in the area. Single monoliths are more numerous and are seen as representing the focus for trading and ceremonial activities. The 'Longstone', once located 2.5 km to the east of St. Briavels, was demolished in 1875/76 as it was regarded as a hindrance to cultivation. However, field walking of the site has revealed evidence for widespread Neolithic settlement of the area. It is likely that during the Neolithic, increasingly large areas of woodland were cleared for cultivation, and it is within these open landscapes that monuments such as the Staunton Longstone and the Broadstone, which is located close to the Severn, would have gained visual prominence, and possibly acted as markers alongside important trade routes.

Bronze Age (c.2,500 - 750 BC)

Metal working technology, along with new types of flint-tool and pottery design, was introduced from Europe at the start of this period. Cereal crops and stock rearing remained the mainstays of the economy, although changes in social organisation were reflected in the increased number of ceremonial and burial sites which many archaeologists now see in the context of ritual landscapes. Burial practices also evolved, the use of cremations and round barrows replacing the chambered tombs and long barrows of the Neolithic.

A fine example of a Bronze Age round barrow has been discovered on Tidenham Chase, where the cremated remains of a young lady and child were deposited beneath a two metre high cairn of stones. Alongside the cremations, a bronze dagger and other valuable objects were interred indicating that the woman was an individual of high status. This site lies in close proximity to two or three other round barrows and together the barrows may represent the local community's attempt to define the limits of their tribal lands, and use the presence of an ancestor to legitimise their claim on the surrounding landscape.

During the late Bronze Age the deterioration in the climate to colder, wetter conditions forced upland communities to relocate to the lowlands, placing habitable land under increasing pressure. Indeed, in the intertidal peat at Goldcliff and Chapel Tump, evidence of Bronze Age and Iron Age wooden houses have been discovered although it is not known if communities farming these areas were forced to do so after leaving their upland territories.

Iron Age (c.750 BC - AD 43)

Iron working was one of a series of new technologies introduced to Britain from the continent in the Iron Age period. Population growth led to competition for land and the development of a more territorial society, hillforts and defensive enclosures being clear manifestations of this in the landscape. Hillforts themselves are both defensible and symbolic, occupying both strategic and prominent locations for maximum effect. Hillforts of various sizes having been identified at Lydney, Lancaut, Symond's Yat, Penyard and Soudley and

illustrate widespread Iron Age occupation in the district. The largest and most identifiable hillfort within the district is the multivallate fort at Welshbury Hill which has views over the surrounding Severn Vale. Perhaps the most dramatic of the Iron Age hillforts is that at Symond's Yat. The triangular enclosure occupies an imposing position on a promontory at the northern gateway to the lower Wye valley, its defences formed from the sheer cliffs of the Wye and the vulnerable south side protected by a series of banks and ditches.

These hillforts are likely to represent tribal centres in which 'council' meetings were held, trade and production controlled, and supplies stored in above ground granaries and clay lined pits for use during times of unrest. The hillforts would have been at the centre of a widespread pattern of settlement with small, primarily agricultural, farmsteads and hamlets located throughout the landscape. A number of these would have been surrounded by a simple ditch and perhaps a stock proof fence although the remains of these are difficult to interpret in the landscape. Some pre-Roman settlements may be identified with place names ending in the suffix 'bury'. Although the name derives from the Saxon period, the suffix suggests the presence of earthworks that were still visible at the time of Saxon settlement. Archaeological investigation of many sites containing the 'bury' suffix have unearthed late Iron Age or early Roman remains, although many other sites await archaeological confirmation of their pre-Roman origins .

Little is known about the political or territorial organisation of the area until just prior to the Roman conquest, although it is believed that three tribes occupied lands bordering the district: the Dobunni, the Silures and the Decagni. The Dobunni occupied lands stretching from the upper Thames valley to the Severn, and the Silures occupied land west of the Wye in modern day Wales. The Decagni are thought to have occupied the northern borders of the district and land stretching as far as south Shropshire. However, it is not clear whether the rest of the district was occupied by a separate tribe, or was shared between those bordering it.

It is interesting to note that at the time of the Roman invasion, settlements in three of the hillforts linked to the Decagni were terminated, whereas elsewhere in the district investigation of

sites such as Symond's Yat and Lydney do not indicate Roman destruction. It is possible, therefore, that the southern tribe(s) co-operated to a greater degree with the invading Roman armies.

Romano British Period (AD 43 - AD 410)

There is no documentary or archaeological evidence at present for Roman military campaigns in the district. However, it is thought that prior to the advance through the district into Wales, the Roman commander Scapula spent time in the Dean securing the iron resources and the co-operation of miners, smelters, smiths and charcoal burners. These skills were needed to produce iron weaponry and the tools and other items such as nails that were needed in fort construction. It has been estimated that during the period of westward expansion, when numerous battles were taking place with the Silures, around 80 furnaces were in operation at ARICONIUM (a fort in south Herefordshire) and in the Forest of Dean at sites such as Ruardean, Drybrook, Great Howle, Huntley, Aston Ingham, Symond's Yat, and probably Coleford. It has been suggested that the majority of adult males in the Dean may have been engaged in some form of iron production at this time.

In the Forest of Dean, as was the case for much of England, the Roman invasion was followed by a rapid implementation of centralised administration based on towns and villas, supported by a network of forts. Roman army engineers also built substantial roads with metalled and cambered surfaces to expedite the movement of soldiers, food, equipment and materials. Naturally these roads were also exploited as trade and communication routes. In the Forest of Dean the road network appears to have grown around the main route between GLEVVM (Gloucester) and the fort at Stretton Grandison. Other known road routes have been identified parallel to the Severn, linking villa sites at Park Farm and The Chesters to VENTA (Caerwent). Despite their low survival rates, Roman roads can be traced in the landscape in the course of modern roads, footpaths and lanes and in the lines of hedges and field boundaries. Their alignments are important and tangible traces of ancient occupation and communication. It has been suggested that the Dean Road, a

portion of which is visible at Blackpool Bridge, may have been a Roman road linking Lydney with Ariconium, and may have followed an earlier prehistoric route. This interpretation of the road, however, is not universally accepted, and the existing metalling may only date to the seventeenth century.

The rivers bordering the district were also vital during the Roman period and were intensively used for the distribution of the district's resources such as iron ore. Lydney was the key port of the Dean. A wharf wall had been discovered adjacent to Park Farm villa during excavations and it has been suggested that the Severn ran close to the villa site prior to extensive alluvial deposits forming in the past 150 years that have shifted the course of the river southwards.

Similar to other areas of Britain, such as Salisbury Plain and parts of East Anglia, the Forest of Dean is thought to represent an Imperial estate on the basis that centralised authorities may have been controlling the local iron industry.

Prior to its decline, the Weald iron industry is thought to have been administered by the Roman Channel Fleet and indeed an inscription on the mosaic from the Temple of Nodens at Lydney suggests a similar naval connection with the Forest of Dean. If mining and iron production activities within the area were under centralised control, it is possible that the villa sites such as those discovered at Park Farm and The Chesters were inhabited by Imperial officials.

Centralised control of parts of the district may also have extended to monitoring the quarrying of Pennant Sandstone, especially to the east of Coleford. Here the grey-green stone, much sought after for floor and roof tiles and found in excavations of towns and villas many miles away, was being extracted.

In the years following the Roman invasion the iron industry may have almost exclusively supplied the needs of the army and it is likely that the Forest of Dean was somewhat marginal to the Roman world. From c.120 AD, however, the district may have entered a period of economic prosperity as a result of the huge demand for iron and the unprecedented requirement for building stone and possibly also coal, a fuel which may have been used for both domestic and industrial purposes. During

this period of prosperity it has been estimated that perhaps 30 tonnes of ore were mined per day, necessitating huge quantities of charcoal to smelt the ore and smith the iron. It is likely that during the period, much of the ore was extracted from shallow pits or 'scowles' which are indicators of early mining activity across the district. The boom period did not last, however, and possibly as a result of over production, the area entered a recession at the beginning of the 3rd century with many iron processing areas closing down and settlements such as Newent being abandoned by workers. A small resurgence in the industry has been identified at a number of sites during the early 3rd century AD. At Lydney, for example, mining was undertaken at this time close to the villa.

The extent of woodland cover during the Roman period in the district is likely to have risen and fallen in line with the growth and recession in the local iron industry. It has been estimated that at the time of the arrival of the Roman armies perhaps 80% of the central forest core was cloaked in either dense woodland cover or scrub and thicket. However, as a result of the activities of the charcoal burners who fuelled the iron working sites, the area of woodland is likely to have fallen dramatically. Woodland decline is thought to have been particularly dramatic during the 2nd century when the re-growth of coppiced trees would not have kept pace with the demand for fuel. This is also believed to have been the case for the woodlands north and north west of Newent which would have been used to fuel the furnaces in Newent and Dymock.

The Roman empire was in decline from the 4th century and after AD 400 the economy is likely to have been almost completely agricultural and rural. By the middle of the 5th century direct Roman rule had been replaced by local governance, the armies having left and much of the Roman infrastructure increasingly falling out of use.

For the majority of those living in the district, lifestyles would have reverted to something appearing very similar to that of their ancestors who lived in the area before the Roman conquest. Evidence for the collapse of the economy and Roman rule may be identified at the Chesters villa site which was abandoned and overtaken by squatters who stripped lead from the roof and re-smelted it on the site.

Saxon Period (AD 410 - AD 1066)

Shortly after the decline of Roman control in Britain, the Angles, Jutes and Saxons began to invade and settle in England. Following gradual incursions into British territories, the battle of Dyrham in 577 ensured the West Saxons had control over the townships of Bath, Cirencester and Gloucester, shortly after extending their control to cover the Cotswold and the Severn Vale. However, the southern part of the Forest of Dean is believed to have remained in Welsh or British control up until at least the early 8th century although the area was under Mercian control during the reign of King Offa in the latter half of the 8th century.

To act as a frontier between Mercia and the Welsh kingdoms, and to control trade passing across the border, Offa constructed an earthen bank and quarry ditch between 784 and 796: Offa's Dyke. The line of the dyke that runs between the cliffs at Sedbury to the Dee, survives in many stretches and is a major earthwork and landscape feature within the district.

Perhaps the other most notable landscape features to arise from the Saxon period were churches and monastic sites. At a time when the majority of buildings were simple thatched structures, these buildings would have gained a symbolic permanence in the landscape. Saxon churches and monasteries are known to have been established at numerous locations including Dymock, Newent, Westbury, Awre and St Briavels. Perhaps the two most dramatic sites are at Lancaut and the Isle of St Tecla, just off the Beachley peninsula, where the remains of early churches can still be seen.

During the later Saxon period it is thought that the central forest area was a domain specially reserved for hunting. In The White Book of Rhydderch and The Red Book of Hengest stories relating to the mythical King Arthur written around 1300 (almost two hundred years after the area was made a Royal Forest for Norman Kings) reference is made to hunting a stag with dogs, thus preserving the tradition of the Forest as a royal hunting ground. Place name evidence attests to this. The Old English word haga refers to an enclosure (probably for keeping deer before or after a hunt), and is frequent in areas

later declared as royal forests. In the Domesday Book the word Haia is taken to represent the Anglo-Saxon Haga and may be identified in place names of The Haie near Newnham, The Hayes and Hay End near Viney Hill and Hay Wood north of Gorsley .

In the absence of significant archaeological evidence, place names are also perhaps the most direct link to understanding the spread of Saxon settlement across the district.

Some time after 600 the Saxons began to establish their settlements and most are likely to have been very small comprising perhaps a homestead in a clearing on the edge of the forest, and maybe taking advantage of surviving Roman fields. These settlements are evident in place names ending with ham (a dwelling or homestead), 'leigh' or 'ley' (a clearing in woodland) and 'tun' or 'ton' (a farm or enclosed land). Elsewhere, names containing 'Hlaw' indicates a burial mound or hill and 'Stow', a sacred place. Almost all traces of these settlements has been removed from the landscape or covered by subsequent development. However, the 'headland', a bank that formed at the edge of village fields is taken as an indication that where present, many of the fields that contain ridge and furrow along the Severn could have originated in the Saxon period.

Little archaeological evidence for mining in the post Roman to Norman period has been found in the Forest of Dean. However, this does not necessarily mean that extraction ended with the demise of Roman rule. Extraction sites adjacent to manors, monasteries and villages of post Roman and Anglo Saxon date may indicate pre-Norman mining activity. For example, un-dated iron working sites have been identified at Woolaston, Lydney and English Bicknor, all places that existed in pre-Norman times.

Medieval Period (AD 1066 - AD 1500)

Following the defeat of Harold at Hastings in 1066 William the Conqueror either killed or dispossessed English earls and thanes and allocated confiscated lands to his followers. This was to ensure the security of this part of the kingdom, and was part of a wider policy of creating powerful lordships that could provide money and military support to defend against uprisings and invaders, and maintain order over the local population.

To achieve this, castles were built at a number of strategic locations. The early types were Motte and Bailey castles positioned to control important routes. Striking examples of Motte and Bailey castles may be found at English Bicknor and Castle Tump, Dymock, which was sited on a Saxon Moot Hill or meeting place. Where a more durable castle and potent symbol of authority was required, castles were rebuilt of stone as at St Briavels, which in the early Norman period also held a market and acted as the administrative centre of the Forest. Many castles were built in the west of the district as there was much opposition to Norman rule west of the Wye.

The Normans were also great church builders (and re-builders) and numerous churches in the district contain Norman architecture. Perhaps the most striking is the church at Kempley which was probably rebuilt between 1095 and 1100 and contains important frescoes in the Chancel.

In the initial years after the conquest, rebellions and uprisings were quickly quashed. For example, whilst hunting in the Forest of Dean, which William had made a Royal Forest, he was given news that the English had attacked York. In reply, William ordered the Vale of York to be ravaged. The Forest of Dean was one of twenty five Royal Forests in England recorded in the Domesday survey although no boundary was stated. All were subject to Forest Law which was used to govern all land within its boundaries including villages, farmland, waste and woodland. Forest Law protected the faunae (the King's beasts) of the woodlands such as red, roe and fallow deer and the wild boar, and the trees that gave them shelter. A complex system of officials (verderers) and courts protected the Forest, a system which has endured up to the modern day.

At its largest the Forest of Dean included all the land between the Severn and the Wye as far as Gloucester, Newent and Ross and is thought to have been the last refuge of the wild boar, which was hunted to extinction by about 1300 AD .

While holding court at nearby Gloucester in the winter of 1085, William established the concept of the Domesday Book, the particulars of which provide an invaluable glimpse of the district and its landscapes. A map produced by H.C Darby

illustrates that at the time of the Domesday survey, there was a remarkably even spread of population and settlement across the district, except in the forested area in the west. This is not to say that this area was peripheral in importance; dues paid to the King by Gloucester included large quantities of iron. It is therefore possible that the wealth of the city owed much to the iron-mines of the Dean. The absence of records for the central forest area can be explained by the fact that by establishing the area as a Royal Forest, it belonged to the Crown and as such was exempt from taxes, and therefore excluded from the survey.

The county of Gloucestershire was formed by the Saxons in around 1008, but much of the Forest of Dean did not become part of Gloucestershire until after the Domesday survey of 1086. It was also around this time that 'the Dene' became known as the Forest of Dean.

The Medieval period was one of great prosperity and wealth for the district. Settlements and manors arose in which the population of the district exercised their skills in diverse local trades including tanning, cooperage, brewing and baking. Streams were dammed to harness water power for fulling and corn mills. Fishing continued in the rivers and in the Forest, trees were felled, oak bark was stripped and wood was burned to produce charcoal. Rapid population growth led to increased demand on productive agricultural land. To this end, extensive areas of woodland were cleared and brought into agricultural use by a process known as assarting. The effect in many areas was the creation of small scale and intimate landscapes of farms linked by winding lanes and irregular fields between patches of surviving woodland. In a charter of 1158, Henry II makes reference to 100 acres of assart given to the monks of Flaxley by the Earl of Hereford. Elsewhere an extensive assart began at Clearwell following the stream as it flows into the Wye at Redbrook. A year later a church amongst the new fields was built, the place later being referred to as Newland.

In many places timber that miners had left standing made way for the plough as further assarting was permitted, as at Littledean in 1319 and Abenhall in 1347, although it is probable that by the middle of the 14th century ploughland had reached its maximum extent.

It was also around this time that the privileges of the Forest Miners arose, by Royal decree, giving them the right to mine anywhere in the forest without hindrance, possibly as a result of the importance of the industry and the gratitude of the crown for their services tunnelling under castle fortifications.

Early Modern Period (AD 1500 - 1750)

From the 16th century industrial activity in the district expanded rapidly. Throughout the later and post Medieval periods considerable mining activity was undertaken for coal and iron from the outcrops around the periphery of the Forest. Because bloomeries and forges were not dependent on water power, they were able to be set up almost everywhere, a pattern which endured into the early 17th century. The productivity of these mines was high, the forest being the premier iron producing district in the nation. In 1540, for example, a local bloomery furnace was producing 18 tons a year .

By 1600 a new method of iron making came to the Forest - the charcoal blast furnace. This required water wheels, driven by streams, to power the bellows which increased the temperature in the furnaces. As a result the main streams in the area were targeted as the location for the new charcoal iron blast furnaces . These were able to produce massive quantities of sow or pig iron. For example in 1649 at Lydbrook the furnace ran almost continuously for a year and produced 720 tons of cast iron.

During the 17th century the Forest of Dean had the largest concentration of furnaces and forges in Britain. This had a detrimental effect on the woodlands as the furnaces consumed ever increasing amounts of charcoal. Depredation of the woodlands was accentuated by the extensive grazing of sheep and by opposition to enclosure emanating from commoners, landowners and ironmasters. Pressure on the woodlands also arose from the shipbuilders at Lydney, using oak from the Forest of Dean, and tanneries at Newnham, Newland, Whitecliff, Lydney and Lydbrook which required vast quantities of oak bark.

During the Stuart period the boundary of the Forest of Dean was similar to today. Attempts by the crown to obtain profits

from this portion of the Royal domain caused numerous disturbances and in 1631 the Foresters rioted and threw down fencing erected by Sir Giles Mompesson at English Bicknor . In 1640 the crown sold all the mines and quarries in the Forest, along with the trees and underwood, to Sir John Wintour of Lydney for £106,000 and an annual rent of £1950. Wintour at once began enclosing large areas of land and proceeded to fell great numbers of trees for profit. At this time the Forest was occupied by large numbers of squatters attracted to the area for the sporadic work in the mines and by the opportunities for poaching. Squatters occupied ancient mine caves or small houses built from local materials.

During the Republic, Cromwell evicted 400 of the squatters and continued the felling of woodlands in the Forest of Dean, which according to Sir John Wintour may have totalled 40,000 trees. At the Restoration, when Wintour regained control of his land holdings, tree cover again fell drastically to the point where in 1667 it was reported that only a small percentage of the original trees sold to him remained standing. As a consequence in 1668 parliament forced Wintour to relinquish his rights and passed an act for the "increase and preservation of timber in the Forest of Dean". The modern administration of the Forest of Dean dates to this time, parliament dividing the area into six districts (or walks) with a keeper in charge of each and authorised by the crown to enclose as much as 11,000 acres at one time for the purposes of re-planting. Keepers were housed in lodges named after celebrities of the day. Chief of these was the King's Lodge which is known today as Speech House, built in 1676. In the specially created enclosures principally oaks were grown to supply the needs of the navy for ship building. Woodland stocks were further protected by the forced demolition of all the Iron works in the Forest in 1693 thus halting their voracious appetite for charcoal. By the turn of the 18th century the surveyor-general found the woods to be full of young trees.

Industrialisation and the Modern Period (AD1750 - 1945)

The protracted decline in iron mining resulted in coal mining becoming the predominant industry of the Forest during the 18th century, particularly after coke replaced charcoal in the furnaces of the iron works that were left in the settlements

fringing the woodlands. The mining was relatively small scale with Freeminers extracting coal from numerous small workings.

During this period the forest was again under threat. By the middle of the 18th century, the squatters had increased in number and reportedly lived by "rapine and theft" and felled trees covertly under cover of darkness, cleared the understorey and removed the mast. In 1788 it was stated that encroachments by squatters had nearly doubled over the previous forty years leading to there being over 2,000 cottagers occupying 589 cottages and 1,385 acres of land. Despite attempts to eject the squatters, the older encroachments were regularised by an act passed in 1838 by which process the squatter holdings were converted into freeholds. As the Foresters now owned their holdings, a new generation of neat, well built cottages grew up, many of which were constructed from the local grey Pennant or Old Red Sandstone which was extracted from innumerable small quarries. These distinct squatter settlements are visible throughout the district fringing the central Forest core.

After this period of unrest, industry within the Forest stabilised and the Wye and the Severn carried ever increasing levels of traffic as coal, ore, stone and timber were ferried to their destinations. It was also during this period that coal mining on an industrial scale began. Historically, mining was undertaken by the Freeminers in small pits. However, these were limited by bad ventilation, rising water and by the difficulty of raising coal to the surface. During the 18th century the vast quantities of coal in the area attracted 'foreign entrepreneurs'. In many instances, Freeminers sub-let their 'gales' to the 'foreigners' and in the early days water was pumped from the new deeper mines by water wheel engines, the coal itself being raised by a Windlass. However, the advent of the Cornish Bream Engine allowed mining on an even more industrial scale. The Freeminers lacked the capital needed to develop deep mines and so outsiders bought up mines and forced many of the Foresters to become waged labourers. This led to the amalgamation of many Freeminers gales into large workable collieries and brought coal kings such as the Crawshays and Protheroes to the Forest.

It was during the 19th century that the first acts were passed to consolidate the rights of Freeminers. The first piece of legislation was the Dean Forest (Gale Rent) Act 1819. This was followed in 1831 by a series of reports which resulted in the legislation of the Dean Forest (Mines) Act 1838, in which the Freeminers' rights were declared and established and a Commission appointed to ascertain the boundaries of the several existing gales of coal, iron and quarries. This act also laid down the conditions for becoming a Freeminer:

"A man must be born within the Hundred of St Briavels. He must be of the age of 21 years and upwards. He must have worked for a year and a day in a Coal or Iron Mine within the said Hundred".

Further Acts were passed in 1861 and 1871. Indeed it was the Dean Forest (Mines) Act 1904, facilitated by the working of the deep coal of some of the lower seams by the amalgamation and rearrangement of 41 gales to form the five major central mining areas, which resulted in a number of significant collieries.

The area's internal transport network was historically poor. This was remedied by the gradual provision of tramroads and road improvements. Subsequently additional industries were able to find a place in the district including tinplate works. Coal mining was able to expand further, with deeper mines such as Lightmoor and New Fancy being sunk to reach the more inaccessible seams of coal and ore.

The deep mines and tram roads placed new pressure on the woodlands which required space to operate and expand. However, the Napoleonic Wars once more highlighted the need for a reserve of timber for the Navy and so a scheme was devised in London to plant 100,000 acres of oak for the Navy, the largest proportion of this being in the Forest of Dean. Enclosures were laid out and protected by banks, ditches and fences with an Act passed in Parliament in 1808 to reinforce the existing powers to Enclose. Each acre was planted with 2,722 acorns, each acorn pit being planted at four foot intervals. Every 100th tree was a sweet chestnut. By 1840 there was nearly 20,000 acres of young oak. In the 1860s, however, iron and later steel replaced timber for ship building and so the timber was no longer required for its initial purpose.

The abundance of natural resources kept Dean's industry thriving, with the arrival of the railway in 1854, and expansion of tinplate works helping the local economy. Negative changes did arrive, however, as a result in a collapse in the iron industry at the end of the 19th century. Coal mining was again resuscitated by the sinking of deep shafts for six new collieries into the deepest and thickest coal seam in the period 1900 - 1920. Two world wars also helped bolster local industry, the Second World War bringing three new industries to the area, those of plywood, film equipment and fruit juices.

From early in the 19th century, the Commissioners of Woods administered the estate management of the Crown lands in the district, most of the industrial activity being carried out under their licences. However, in 1919 the management was taken over by the Forestry Commission, the First World War again highlighting the need for home grown timber. At this time the Forest of Dean was the second largest area of woodland in Britain.

In rural areas away from the Forest core life continued to evolve in line with changes in agricultural practices that were mirrored across the county. A significant development in the landscape was the introduction of planned villages in the Severn Vale. Two Chartist estates were established at Lowbands and Snigs End (Staunton) between 1846 and 1851 under the direction of Feargus O'Connor who, in 1845, launched the Chartist land plan in which he hoped to "change the whole face of society in twelve months…and make a paradise of England in less than five years". In each of the Chartist settlements, small holdings, model cottages (each with a privy and water supply), a school house, and roads and pathways were built to serve the needs of the settlers.

In 1938 the Forest of Dean was designated as a National Forest Park, the first in England, a designation that recognised the area's natural beauty and potential for outdoor leisure.

Recent History and Current Trends (1945 - Present)

Ore mining ended in 1945 and all of the Forest's collieries, which by this time had become uneconomic, were all abandoned by the end of 1965. A large cable manufactory also departed the Forest in this year. The consequential unemployment was countered by the efforts of the local Development Association, the expansion of existing factories and the growth of Rank Xerox at Mitcheldean.

The period also saw a Government sponsored experiment in Land Settlement. Schemes were set up all around the country and significantly in the area north of Newent. Small holdings were established for the unemployed although the success of this scheme was patchy and depended heavily on the quality of the land, the proximity to markets and experience of the small holders. The scheme was wound up during the 1980's with land holders forced to buy their lease or leave, resulting in a small number of thriving horticulture businesses, derelict holdings or diversification. In almost all cases the characteristic cottages have been demolished and re built or added to.

In the Forest of Dean during the 1950s the Forestry Commission continued to plant broadleaves where soils were suitable, and many other tree species were introduced. After 1950 the government insisted upon maximum returns from state forests, and coniferisation began. Conifers produced good timber in half the time of that of broadleaved trees but their planting on areas cleared of beech and oak changed the appearance of the forest dramatically. By 1971 local residents persuaded the Minister for Agriculture to halt the process and a balanced planting regime of 45% broadleaf and 55% conifer planting was approved for the Forest of Dean.

In recent times tourism and leisure have played an increasingly important part of the district's economy which is reflected in how certain areas are managed. The central Forest is managed by Forest Enterprise for three objectives: timber production, amenity and conservation, with picnic sites, walking routes and cycling trails provided to meet the requirements of tourists and local residents.

Significant areas of the district have been designated on the basis of their scenic beauty, as part of the much more extensive Malvern Hills AONB (designated in 1959) and Wye Valley AONB (Designated in 1971). AONB designation was based on the list of 52 conservation areas drawn up for the Hobhouse Committee in 1947. Interestingly the map for the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley conservation area originally included much of the south of the district and the central forest core.

3.1 Introduction

The landscapes of the Forest of Dean have inspired many authors, poets, artists and musicians. Many are well known and of national or international importance. Others are less well known outside the district and have their work displayed and published locally. In recent times the district's landscapes have provided a forum to develop local cultural initiatives. A number of these are also introduced in this section.

3.2 Writers and Poets

For hundreds of years writers and poets have visited and settled in the district and have been inspired by the landscape, its traditions and people. Others have been raised in the district and have returned to the landscape for inspiration time and again.

Wordsworth and Gilpin

The first poets known to have brought the district to the attention of the wider literary world were William Gilpin and William Wordsworth. During the 18th century the Wye Valley became famous for its natural beauty, and landmarks such as Symond's Yat were well known in artistic circles. The valley's rugged and inspiring landscape was initially promoted by William Gilpin in 1782 in his book *'Observations on the River Wye and Several Points in South Wales'*. Later the landscape was adopted by Wordsworth and other Romantic poets. The Wye and the surrounding landscape were seen as providing examples of the correct balance of feature, form, proportion, foreground, background and colour and as such, conformed with Gilpin's complex rules for his theories of the 'picturesque'. As the search for the picturesque became fashionable, a tour of the Wye became an integral part of the development of a person of taste. The extract presented below from a poem of 1798 by Wordsworth illustrates the Romantic way the landscape was viewed at this time;

"Once Again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and
Connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky".

(From 'Lines composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey'.)

William Wordsworth is identified as having a close relationship with the River Wye. His dual attitude to nature is seen as representing the loss of his parents at an early age, with the grand dark landscapes of his poetry associated with the admonishing father, and the homely images of the Wye Valley linked to his mother and sister. Indeed Wordsworth is noted as being more influenced by nature and landscapes of the Wye rather than the religious association of the ruins when visiting Tintern Abbey .

Catherine Drew

Catherine Drew, a contemporary of Wordsworth was born in 1794 in Cinderford and during her life she wrote many poems about the Forest Dean, a number of which were published in a limited edition book in 1841: '*A Collection of Poems on the Forest of Dean and its Neighbourhood*'. Unfortunately it is believed that only 100 of these books were printed.

The Dymock Poets

Perhaps the most celebrated group of writers to have been inspired by the district's landscapes are known as the Dymock Poets. In the years leading up to the First World War, the six Dymock poets (Lascelles Abercrombie, Wilfred Gibson, Rupert Brooke, John Drinkwater, Robert Frost and Edward Thomas) made their base at Dymock from where the group explored the countryside between May Hill and the Malverns and indulged their love of nature and the countryside. A number of walks have been established which allow visitors the opportunity to access some of the landscapes that the Dymock poets found to be inspirational.

Abercrombie, Gibson and Drinkwater published a quarterly magazine in 1914; however, only four issues were published. The First World War, and significantly the death of Rupert Brook, brought an end to this venture. However, their significance in the development of modern poetry is now recognised, and their time at Dymock seen as a golden idyll;
"..... I had a song, too, on my road,
But mine was in my eyes;
For Malvern Hills were with me all the way,

Singing loveliest visible melodies
Blue as a south-sea bay;
And ruddy as wine of France
Breadths of new-turn'd ploughland under them glowed.
'Twas my heart then must dance
To dwell in my delight;
No need to sing when all in song my sight
Moved over hills so musically made
And with such colour played. --
And only yesterday it was I saw
Veill'd in streamers of grey wavering smoke
My shapely Malvern Hills ....."

(Excerpt from the poem *'Ryton Firs'* by Lascelles Abercrombie).

Frederick William Harvey

Frederick William Harvey was born in Hartbury in 1888, the son of a successful horse breeder. Like the Dymock Poets Harvey was inspired by the local countryside. This is clearly expressed in his poem, *'My Village'.*

'…I love the tangled orchards blowing so bright
With clouds of apple blossom, and the red
Ripe fruit that hangs a-shining in the blue air
Like rubies hanging in the orchard's hair'.

After surviving the Somme offensive, Harvey was held in German Prisoner of War for two years. During this time memories of the landscapes of his homeland helped him endure his ordeal.

Leonard Clarke

Leonard Clarke, best known as a poet and broadcaster was raised in the Forest of Dean. His books, *'Green Wood', 'A Fool in the Forest'* and *'Grateful Caliban'* give an autobiographical account of his life in the Forest. In particular Clarke writes with warmth about the people and places of the Forest, giving a clear insight into the social history of the Forest of Dean. Clarke reminisces about his favourite wood, Abbot's Wood, south of Cinderford in *'Green Wood'*;

'In spring, the glades around me were purple with bluebell light. The foxgloves followed, the tall soldiers of the forest, solitary bees buzzing in and out of their silky sheaths, with other tiny insect noises chiming unendingly around me'.

Winifred Foley

Winifred Foley, born in 1914 in the small village of Brierley, near Cinderford, and the daughter of a Forest of Dean miner, is another life long resident of the Forest to write an autobiographical account of her life. Her celebrated '*Forest Trilogy*' tells the story of a period of great social and landscape change in the Forest. In the publication *'A Child in the Forest'* Foley describes the landscape as; *"Ten by twenty miles of secluded, hilly country; ancient woods of oak and fern; and among them small coal mines, small market towns, villages and farms. We are content to be a race apart, made up mostly of families who had lived in the Forest for generations".*

Dennis Potter

The critically acclaimed playwright Dennis Potter was born in the Forest of Dean in Coleford, the eldest son of a Forest coal miner. The landscapes of the Forest of Dean inspired much of Potter's work and indeed he once referred to the Forest as "this heart shaped land". Two of his books, *'The Glittering Coffin'* and *'The Changing Forest: Life in the Forest of Dean Today'*, provide a detailed account of Forest life, the unique Forest dialect and Forest traditions. In 'The Changing Forest' Potter's deep appreciation is made clear; *"I know of few more fascinating areas, and, entering the Forest of Dean by whichever route you choose, you can soon sense that you are in a self absorbed community where the interrelation of landscape, work and the different generations demands more than the usual flickering attention".*

3.3 Artists and Sculptors

Joseph Mallard William Turner

Given the nature of the dramatic and varied landscapes of the Forest of Dean it is of great surprise that there is no wealth of work, or artist of national importance that can be traced back to the district. As a Romantic artist, and contemporary of Wordsworth, Joseph Mallard William Turner is known to have painted and sketched extensively at Tintern Abbey. However, the dramatic landscape setting of the monument appears to have been secondary in importance to the abbey ruins. Only one finished watercolour (dating to c.1828 and titled Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire) provides a view of the dramatic wooded gorge and the River Wye.

Ian Hamilton Finlay

In more recent times the contemporary artist Ian Hamilton Finlay produced a lithograph of the central forest entitled *'A Proposal for the Forest of Dean'* in 1988 in the *'Garden Proposals'.*

Lightshift

In recent years the district has seen artists and craftspeople grow in confidence and produce work of great merit. In 2001, for example, a collaboration of artists, foresters and students created a light based performance event in the Forest of Dean. 'Lightshift' incorporated installations of light, sound, projection and pyrotechnics into the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail, which itself is an important forum for local artists.

3.4 Musicians

Herbert Howells

The eastern part of the district falls within the influence of the Three Choirs Festival which began in 1724. Indeed the Three Choirs Way, a long distance footpath which links the cities of Gloucester, Hereford and Worcester, incorporates a number of the district's varied landscapes. The most notable composers associated with the festival and the district are Herbert Howells of Lydney who was a friend of Vaughan Williams, and Edward Elgar who was born at Broadheath in Worcestershire, and whose mother was from the Forest of Dean.

Herbert Howells had a strong affection for his home county and amongst his most fluent works is the string quartet *'In Gloucestershire',* the first movement of which describes the River Severn and the fourth movement which is suggestive of the welsh borders of Dean .

Edward Elgar

Edward Elgar, England's first major composer since Purcell, was also deeply inspired by the landscapes of neighbouring Worcestershire and it is not impossible that the landscapes of the Forest of Dean also inspired his music.

3.5 What Makes The Forest of Dean Special?

The By Definition team has collected the views of stakeholders and community groups across the Forest of Dean District in order to contribute to the 'Forest of Dean Landscape and Heritage Study'. One to one interviews were undertaken with1256 individuals and the attendance of the By Definition team at over 50 gatherings across the district in order to answer the overall question, 'What Makes the Forest of Dean Special?'

In addition to questionnaires, the By Definition Project adopted a multi media approach to data collection in order to canvass a broad spectrum of views from those living and working within the district. This included a parish photography project (Forest 41) where local communities were asked to record aspects of Forest life or special features within it, and a video project aimed at young people. A number of photographs provided to the By Definition project have been included within this report.

Included below is a brief summary of the data collected as a part of the project. Further details are available from the By Definition team. Example responses are contained in Appendix 6.

'When you talk about the Forest of Dean, what do you mean?'

Less than a fifth of the people gave the district as their answer. There was a significant difference in the sense of belonging between residents in the North of the District and those who live in the centre or south.

'What's special about the Forest of Dean?'

Before asking this question, By Definition clarified that the term was being applied to the whole district and so wished respondents to include anything special within the District boundary. The results illustrate that those questioned regard strong sense of place and people as being special. 84% of those surveyed gave place (general, features, specific) or people as special. Only 10% said just 'place', 5% said just 'people'.

This shows that the answer to 'what's special about the Forest of Dean' is not a simple one, but a combination of ingredients. Sense of 'place' and 'people' were again mentioned a lot. However, 'past, heritage and rights'; 'presence' (e.g. peacefulness, tranquillity, safe); 'process' (e.g. walking, cycling, fishing); and 'access and freedom' were also highlighted.

A more specific question relating to particular places, events, ways of life and seasons was also asked. Of uppermost importance to those interviewed was again 'place' with 59% of people giving this as their reply. Events figured highly (51%) with the traditional Carnival and Fetes sharing support with more contemporary events such as festivals of music and transport and fayres. Sites and attractions, ways of life and the seasons were all also identified as important as things which make the Forest of Dean special.

4.1 Introduction

The Forest of Dean District is well known for its natural beauty and amenity value, but perhaps less so for the great diversity of landscapes it possesses. The combination of woodland, pasture, arable land, hills, ridge lines, scarp slopes, vales, valleys and riverine landscapes all contribute to a dramatically varied landscape.

Parts of the district such as the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills are protected as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their landscapes are well known nationally and evoke strong images. Elsewhere landscapes and landscape features are recognised and designated for their nature conservation and wildlife value, or for their historic or archaeological importance. However, beyond these instantly recognisable and protected areas, are landscapes of strong and coherent character. Examples include the distinctive rolling vale landscapes bordering the Leadon and the Severn, the low hills containing numerous glasshouses and orchards north of Newent, and the soft and shifting landscapes of the Severn Sands.

This assessment provides a detailed review of the district's landscape and recognises that all landscapes matter, not just those that are designated 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 district which draws attention to the contrasts in landscape character that we so often take for granted.

4.2 Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

The Landscape Character Assessment records the specific character of fifteen landscape character types and forty two landscape character areas. These are listed in table 4.1 and their distribution across the district is shown on Figure 6. A more detailed map at 1:50,000, scale is provided in the back pocket of this report.

Following this introduction, each of the fifteen generic landscape types is described. The physical and human influences which have shaped the character of the landscape are noted and the unique landscape character areas found in each landscape character type are described.

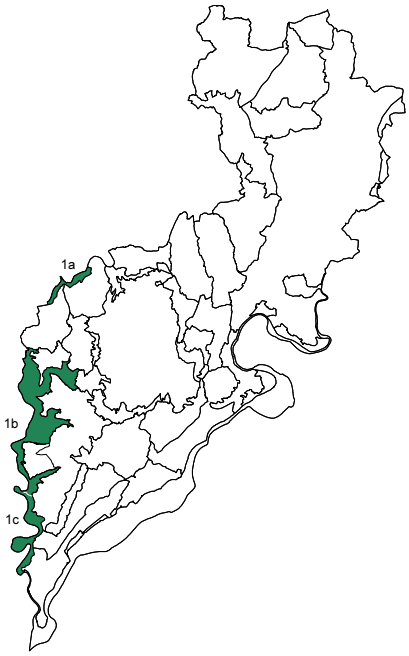
Table 4.1 Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Character Types		Landscape Character Areas
1.	Wooded Valleys	• 1a. The Wye Valley - Common Grove to The Slaughter • 1b. The Wye Valley - Redbrook to Brockweir • 1c. The Wye Valley - Brockweir to Tutshill
2.	Limestone Hills	• 2a. The Bicknor Hills • 2b. Highmeadow Woods and Staunton Hills • 2c. Coleford and Christchurch Hills • 2d. Newland Hills • 2e. Ruardean Hills
3.	Limestone Plateau	• 3a. Tidenham Chase • 3b. St Briavels Common
4.	Wooded Scarp and Lower Scarp Slopes	• 4a. Lydney Park • 4b. Netherend Farmed Slopes • 4c. Woolaston Scarp
5.	Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Margin	• 5a. Forest Core • 5b. Lydbrook and Ruardean Woodside • 5c. Cinderford and Ruspidge • 5d. Soudley Brook • 5e. Littledean Ridges and Valleys • 5f. Ellwood • 5g. Bream and Yorkley Fringe
6.	Unwooded Vale	• 6a. Severn Vale - Stroat and Sedbury • 6b. The Severn Vale • 6c. The Leadon Vale
7.	Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh	• 7a. Pillhouse Drained Farmland • 7b. Aylburton Newgrounds • 7c. Awre Drained Farmland • 7d. Westbury on Severn Drained Farmland • 7e. Upper and Lower Dumball
8.	Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops	• 8a. The Severn Sands
9.	Undulating Farmland	• 9a. Bledisloe Hundred
10.	Ridges and Valleys	• 10a. Allaston Ridge • 10b. Littledean Ridge • 10c. Edge Hill • 10d. Breakheart Hill
11.	Wooded Hills	• 11a. May Hill and Outliers • 11b. The South Malvern Foothills
12.	Floodplain Farmland	• 12a. Walmore Common
13.	Vale Hillocks	• 13a. Corse Wood Hill • 13b. Woolridge
14.	Low Hills and Orchards	• 14a. Bromsberrow Heath • 14b. Botloe's Green
15.	Undulating Hill Farmland	• 15a. Kilcot and Gorsley Farmed Slopes

1 WOODED VALLEYS

Character Areas

1a The Wye Valley - Common Grove to The Slaughter
1b The Wye Valley - Redbrook to Brockweir
1c The Wye Valley - Brockweir to Tutshill



Key Characteristics

- Steep sided river valleys and dramatic bare rock faces.
- Densely wooded valley sides along main river channel and its tributaries.
- Narrow floodplain pastures on the valley floor.
- Linear settlements bordering valley floor pastures, often at ancient bridging points and small clusters of historic squatter settlement on valley sides surrounded by intricate pattern of small fields, narrow lanes and small deciduous woodlands.
- Variations in building materials and hard rock outcrops.
- Long history as an important route way and boundary feature.
- Ancient meanders preserved as the course of tributary streams.
- Woodlands, including many ancient semi natural woodlands, and riverine landscapes of high ecological and scenic value.
- Long panoramic views from high vantage points.

Landscape Character

The deeply incised and heavily wooded valley of the Wye and its tributaries define the western boundary of the district. Dramatic valley profiles, sheer rock faces and scree slopes have been formed from the erosive action of fast flowing rivers and streams flowing through the Carboniferous Limestone as at Yat Rocks, Devil's Pulpit and Wintours Leap. However, on Old Red and Tintern Sandstones, softer valley profiles have been formed creating dramatic and contrasting landscape elements. At the base of the valleys, rivers and streams meander through narrow alluvial floodplains dominated by pasture. These areas are often visually linked to the surrounding woodlands by hedges and isolated trees. Many of the tributaries of the Wye, such as Valley Brook, have produced equally dramatic relief features and as a result share many of the Wye's distinctive characteristics.

Woodland cover dominates and in addition to its ecological value it is visually important providing a great diversity of texture and colour. Heavily wooded areas, which in places extend from the valley floor to the skyline, contrast strongly with the lush pasture of flat riverside meadows and the dramatic rock faces. Unfortunately, in many areas, the dramatic effect of the rock faces is lost or diminished due to overgrown and overhanging vegetation.

Areas of deciduous woodland and the cliff faces are often perceived as 'wild' and untouched, long and panoramic views from vantage points emphasising the remoteness and inaccessibility of many parts of this landscape. This is in stark contrast to the areas of managed pasture and the patchwork of fields surrounding the valley floor which clearly display a high degree of human interaction with the landscape. A clear transition is often visible from dense woodland, through rough pasture on the woodland edge, to the improved pastures which border rivers and streams.

Roads tend to follow the base of the valley above the upper level of winter flooding and are the natural focus of settlements. Due to the nature of landform, settlements running parallel to the river channel tend to be linear and tightly clustered. Many stretches of valley contain no roads, and are relatively inaccessible and devoid of settlement.

A number of redundant and active quarries are located throughout the landscape. The active quarries are large commercial ventures chiefly mining limestone for aggregates, although the Pennant Sandstone is also quarried.

Physical Influences

In the early Pleistocene (approximately two million years ago) when the sea was higher than at present, the Wye meandered across an ancient plain. As the sea level dropped the Wye became more vigorous and eroded downwards rapidly to create a deep valley. The erosion of the valley was so swift that the original meanders became entrenched in the course of the valley. Because sea level did not fall at a continuous rate, periods arose when the level of the river remained stable. During these periods large quantities of sand and gravel were deposited, remnants of which can be found in many locations along the Wye for example at the Lancaut Peninsula.

Within the district the valley extends across various rock types. The nature of the underlying geology and subsequent periods of erosion has defined distinct character areas along the course of the valley. As the river passes through limestone geology, the channel occupies wide meanders and is flanked by steep wooded slopes and bare rock faces. By contrast as it travels through Devonian Sandstones, the river has no wide meanders and is flanked by gentler slopes which have often been partially cleared of woodland for agriculture. Meanders did, however, once exist. These are preserved in the valleys of tributary streams.

The flat floored valleys of these ancient meanders became a series of swamps when the river was cut off and later, when the land was drained, it provided good pasture for dairy cows. These gentler valley landscapes tend to be more heavily settled and often contain communication routes leading into the main channel of the Wye.

The majority of the Wye Valley is covered by woodland and indeed ecologists regard the Wye as containing some of the most important woodland areas in Britain. The tributaries are less well wooded. However, the combined effects of dense hedgerows, small copses and views to surrounding woodlands can often give the impression of a well wooded landscape. The woodlands are of particular nature conservation interest with a great number being designated as SSSI. Many woodlands contain 60 species of native trees and

shrubs representing 70% of the British total. Certain woodlands are also noted for their high proportion of small leaved lime. On the steeper slopes many are ancient semi-natural woodlands and contain a remarkable diversity of fauna and flora including Peregrine, Goshawk and Raven. The commonest woodland species are Beech, Small Leaved Lime, Pedunculate Oak, Sessile Oak, Ash and Hazel. Many areas show signs of previous coppice although this management practice increasingly fell out of use during the 20th century. The ground flora of the woodlands is also rich, the diversity of species present being a direct result of past coppicing activity. Significant areas of the valley woodlands have been felled and replanted with conifers fragmenting the spread of deciduous woodland. Elsewhere, on steeper slopes, small unimproved areas and semi improved grassland survive. These areas, along with pockets of scrub, ancient hedgerows, veteran trees and woodland edge form a complex and valuable mosaic of habitats and are important roosting and feeding sites for bats.

The river acts as a wildlife corridor and a migration route and represents one of the cleanest and most unaltered lowland rivers in England. The lower reaches of the river are designated as SSSI and cSAC. Saltmarshes and estuarine habitats at the junction with the Severn Estuary are designated as SSSI, pSAC, Ramsar and SPA. The river here forms the gateway for migratory fish including five protected species. In the upper and middle reaches of the Wye the river channel is dominated by large submerged plants such as Spiked Milfoil and beds of water crowfoot. The Otter is widespread and Water Vole is also found along the middle section of the Wye.

Human Influences

The natural vegetation cover of the valley in the period from the retreat of the ice sheets to the appearance of the first farmers is likely to have been mixed deciduous forest with a range of species including Oak, Beech, Elm, Lime, Birch and Hazel. Alder is likely to have been dominant on the wet valley floor. Remains of Palaeolithic man's activity have been found in nearby King Arthur's Cave and it is likely that the Wye was an important route-way and hunting ground throughout the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods. Neolithic man began to clear the 'wildwood' from around 4000 BC to make way for farmland. However, the steep gradients in the valley are likely to have precluded extensive settlement and the valley may have escaped widespread clearance. The alluvium deposits in the base of the valleys are likely to have started to be formed in Neolithic period. Farmers clearing trees in the

wider landscape would have caused hillsides to become unstable with soil being washed into the valleys. The process has continued ever since and has provided valuable pasture land, nutrient levels being replenished by seasonal flooding.

During the Iron Age large scale man-made features began to appear such as the impressive hillforts at Symond's Yat and Spital Meend, Lancaut, which are thought to have been occupied from about 600BC up until the Roman conquest in 43AD. These forts, and later structures such as Offa's Dyke, reflect the strategic importance of the gorge, and its long established function as a boundary between two realms. The boundary of the Steep Wooded Valley landscape type is often drawn along the course of the Dyke wherever it occupies the very top of the valley slopes.

During the Medieval period extensive management of the woodlands was taking place. The most common technique was coppice with standards and was employed on all but the steepest slopes and inaccessible cliffs. Standard trees were used as pit props for local mines and ship building, the coppiced wood almost exclusively reserved for charcoal production to supply local iron furnaces. Remains of charcoal hearth structures in Lady Wood and place names such as The Coppice near Lydbrook and Furnace Grove and Forge Wood near Lower Redbrook are testimony to this period of woodland management. Elsewhere lime kilns are evidence of the areas industrial past.

Fast tributary streams allowed early industries to take advantage of water power, the former copper and tin plate works at Redbrook being good examples. The river, which is navigable up to Hereford, was an important commercial waterway and during the 18th and 19th centuries the Severn trows, specially designed wooded vessels, would have often been seen ferrying cargo, such as Forest coal to Ross and Hereford, and passengers up and down the river. It is interesting to note that at this time of intense industrial activity, Romantic artists and poets such as Gilpin, Wordsworth and Turner were visiting the area to gain inspiration from the dramatic and wild landscapes of the valley.

In the 20th century, with the decline of river traffic and industry, the river became a much more peaceful landscape. The decline in industry made coppicing unviable and resulted in vast acres of woodland to become neglected and allowed to mature to continuous stands of high forest.

In a continuation of the Romantic movement's love of the area, the popularity of the valley as a place of beauty continued into the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1971 the Wye Valley was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in recognition of the high ecological value of many areas within the valley, numerous sites have been designated and protected for their wildlife and ecological value.

The flat valley floor and gentle valley slopes are often intensively improved with medium to large fields of improved pasture and arable land enclosed by low, well maintained hedges.

A lack of management, however, has resulted in a breakdown of the field boundary structure, many hedges having been replaced with post and wire fences. On the upper slopes thick mature hedges divide up fields of rougher pasture and merge with surrounding woodland.

Buildings and Settlement

Small riverside settlements, such as Brockweir, Redbrook, Newland and Clearwell are spread thinly along the Wye Valley and its tributaries. These small settlements often lie close to riverside meadows and are located along communication routes that run along the base of the valleys. These villages tend to be linear clusters and contain houses of various ages and architectural styles. Brockweir is of some significance as it contains many whitewashed Tudor houses hugging the banks of the Wye. Elsewhere settlement is largely in loose clusters of houses, each surrounded by a small plot of land, surrounded by stone walls or hedges and reached by narrow winding lanes. These represent consolidated squatter settlements in woodland clearings on valley sides such as at Lower Meend and Mork. Many houses in these settlements are characteristic squatter houses of the Victorian period. Elsewhere along the valleys, settlement and communication routes are absent, creating peaceful rural landscapes.

Buildings and boundary walls are important indicators of quarrying activity and the distribution of building materials indicates the distribution of rock types. The use of local materials and the careful siting of buildings along contours ensure that the majority of settlements integrate well with the surrounding landscape.

A characteristic feature of settlements is the close relationship they have with areas of woodland. Many settlements lack a clearly defined edge, with 'fingers' of woodland appearing to encroach into them. This greatly enhances their visual appeal and successfully integrates built form with the surrounding landscape. However, in some valley settlements housing built from incongruous materials and sited across the gradient of the valley slopes interrupts the traditional settlement pattern and visual balance.

Where present, settlements make an important contribution to landscape character, providing a scale and focal point in many views.

Character Areas

1a The Wye Valley - Common Grove to The Slaughter

At Symond's Yat the river has created a steep sided gorge by cutting through a promontory of Lower Dolomite (a pinkish grey form of limestone) which has vertical joints which tend to open up and create craggy cliffs high above the river. In the past crags have detached and fallen into the river creating rapids and islands. The Longstone, a prominent landscape feature in the area, is formed from a detached block of Lower Dolomite which still clings to the valley sides. The steep valleys sides are cloaked in thick woodland, which opens only where rock faces and scree slopes preclude tree growth. However, a small area of gentler landform (formed by the lower slopes of the Rosemary Topping syncline) has been cleared for grazing. The most prominent landscape feature within the character area is Symond's Yat. The Iron Age Hillfort is positioned on a high promontory almost entirely surrounded by sheer cliffs and affords wide views over Huntsham Hill into Wales. The cliffs play host to breeding pairs of Peregrine Falcons.

1b The Wye Valley - Redbrook to Brockweir

Between Redbrook and Brockwier the river flows through Lower Devonian rocks. The steep valley slopes are formed from sandstone with Quartz conglomerate outcropping high on the valley sides appearing as crags. Fallen blocks of the Quartz may often be found in the river below. Woodlands cloak the valley slopes although the gentler relief has allowed more extensive clearance for agriculture and settlement than elsewhere along the valley. Pasture fields occupy the flat alluvial floodplain bordering the river and can often be seen extending up the valley sides, becoming rough pasture towards the woodland edge. The A466, which runs along the base of the valley on both the English and Welsh sides, is a prominent feature of the valley, its course often indicated by the small villages that lie alongside it.

Perhaps the most interesting features of this stretch of the Wye is the abandoned channels and meanders of the Wye that are now occupied by the tributary streams of the Mork Brook and the Valley Brook. The Wye, when flowing along these channels, deposited silts which have formed productive soils, and have been cleared and farmed and settled for some time. These valleys also provide the ideal route for roads and footpaths travelling between the neighbouring plateau and the Wye. In areas of surviving woodland on the gentle valley slopes, squatter settlements dating to the late 18th century developed. The distinctive pattern of hedged fields and dispersed settlement amidst woodland remain visible at Lower Meend and Mork.

1c The Wye Valley - Brockweir to Tutshill

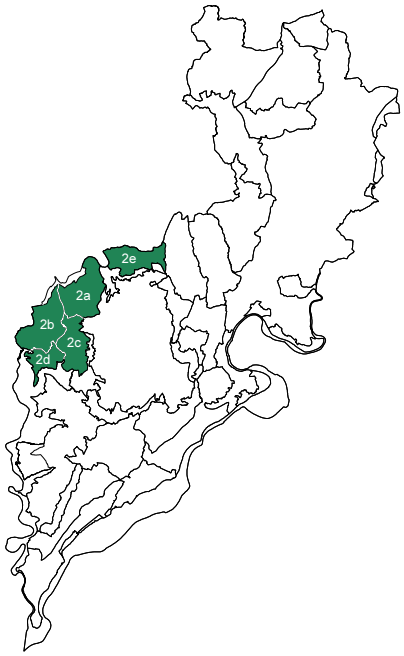
South of Brockweir the Wye re-enters limestone geology, the river and its narrow floodplain again is closely bordered by a steep sided gorge cloaked in dense woodland. As is the case around Symond's Yat, distinctive scarps of Carboniferous Limestone rise above the woodlands bordering the river. Examples may be viewed at The Devils Pulpit and at Wintour's Leap. This stretch of the valley has been relatively heavily quarried which has left large exposed cliff faces of white limestone in numerous locations.

Wide meanders are again a characteristic feature, the most prominent of which is that of Lancaut, occupied by St James Church and protected by Spital Meed Fort. The gentle relief of the meanders are characterised by a patchwork of fields defined by hedgerows. These openings in the dense woodland offer long distance views towards woodlands and cliffs up and downstream. The Wye south of Brockweir is affected by the tide and as such tidal mud-flats are relatively extensive along this stretch of the river.

2 LIMESTONE HILLS

Character Areas

2a Bicknor Hills
2b High Meadow Woods and Staunton
2c Coleford and Christchurch
2d Newland Hills
2e Ruardean Hills



Key Characteristics

- Rolling landscape of interlocking convex hills and dry valleys formed from Carboniferous Limestone and Coal Measures.
- Generally poor soils and hilly landform well suited to pasture.
- Fields defined by well maintained hedgerows.
- Hedgerow trees, copses on steeper slopes and large areas of mixed and coniferous woodland.
- Small villages are well integrated with their surroundings.
- Large towns.
- Scowles and other remnants of mining activity.
- Large areas of woodland on the Carboniferous Coal Measures.

Landscape Character

Carboniferous Limestone, Mudstones and Coal Measures have created a soft landscape of rolling landform with complex interlocking hills and intricate dry valleys. The landscape is similar in many respects to the Limestone Plateau. However, it is distinguished by a more complex landform and a sense of elevation, with extensive views of the Forest of Dean to the east, and to the Welsh hills across the Wye Valley also possible from open hillsides.

Generally poor soils and often relatively steep landform has resulted in a predominantly pastoral landscape. A well established network of hedgerows emphasises the hilly relief and creates a patchwork of moderately sized fields which appear verdant when contrasted to the isolated fields of arable land which are often located on gentler slopes. Further visual contrast is provided by the small areas of deciduous woodland that tend to be located on steeper slopes, along many of the dry river valleys and surrounding many of the farms and villages, and active and disused quarries.

The hedgerows, large woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees combine to give the impression of a well wooded landscape. This is enhanced by long distance views to woodlands fringing the Forest of Dean and along the Wye Valley and the large areas of woodland surrounding Staunton. This creates the sense of a relatively intimate landscape which is of contrast to the exposed character of the open hilltops. The winding, narrow roads and lanes are often bounded by tall, thick hedges and occasionally stone walls. These obscure views into the landscape, and further enhance the sense of enclosure and intimacy in certain areas.

Small, clustered, historic settlements such as English Bicknor, Newland and Staunton appear to be well integrated with their surroundings. However, larger towns such as Christchurch and Coleford exert a distinct urbanising influence over large areas of the landscape. Elsewhere, settlement is confined to isolated farms which occupy sheltered locations below the sky line.

Physical Influences

The Limestone Hills represent the remnants of the plain through which the Wye flowed during the early Pleistocene. A general plateau level of approximately 220 m can be identified. However, this has been moulded by countless streams over the past two million years to form a complex series of convex interlocking hills and dry valleys. Drainage patterns reflect the influence the River Wye has had in this area, with the small number of brooks draining westwards and northwards into it.

The underlying geology is predominantly of the Carboniferous period, with the Limestone Series marking the northern and western extent of the Coal Measures that underlie much of the Wooded Syncline landscape character type to the east. In the far west of the landscape type a small area of Devonian Sandstone may be identified between Staunton and the district boundary.

The nature of the underlying geology may often be identified in the landscape by observing features such as quarries and locating other indicators such as place names, redundant mines and rock outcrops. For example, in the area around Staunton, at the border between Carboniferous and Devonian rocks, an outcrop of Quartz Conglomerate emerges as a prominent escarpment amidst woodland and provides a distinct contrast to the gentle form of the rolling hills located on Carboniferous Limestone and Coal Measures. Evidence of these two contrasting Carboniferous rock types may also be identified, with quarries at Whitecliffe and north of Cherry Orchard Farm indicating the presence of limestone; place names such as Coalpit Hill; and redundant shafts suggesting the close proximity of Coal Measures to the surface.

Another prominent geological feature in the landscape is the Crease Limestone band. This is historically important as the source of iron ore and runs north-west between Whitecliffe and Redding's Lodge. The band is virtually invisible in the landscape and may only be identified by observing the occurrence of disused iron pits and place names containing 'Scowles', the local term used to describe ancient shallow workings for iron ore.

The relatively poor soils deriving from the underlying geology and hilly landform limit intensive agriculture. Improved and semi-improved pasture for sheep predominates although large areas of woodland (both coniferous and mixed plantations) have also been

established on poorer soils. A number of woodlands are ancient semi natural woodlands, and support scowles and entrances to underground mines which are important to greater and lesser horseshoe bats. Elsewhere, where better soils and gentler landform permit, arable fields provide visual diversity. Field boundaries are largely defined by hedgerows, many of which are ancient and of nature conservation interest.

Human Influences

Evidence of prehistoric activity is largely absent. However, Staunton, a Saxon name taken to mean 'Place of the Stones' has many stones of ancient origin in its vicinity. For example, the Buck Stone, Suck Stone and Long Stone are all regarded as having significance to prehistoric communities and suggest that large tracts of this landscape in the vicinity of Staunton may have been cleared of woodland during the Neolithic period.

Contrasting strongly with the quiet pastoral landscapes surrounding English Bicknor and Staunton are landscapes which contain traces of the areas industrial heritage.

Limestone, iron ore and coal all outcrop in the area and have been exploited since before the Roman invasion. Remnants of past mining activity are often difficult to discern in the landscape. However, place names are often a good indication of historic activities. For example, ancient 'scowles' in Perrygrove indicate the early origins of iron ore mining in the vicinity of the Crease Limestone band. Indeed, the term 'scowles' is widely used in the west of the district. However, only one settlement is actually named Scowles. This is a small linear settlement running almost parallel to the line of the Crease Limestone to the west of Coleford.

Following the decline of Forest industries during the past 50 years, new industries and factories were encouraged to relocate in the area. A distinct factory belt is located to the south east of Coleford. To the south west lies the largest factory complex in the district; SmithKline Beecham. A further large factory site is located adjacent to the Wye opposite Welsh Bicknor.

In recent times, large limestone quarries have been established at Whitecliffe and to the east of Cherry Orchard Farm. Despite occupying vast areas, these are barely visible from roads and footpaths due to the nature of the local landform and intervening vegetation.

Elsewhere, evidence of the landscape's visual and recreational appeal, and proximity to the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley is confirmed by the number of camping and caravanning sites located throughout the area. Further recreational pressure is evident to the south of Coleford and Christchurch where an eighteen hole golf course and hotel have been established. Here, manicured landscapes contrast with neighbouring pastoral fields.

Buildings and Settlement

The most significant settlement in the Limestone Hills is Coleford which was first recorded as 'Colevorde' in 1275. It grew rapidly from a small market town into a thriving industrial centre in line with expansion of the local mining and industry in the late 17th century and was once the home of two of the area's leading 19th century industrial pioneers, James Teague and David Mushet. Unfortunately Mushet's stone built coke fired blast furnace at Whitecliffe Ironworks is all that remains of this period in the landscape. The centre of the town has changed little since the 18th and 19th centuries and is a Conservation Area containing many listed buildings. However, post war housing and industrial development has created an unattractive fringe to the town, particularly to the east and south. The pinkish brown sandstone (of an Old Red Sandstone type) is conspicuous in many of the older buildings although orangey bricks, manufactured locally, are also evident as building materials.

English Bicknor, Newland and Staunton are the largest true villages in the landscape. These are small clusters of stone built houses and have ancient origins. English Bicknor for example was once the site of a Motte and Bailey Castle. The remains of this can still be seen in the churchyard of the early 12th century church, the spire of which is a prominent landscape feature. The churchyard itself is oval and is thought to date to the Saxon period.

Elsewhere in the landscape settlement is located in isolated farms. These tend to be built from the local limestone, close to roads and occupy sheltered positions below the skyline. Farm houses and their associated outbuildings also gain shelter from small clumps of trees and shelterbelts.

Character Areas

2a English Bicknor

Erosion of the Carboniferous Limestone Series rocks has created a soft landscape of rolling pastoral hills, often divided by dry valleys. Surface streams are rare, with water emerging from springs tending to drop below ground through sink holes. An example of this is a stream that emerges from a spring at Joyford Mill which quickly disappears below the surface and continues as an underground river, to emerge 3 km to the north near Symond's Yat. One principal exception exists to the east of English Bicknor where a stream, originating from a powerful spring, runs northwards in a deeply incised convex valley towards the Wye.

The landscape is divided up into a neat patchwork of improved pastures by well maintained hedges which are often so dense along roadsides that views into neighbouring fields are almost completely obscured. Woodland is generally confined to steeper hillsides. Elsewhere small copses and shelter belts, often close to farms, give the impression of a well wooded landscape. This illusion is further enhanced by hedgerow trees and the close proximity of woodland along the Wye Valley and heavily forested areas to the east and west. The village of English Bicknor is located in the north of the character area. The spire of the church of St Mary's is visible from many viewpoints in the locality.

2b High Meadow Woods and Staunton

The landscape is dominated by extensive coniferous plantations and mixed woodlands. These cloak the landscape and obscure the underlying Carboniferous Coal Measures and subtle hilly landform. However, pasture fields surrounding the village of Staunton allow the nature of the underlying landform and rock strata to be appreciated. Here, fields extend up the hillsides and are fringed by surrounding woodland which creates a natural amphitheatre. The convex hillsides, a characteristic of Carboniferous Limestone geology, are visible and their distinctive form is emphasised by the well maintained network of hedges. The presence of limestone in the vicinity of Staunton is further confirmed by the distinct absence of surface streams and the quarries south of Staunton.

Contrasting geological features are also evident in the landscape. To the west of the village, the Buckstone, a crag on the escarpment

of the Quartze Conglomerate, is a popular tourist attraction and has been linked to Druid ceremonies. Further to the west lies a small area of the Devonian Sandstones which extend beyond the Wye into Monmouthshire.

Long distance views within the landscape are significantly restricted by dense woodland and landform. However, in the clearing around Staunton, middle distance views towards All Saints Church are possible and from the Buckstone, panoramic views over the Forest of Dean, Highmeadow Woods and the Black Mountains are also possible.

Roads are generally absent in the landscape, the majority of road traffic being concentrated on the busy A4136 between Mitcheldean and Monmouth which runs through Staunton. Elsewhere logging roads, which are largely closed to the public, criss cross the woodlands.

2c Coleford and Christchurch

This landscape character area encompasses the landscape of gentle hills surrounding Christchurch and Coleford. As is typical of the type, convex hills are cloaked by fields of improved pasture defined by a well maintained network of hedges. However, in close proximity to the settlements, the influence of the urban fringe becomes more apparent; areas of neglected pasture and the manicured landscapes of golf courses contrast strongly with the patchwork of pasture fields which are a characteristic feature of the landscape type.

The underlying Carboniferous Coal Measures have had a strong influence on the industrial development of the area and the growth of these settlements during the 19th and 20th centuries. In more recent times large housing estates, and industrial areas and factories sited on the edge of towns, and as ribbon developments along roadsides exert a strong urbanising influence on the landscape. Built elements, often of incongruous materials and design, are frequently visible on the skyline, or obscure views from roads into the landscape beyond.

2d Newland Hills

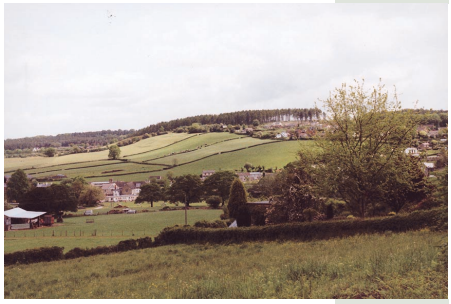
This rural area is similar to the English Bicknor landscape character area, the underlying limestone geology having been moulded into a series of convex hills covered in pasture fields enclosed by neat hedgerows with woodlands clinging to steeper hill slopes. Newland is located in the south of the character area, and similar to English Bicknor, the church spire is visible from many elevated viewpoints and provides a useful orientation point in the landscape. Interestingly the landscape forms the core of the abandoned channel of the Wye - Astridge Barn and Hazelwell Wood being fine examples of erosion platforms, with their flat nature as a result of a capping of thin Lower Carboniferous Limestone series.

A feature of the landscape is the Great Oak of Newland, a massive veteran oak tree which may be the largest in England.

The eastern extent of the character area is defined by the linear settlement of Scowles which runs parallel to the Crease Limestone which was mined for iron ore throughout history. To the south of Scowles is a large active limestone quarry. This is adjacent to Whitecliffe where the remains of the first coke-fuelled furnaces built in Dean may be found.

2e Ruardean Hills

The hills surrounding Ruardean are higher than elsewhere and from exposed hill tops, the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons are visible in wide panoramic views. The village of Ruardean (its name derived from 'Rwirdin', meaning fortified hill) is located on thin shales and sandstones of the Trenchard Group, below a line of hills where the Pennant Sandstones crop out. At the base of these is the Coleford High Delf coal seam, which historically was mined by residents of the village. To the north of the village the Lower Dolomite has been shaped into convex hills which are characteristic of the Limestone Hills landscape type. Small areas of woodland cling to steeper slopes and hillsides and combine with hedgerows to give the sense of a well wooded landscape. Springs mark the junction of Coal Measures and the Lower Dolomite, and similar to the landscape around English Bicknor, streams quickly disappear into underground river systems. A notable exception is the Lodgegrove Brook which occupies a deeply incised wooded valley running east west into the Wye.

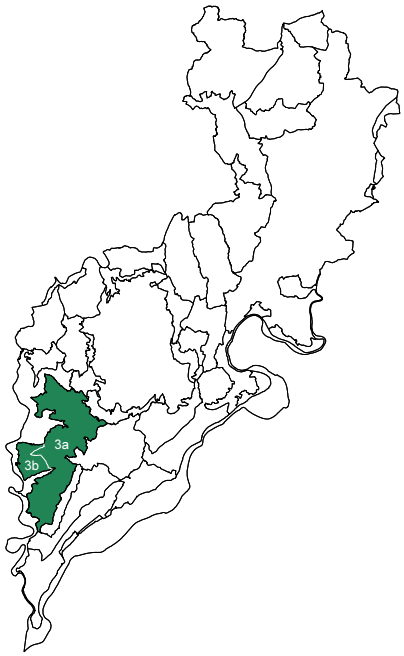


The village of Ruardean is characterised by traditional stone and slate roofed buildings. The spire of St John the Baptist Church is a prominent landscape feature and is visible from many areas within the landscape. Another, equally prominent landmark is the quarry on the hillside above Drybrook.

3 LIMESTONE PLATEAU

Character Areas

3a Tidenham Chase
3b St Briavels Common



Key Characteristics

- Gently undulating plateau with expansive views.
- Strong field pattern of large or moderately sized arable and pasture fields with distinctive stone walls and ancient hedgerows.
- Dispersed isolated farms which are located at the end of lanes and often associated with modern barn complexes and villages sited at the edge of the plateau.
- Active and redundant Limestone quarries located across the landscape.
- Tree belts and copses are widespread.
- A potentially rich archaeological record.
- Colourful arable fields.
- Small enclosures, winding lanes, small woodlands and 'squatter' cottages on St Briavels Common.
- Heathland landscapes at Poor's Allotment and semi-natural, unimproved grasslands associated with settlements on former commons.

Landscape Character

The high Limestone Plateau is generally characterised by a level or gently rolling landform although they may include slightly steeper relief fringing the neighbouring river valley systems that drain it. The plateau lies predominantly above 150 m AOD and rises to up to approximately 260 m AOD on some isolated hills, although the table-like relief has a consistent elevation of between 180 and 220m AOD. Land cover is predominantly improved pasture and arable land with woodland generally being absent although some significant plantations such as Oakhill Wood do exist in the south on Carboniferous Sandstone and Oolitic Limestone geology. Elsewhere small copses have been planted alongside farm houses. Where present, woodlands provide a sense of enclosure and create a backdrop to wide panoramas.

Large areas of the plateaux have a sense of elevation and openness, with expansive views across vast areas of the countryside. Despite intensive farming taking place, the open landscape creates a sense of remoteness and space which is enhanced by the enormity and dominance of sky in these large scale landscapes. Colours tend to be verdant, although areas of arable cultivation provide contrasting expanses of colour, texture and scale as they often contain woodlands.

A more intimate landscape exists on the fringe of the plateau where former commons were colonised by squatters.

Physical Influences

The dominant influence on the landscape is the underlying Carboniferous Limestone Series which have created an extensive plateau. Similar to the Limestone Hills to the north, the landscape represents the remnants of an extensive plain through which the Wye cut its present course. However, the erosive action of streams and rivers has had a less pronounced influence on the landform and as such, the landscape is conspicuous because of its flat-topped table-like relief with a relatively consistent elevation of around 200 m AOD.

The weathering of the limestone is mainly by solution and in many instances the rainfall runs into the joints (through sink holes) dissolving out the rock below and forming underground rivers. In this way the limestone plateau is well preserved in the form of a wide, extensive table land. In some areas surface soils have been eroded away to reveal large areas of limestone geology. Other features of karst scenery are also conspicuous. In the Wintour's Leap and Woodcroft areas acid waters from the soils have percolated into the joints to widen them to create clints and grikes. Limestone pavement is unique to this area in the district and may represent a small part of a much larger area which is now hidden by woodland. Solution hollows created on the clints become eroded over time into strange shapes which often become detached from the bedrock and may be found in rock debris in the sub soil. These strange shaped rocks are often used as ornaments on stone walls in the Chepstow area.

Thin soils have developed on the limestone and are better suited to grassland than trees and as such the landscape is less well wooded than on the brownstones to the west of the Wye at Trelleck. However, moderately sized coniferous plantations such as Oakhill Wood and The Park have been established on outcrops of Oolitic Limestone and Carboniferous Sandstone. Fields tend to be relatively large and support productive improved pasture for cattle and arable fields. In some areas field amalgamation and degradation of the hedgerows and use of post and wire fencing is apparent. In areas where unimproved and semi-improved grassland are managed with traditional non intensive methods, species rich grasslands have survived. Elsewhere important grassland habitats include acidic grassland and heath which occur on Tidenham Chase.

Human Influences

Evidence exists to suggest that the landscape has been extensively cleared of trees since the Neolithic. At Close Turf Farm, 2.5 km to the east of St. Briavels, there once stood a Neolithic monolith -The 'Longstone'. This was demolished in the late 19th century; however, field walking of the site has revealed evidence for widespread Neolithic settlement of plateau. Further to the south on Tidenham Chase, a number of Bronze Age round barrows indicate that the surrounding landscape was cleared of forest and was being farmed by a community keen to assert their tribal claim on it.

The existing pattern of hedged and occasionally walled fields creates a patchwork of fields extending across the plateau. The shapes of fields indicate the type of enclosure taking place: irregular enclosures are suggestive of piecemeal enclosure with more geometric patterns indicating systematic parliamentary division of the landscape, usually of the 18th and 19th century. This process established the non-nucleated pattern of individual farmsteads which forms the predominant farming unit on the plateau. By contrast, a unique landscape of small enclosures has survived at St Briavels Common. This landscape was created by the piecemeal enclosure of plateau commons and is therefore distinct from, but intimately linked to, the wider plateau landscape.

Large quarries as at Clearwell and Stowe Green are features of the limestone plateau. However these are largely hidden from view by the screening effect of hedgerows and as a consequence of them being sunk into the plateau. The clearest indication of quarries in the vicinity of these sites is the appearance of stone walls rather than hedgerows defining field boundaries.

Buildings and Settlement

The only true villages on the plateau are St Briavels and Hewlesfield, both of which are noted for their architectural and historic interest. St Briavels is located on the edge of the plateau above the Wye valley and is the site of a 12th century castle which was at one time the administrative centre for the Royal Hunting Forest. It has a particularly attractive compact core with traditional whitewashed stone buildings with slate roofs. Unfortunately however, the outskirts of the village are characterised by inappropriate modern residential development which detracts from the local vernacular. A second castle above the village of Clearwell

is located further to the north. Similar to St Briavels this again occupies a position on the edge of the plateau.

Isolated farms are often located at the end of tracks off the main arterial routes through the area, and as such appear relatively isolated amidst fields when viewed from a distance. Many farms are located beneath the crest of hills and are surrounded by small copses for shelter, further contributing to their apparent seclusion. Farm houses are generally constructed of stone and tend to be the oldest buildings in the area. However, large modern metal barns are becoming more numerous and often obscure views to vernacular farm buildings.

St Briavels Common is characterised by consolidated squatter settlement. Traditional cottages dating to the conversion of squatter settlements to freeholds, has preserved a pattern of neat stone built cottages within a patchwork of smallholdings linked by winding lanes.

Character Areas

3a Tidenham Chase

The rural landscapes of Tidenham Chase extend northwards to Clearwell and possess a strong and coherent identity. A patchwork of large arable and pasture fields cloak the gently rolling limestone landform. The majority of fields are defined by a network of well maintained hedgerows, many of which are of great antiquity. However where hedgerows have become degraded post and wire fences are also conspicuous. In the vicinity of the large quarry to the south of Clearwell, limestone walls demarcate field boundaries. These are distinctive in that they are dry stone walls with a 'cock and hen cope' a type of wall most usually associated with the Cotswolds. Views from exposed areas of the landscape are extensive and the landscape invokes a distinct sense of elevation and exposure. However, in the vicinity of large conifer plantations such as The Park and Oakhill Wood, long distance views are significantly restricted, the woodlands forming a dense dark-green backdrop. Many of the coniferous plantations were sited on former heath land. However, heathland and acid grassland survives in limited areas close to Tidenham Chase. The heathlands are of great nature conservation value and represent one of the most important areas of heathland in the district and possibly in the county. In recent years for example, Nightjar populations have

been re-established in the area. Settlement is largely confined to isolated farm houses which are evenly distributed across the landscape. These are often sheltered by small copses and coniferous shelterbelts and made conspicuous by the presence of large modern barns and outbuildings.

3b St Briavels Common

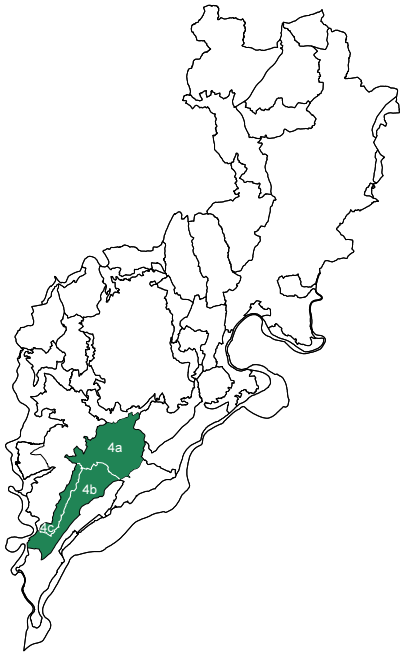
In contrast to the more open and intensively farmed areas of the Limestone Plateau, the St Briavels Common character area represents a unique landscape of intimate pastures and dispersed 'squatter' settlements linked by narrow winding lanes on gently sloping landform.

The gentle slopes above the Wye gorge are formed primarily from Devonian Sandstone and as such represent a transitional landscape between the Wooded Valley and the Plateau. The area was once wastes of the Lordship of St Briavels and probably would have been covered in dense deciduous woodland and scrub. However, large scale assarting/ squatter settlement towards the end the 18th century established a patchwork of small enclosures and isolated cottages interspersed with small deciduous woodlands. These woodlands along with the dense network of overgrown hedgerows have created a well wooded and intimate landscape with a strong and coherent identity. Indeed ancient hedgerows around Hewlesfield Common represent one of the most important hedgerow landscapes in the district and possibly in the county. The small fields support market gardening, sheep pastures and horse grazing although many holdings are part time enterprises. A number of small holdings contain unimproved and semi improved species rich grassland as a result of traditional non-intensive management. Winding between the enclosures, a network of narrow lanes and footpaths provide access to the numerous small cottages, many of which are distinct traditional style 'squatter cottages'.

4 WOODED SCARP AND LOWER SCARP SLOPES

Character Areas

4a Lydney Park
4b Netherend Farmed slopes
4c Woolaston Scarp



Key Characteristics

- Steep, exposed and elevated scarp slope cloaked in semi - natural broadleaved woodland and coniferous plantations.
- Generally poor soils and steep sloping relief of the scarp slopes well suited to pasture.
- Distinct sense of elevation and dramatic panoramic views over the Severn Vale to the Cotswold Escarpment.
- Gentler landform on lower slopes below the spring line.
- Distinctive settlement patterns.
- Roads and tracks, surrounded by dense vegetation, run parallel to streams and link the plateau and the lowlands across the scarp slope.
- Historic designed parkland at Lydney Park is a significant landscape feature.

Landscape Character

The Wooded Scarp and Lower Scarp Slopes form a major landscape feature and represent a transitional landscape between the open and exposed limestone plateau and the more intimate lowland landscapes bordering the Severn. The distinctive scarp and gentler, more intimate lower scarp slopes are part of a single geological feature; the Beachley-Clanna pericline

The upper scarp forms an abrupt face of Quartz Conglomerate rising from the vale below although its appearance is softened by woodland and hedged pastures that cloak it. The slopes are typically steep, irregular and indented by numerous streams and gullies draining the plateau above. These are often bordered by deciduous woodland and rough sheep pastures. The scarp is outward looking and elevated and from it dramatic long distance views across the vale are possible.

The lower scarp slopes are generally formed from the Devonian Brownstones. These have been eroded by numerous streams draining the plateau to form a series of ridges and valleys running in the general direction of the slope. These landscapes are better suited to agriculture and have been divided up into relatively large fields. Improved pasture dominates although where conditions are suitable, large arable fields are also conspicuous. The lower slopes are generally softer and more intimate than the scarp slopes due to hedgerows and landform limiting long distance views. Despite this however, relatively long distance views are available from the top of some undulations. These become less dramatic and extensive towards the base of the slopes.

A spring line marks the boundary between the upper and lower scarp slopes. This has been the focus of settlement, with farm houses, often surrounded by a patchwork of small fields, frequently being sited close to a spring or well at the base of the scarp. Elsewhere settlement tends to be in the form of linear villages. These border roads, many of which may be ancient, linking the plateau to the lowland vale. These settlements may be compact or dispersed, the latter reflecting settlement of former common land.

Physical Influences

The scarp and lower scarp slopes represent the exposed section of a structural unit known as the Beachley-Clanna pericline. This was once a dome of Devonian rocks formed during the Hercynian oregeny which has subsequently been dramatically eroded to form a 'basin'. Within the basin formation the core is exposed with the oldest rocks at the centre and the scarp slope of younger rocks forming the rim. The unit dips southwards resulting in only half of the feature being visible, with the southern portion of the basin extending under the bed of the Severn.

The upper scarp slopes (the outer edge of the rim of the basin) are formed from the inclined strata of Quartz Conglomerate. These outcrop in a narrow, steep band that is sloping at an angle of around 15 degrees between the 180 m and 90 m contour. However, to the north of Ayleburton, the outcrop dips eastwards at 15 degrees resulting in a much wider outcrop. The lower slopes of the scarp and the lower scarp slopes, which were once the core of the eroded dome, are formed from the Brownstone Series of the Lower Devonian. These rocks have been sculpted by streams running off the plateau above to form an undulating landscape which shelves southwards to the Severn. These lower slopes tend to have a softer more rounded landform and are located between 90 and 30 m AOD.

Land cover on the steeper scarp slopes consists predominantly of semi improved grassland and broadleaved woodland although areas of unimproved grassland and rough, scrubby pasture are also visible on the steeper slopes. Small coniferous plantations are also present and are particularly sizeable approaching Lydney. Hedgerows, often of great antiquity and containing hedgerow oaks, define the majority of field boundaries although some hedge loss and the use of post and wire fences is conspicuous on some lower slopes where arable fields and improved pasture are dominant. When viewed from the lowlands, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands combine to give the impression of a well wooded landscape. This emphasises the dominance of the steep scarp slope and presents it as a dark backdrop to farmland and riverine landscapes in the foreground.

The basin is formed from sandstone, a very permeable rock that will hold great quantities of water in pores between tiny grains of sand.

This has meant that a large number of springs have formed along the foot of the major scarp. These springs often form powerful streams which drain into the Severn. The erosive action of these streams and others draining the plateau above has cut deeply incised valleys or ravines. These are often bordered by small linear woodlands and rough pasture.

Human Influences

The dramatic scarp landscape displays evidence of settlement and exploitation since prehistoric times. It is thought that areas on the plateau were relatively heavily settled from the Neolithic and indeed Mesolithic hunters are known to have been present here and in the vale below. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that many of the hollow ways, preserved in the course of modern roads and footpaths climbing up the scarp, represent remnants of prehistoric routes between the riverine landscapes adjacent to the Severn and the plateau and upland landscapes beyond.

During the Iron Age a promontory hillfort was established at Camp Hill, Lydney. This appears to have been sited strategically to command an important and defensible vantage point overlooking the Severn. The site also contains evidence of Bronze Age metal working and may therefore have been an important site from the earliest period of metallurgy in the district.

Evidence of the Roman period is well distributed across the landscape. Bordering the Roman road to Caerwent, the course of which is now the A48 (T), villas were established at Park Farm and Boughspring. However, perhaps the most significant Roman site is the temple complex at Lydney Park. The temple was dedicated to the native god Nodens and was associated with richly a furnished guest house and bath house above the Park Farm villa which is located in the vale below. It is interesting that Nodens is the god of hunting and is therefore possibly linked to the Forest of Dean to the north which, during the Roman period, is thought to have been preserved as hunting grounds for Imperial officials.

A number of the deeply incised valleys were the focus of industrial activity, the fast flowing streams powering various mills. For example, the Cone Brook which flows through a steep sided ravine cut into the wooded scarp slopes once provided power for a series of mills along its course. The former grain mill at Rodmore is still visible in the landscape. Other industries were located on the scarp

slopes. A number of local derelict quarries attest to mining for sandstone for building stone. Their location can often be inferred by the occurrence of stone walls rather than hedges dividing up the small hillside pastures. Scowles in Lydney Park indicate a long history of iron and coal mining in the area and the outcropping of the Crease Limestone Band in the vicinity of Lydney. At Tidenham the large Dayhouse quarry was sunk into Lower Dolomite to supply hard road aggregate for motorway construction.

Buildings and Settlement

Two distinct settlement patterns are evident. The steeper scarp slopes are largely unsettled although isolated farms may be found nestled in sheltered positions in the hillside adjacent to roads climbing onto the plateau. These are generally of stone construction and whitewashed making them visible from the surrounding lowlands. These small farm houses are generally associated with a patchwork of small fields amidst deciduous woodland. A number of modern houses are also located on the scarp slopes. These are sited to take advantage of dramatic views across the Severn Vale and are often of incongruous materials.

On the lower scarp slopes, gentler landform has allowed more extensive settlement. Compact linear villages such as Netherend and looser clusters of houses and farms as at Woolaston Common and Ayleburton Common border roads and are often sited above streams draining the scarp. These settlements are generally surrounded by mixed farmland and some fields are given over to 'horsiculture', the landscape appearing to be more intensively managed than farmland and pastures on the scarp slopes. Place name evidence suggests that a number of these settlements became established as a result of piecemeal enclosure of common land associated with much older settlements such as Woolaston and Ayleburton that are situated fringing the vale.

Character Areas

4a Lydney Park

A wide outcrop of Quartz Conglomerate forms the scarp face between Ayleburton Common and Kear's Grove. Beyond the scarp to the east, Carboniferous Limestone's, Coal Measures and significantly the Crease Limestone are present and as such form landscapes and landscape features reminiscent of the Forest of Dean.

The scarp has been extensively planted with coniferous trees and as such can be seen from some distance, forming a significant wooded backdrop to the lower scarp slopes and the neighbouring vale. The area is sparsely settled although isolated farms and loose clusters of houses on former common land are dotted throughout the landscape. These are predominantly surrounded by improved pasture land although areas of arable farmland are conspicuous on gentler landform.

The designed landscape at Lydney exerts a strong influence on local landscape character. The park contains secluded wooded valleys with lakes, parkland, veteran parkland trees, a profusion of rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias, acers and numerous fine hardwood tree specimens within woodlands. Many parkland species have colonised the local woodlands and are visible in the landscape some distance from the core of the gardens. The occurrence of stone walls can also be used to indicate the close proximity of the Lydney Estate. The park occupies the dramatically undulating landscapes to the east of the Ayleburton scarp where streams draining the adjacent uplands have created a series of ridges and valleys. A number of these streams have been dammed to create a series of pools and lakes. These are largely inaccessible and surrounded by dense woodlands.

The area is of considerable archaeological importance reflecting past land use and settlement history and has been the subject of some detailed archaeological research. Evidence of iron mining and iron working dates back as far as the Bronze Age. Indeed the most conspicuous evidence for ancient mining is preserved as a series of scowles at Devil's Chapel. The Camp Hill fort and temple complex are important archaeological monuments.

4b Netherend Farmed Slopes

The distinctive landscape of gentle slopes bordering the steep wooded scarp stretch from Ayleburton Common in the east to Tidenham in the west and fringe the softer undulating vale landscapes bordering the Severn. Streams draining the plateau and emerging from springs have dissected the underlying geology to form a series of undulating ridges and valleys running at parallel to the direction of the general slope. These valleys tend to be steep sided and as such contain either rough pasture or linear stretches of broadleaved woodland. The ridges tend to be cloaked in a patchwork of large fields enclosed by well managed hedgerows. These fields are generally managed as improved pasture. However, arable fields are conspicuous in the vicinity of Woolaston where calcareous soils and gentle landform provide productive farmland.

Linear villages and settlement clusters are most numerous. These tend to be sited alongside roads running at or close to the crest of ridgelines between the vale and the plateau. Netherend is the largest settlement and is located above the Cone Brook. Further to the north an area of smaller fields and dispersed farms at Woolaston Common indicates sporadic settlement of former common land. Elsewhere isolated farm houses are conspicuous throughout the landscape. Despite these often being sheltered by small deciduous copses they are particularly visible from the scarp slopes to the north due to them being whitewashed. The shiny roofs of barns are also highly visible when viewed from neighbouring uplands.

Wide panoramic views to the south are possible from the top of the ridges and higher undulations although in the valleys woodland and landform combine to obscure views and create more intimate landscapes.

4c Woolaston Scarp

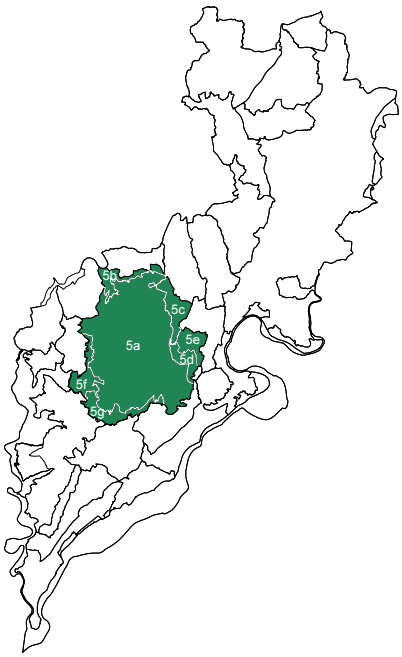
The steep scarp slopes are a dramatic landscape feature and visible from the Cotswolds, forming a dark wooded backdrop to the river and vale farmland in the foreground. The steep scarp is formed from quartz conglomerate and is generally cloaked in deciduous woodland although small hedged clearings have been established for sheep grazing close to whitewashed farm cottages. When viewed from a distance, hedgerows and hedgerow trees combine with deciduous woodlands to create the illusion of an almost continuously wooded scarp.

Deeply incised roads and tracks climb the scarp and may be ancient tracks linking the Severn Vale to the plateau. Trees and hedgerows either side of these routes often create a tunnel like effect. These dark, enclosed areas open quickly to reveal wide panoramas over the vale to the south or the vast areas of the limestone plateau to the north. Recent piecemeal housing development is conspicuous on some scarp slopes, residences sited to exploit dramatic views. These homes are often of incongruous materials and occupy prominent locations, which contrast to older farm houses which tend to be sited in more sheltered locations.

5 WOODED SYCLINE AND SETTLED FOREST MARGIN

Character Areas

5a Forest Core
5b Lydbrook and Ruardean Woodside
5c Cinderford and Ruspidge
5d Soudley Brook
5e Littledean Ridges and Valleys
5f Ellwood
5g Bream and Yorkley



Key Characteristics

- Distinctive syncline structure occupied by extensive areas of coniferous plantation and deciduous woodland.
- Dense vegetation cover.
- Type, age and management regime of different woodlands varies.
- Linear ponds and lakes along streams bordered by verdant lawns and riparian habitats.
- Long history of mining, industrial activity and forest management.
- Almost continuous belt of development encircling the central forest.

Landscape Character

Extensive areas of coniferous plantations and deciduous woodlands occupy a syncline or basin feature which itself has been moulded by rivers and streams into numerous valleys. The grain of the landscape is generally north-south although this is rarely evident in the landscape due to dense woodland obscuring relief features.

The area has a rich and varied history. The area was managed as a Royal hunting forest from the Norman period the biggest influence on the landscape has been that of industry and mining. Mining has its origins in prehistory although from the Medieval period this had an ever greater impact on the landscape. Remnants of forest industries are often hard to discern in the landscape as scrub encroachment and colonisation by woodland species quickly cover any remains. Despite this 'scowles' and spoil tips and footings for furnaces can often be seen on road sides.

Today, the forest is an almost continuous blanket across the syncline and carefully managed for its commercial timber, scenic qualities and amenity value. However, this was not always the case. In the past four hundred years the Government was forced to initiate re planting and to protect the woodlands on two separate occasions due to extensive felling, the action of squatters and poor management.

The landscape is small scale and intimate, the dense woodland significantly limiting long distance views. Clearings in the woodlands are an important respite. Of particular visual importance are the grassy lawns bordering streams and linear ponds and clearings which are open to the sky. The viewing platform built on spoil from the New Fancy colliery provides an excellent vantage point from which to survey the extent of woodland within the syncline.

There is a clear line of settlements around the edge of the forest. These are often sprawling and linear and result from development over several centuries. Buildings often reflect the area’s industrial heritage and display the range of building materials available locally, further emphasising the sporadic nature of settlement.

Physical Influences

In simplified terms the area comprises a downfold or syncline of the youngest rocks of the Coal Measures. This formed during the Hercynian oregeny which occurred 280 million years ago. The Coal Measures are mainly Pennant Sandstones interspersed with coal seams and shales. The folded basin of Coal Measures is overlaid on Carboniferous Limestone. These emerge from beneath the Coal Measures as a rim surrounding the central plateau. In the east, roughly stretching from Danby Bridge to Mitcheldean, this is a narrow outcrop of Carboniferous Limestone. To the north and west, the syncline is bordered by a much wider outcrop.

Erosion by rivers and streams has also shaped the forest landscape. The syncline is asymmetrical which allows water to collect in the central basin in a multitude of streams and brooks such as Cinderford Brook and Soudley Brook. Indeed throughout the syncline are numerous deep valleys (Slades) such as Wimberry Slade and the Greathough Valley. These were formed by streams draining the slopes of the rim and generally have a north-south orientation. The majority of streams join the main central drainage basin of the Cannop Brook which emerges from the forested syncline at Park Hill and in turn joins the Lyd before entering the Severn. The majority of these watercourses are virtually invisible amidst the woodlands although a number feed linear lakes and ponds which are conspicuous in that surrounding them are verdant meadows amidst clearings, bordered by alder and riparian habitats containing wetland species such as, reeds and Flag Iris. These represent the most important locations for standing water habitats in the Forest of Dean.

The coal seams within the syncline are very thin and account for approximately 1% of the total thickness of the Coal Measures strata. The most productive seam is the Coleford High Delf seam which has an average thickness of 1.2 m and has provided approximately 97% of the coal for the whole region.

Much of the central area is wooded and managed for the production of timber. Great variations exist as a result of the long history of woodland management. Deciduous woodlands which occupy approximately half of the forested areas are characteristically oak, grown as dense standards although Birch, Sweet Chestnut and Sycamore are also prevalent. These are often remnant areas of

ancient semi natural woodland or replanted ancient semi natural woodland. The dominant coniferous species is larch although Norway Spruce, Scots Pine, Corsican Pine and Douglas Fir are also common. The ground flora of woodlands is generally poor. Acid soils formed on the sandstones favour the growth of typical grass plants such as Common Bent, Yorkshire Fog and Red Fescue whilst in the clearings of pine and oak forests, bracken rather than grass colonises the acidic soils. This forces sheep, which are sent out to graze freely in the Forest, to favour roadsides where bracken is less dominant. Some of the extensive open areas within the forest (often opened by clear felling) support damp acidic grasslands and sometimes grade to wet heath and bog habitats. Some parts of the forest have a long history of wood pasture and sites such as the Speech House Oaks SSSI are important for lichen communities.

Old industrial sites have become colonised by acid and complex ephemeral grasslands which are valuable habitats for many species of plants and animals which are characteristic of the semi-natural habitats that existed prior to afforestation. Extensive surface and underground mine systems are of great value to bats, and wasteland and scrub habitats contain important plant and invertebrate communities. The complex mosaic of habitats including woodland, grassland, clear fell sites, rides and wetland, provide diverse feeding opportunities and connectivity over wide tracts of the landscape, much valued by local bat and bird populations.

Human Influences

It is thought that the Saxons preserved parts of the woodland for hunting. However it was under the Norman king William I that the forest gained protection as a Royal hunting ground. Under Forest Law, the flora and fauna of the forest were protected by representatives of the King and much of the Forest was divided up into Bailiwicks, or units of administration, with ultimate control being held by the Constable of St Briavels Castle and the Lord Warden of the Forest of Dean.

Over time, however, various pressures were placed on these woodlands. This led to hundreds of years of episodic felling and replanting across vast areas of the forest. For example, from the late Medieval period onwards, industrial activity expanded rapidly and required trees to be felled to make way for iron and coal mines and to provide pit props and fuel for iron furnaces. During the 17th century, further pressure was placed on the woodlands by ship builders and local residents who, opposed to enclosure, grazed their sheep in the woodlands preventing the growth of new trees. To counter these trends Cromwell ordered that large areas of the forest be enclosed for the purposes of re-planting.

In the 18th and early 19th century, extensive areas of woodland were again cleared, this time by squatters settling in the area to work in local industries. The Napoleonic War however, highlighted to the need for a national reserve of timber for the Navy. A report in 1803 which highlighted the poor condition of woodlands in the Forest forced the government to initiate the Dean Forest Timber Act of 1808 and large scale enclosure and replanting was undertaken between 1810 and 1819. However, just five years later iron ships came into being and there was a decline in the need for timber for ship building. 'Navy Oaks' dating to this period have survived throughout the forest, most notably in the Cannop Valley and around Speech House.

Within the woodlands there is widespread evidence of mining activity and industry. Coal mining occurred mostly on the western edge of the forest where the Coal Measures dip gently enough to be entered through mines driven into the hillside, a process known as adit mining. The outcropping of coal is often visible in the landscape, not by the mine itself but by the small tips of blue grey shale which developed close by. Where these former workings are

of some age, natural colonisation by birch and gorse ensures they remain prominent and visible in the landscape. Where larger mines were in operation massive spoil tips developed, examples being at the former New Fancy Pit, now the site of an impressive viewing platform. Elsewhere 'scowles' indicate the location of ancient iron ore extraction, the area having been exploited for its iron reserves since before the Roman invasion.

The dense and extensive woodlands are a valuable recreational asset, the perceived 'wilderness' of many areas attracting thousands of visitors every year. The high number of car parks, picnic sites and footpaths are testimony to its popularity as a recreational resource and its scenic quality. It is also a working forest, with the Forestry Commission controlling large areas of woodland for commercial timber. Initially commercial woodlands were almost entirely coniferous. After 1971, however, a balanced planting regime was introduced.

Buildings and Settlement

The central area of forest is virtually devoid of settlement. A notable exception is the village of Parkend, which is located amidst dense woodland. The village is thought to have been established to house workers in local industries, the remains of which are now hidden by woodland and developed as a transport 'hub' following the arrival of tram and rail networks in the 19th century.

The outer edge of the forest is almost entirely fringed by settlement. These are generally located close to the Crease Limestone band which contains iron ore. The majority of the settlements have their origins in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when 'encroachment' cottages were built on the fringes of the forest. At this time it was illegal to build within the forest itself. However, sprawling settlements were established which have in recent history expanded to form an almost continuous ring of settlement. Much expansion dates to the 19th century during the boom in iron working and coal mining ventures in the area. However post war expansion and infill development is also conspicuous and detracts from the historic, industrial character of many forest settlements. The settlements fringing the forest coalesce with one another and have no clear structure although two distinct settlement forms may be identified: urban; and sporadic low density.

Urban areas include Cinderford and Ruspidge and generally represent ancient settlements that expanded rapidly during the 19th century. Characteristic building styles are those of the industrial and railway vernacular although this occurs on a less rigid framework than industrial towns in South Wales and northern England. Terraces along straight streets are conspicuous of industrial expansion and display a number of styles, indicating different builders. Modern developments, often in the form of large estates, are situated on the edge of these settlements or as linear extensions fringing the edge of the forest as at Broadwell. The use of incongruous materials and building styles sometimes leads to an inappropriate urban fringe in these locations.

The main building stone is Carboniferous Sandstone, mainly Pennant and its derivatives. The stone is closely associated with coal bearing measures giving rise to reminders of the area's industrial heritage.

Sporadic low density settlements include Bream and Lydbrook. These are generally un planned and often developed as 'squatter' settlements within clearings on the ridge of the woodland. Houses tend to be of the late 19th century terraced form built as detached buildings. In many instances these houses replaced earlier more rudimentary structures following the Act of 1838 by which squatter holdings were converted to freeholds. They are characteristically located at the centre or in the corner of a small, hedged, rectangular plot of land. These plots are often located within woodland on steep hillsides and are reached by winding lanes and tracks twisting up the hillsides from the main road. The appearance of random and cluttered settlement is exacerbated by the wide variety of materials used for building. These range from dull pinkish grey to warm pink brown sandstones, and occasional grey limestones and brick.

The forest creates a backdrop and edge to most settlements. Therefore buildings rarely interrupt the skyline although in many instances clusters of houses may be seen climbing up the sides of valleys in characteristic informal loose terraces.

Character Areas

5a Forest Core

In contrast to the more open and settled areas surrounding it, the central forest core retains a strong sense of wilderness and isolation. Extensive areas of coniferous plantations and deciduous woodland, few roads and little development add to the sense of isolation. However, the screening effects of the woodlands disguise the fact that busy towns are only a short distance away. The woodlands are an important feature of the area and contribute to a strong and coherent 'forest' identity although free roaming sheep, bluebells and foxgloves are also quoted as being key characteristics. The nature of the underlying geology and landform has been an important part of the evolution of the woodlands and forest industries. However, the dense tree cover often obscures visible features of these and even dramatic relief features such as slades, valleys and ridges are disguised. Therefore views confirming that the woodlands occupy a syncline structure are rare. Occasional views to and from the surrounding ridges indicate the true nature of the topographic framework. The 360 degree view from the top of the New Fancy pit viewing platform is particularly striking. The woodlands also cloak former industrial sites, quarries and mines although these may often be identified by birch copses where they have colonised former workings and spoil tips. The varied nature of the woodlands and management regimes adds to visual diversity of the forests and therefore to their appeal. However, large tracts of recently cleared coniferous plantation are often conspicuous and scar large tracts of the landscape. The forest core is a popular recreational resource, particularly amongst ramblers and cyclists. Numerous footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes criss-cross the woodlands although their impact is minimised by woodland cover. Picnic sites are also conspicuous, especially where they are sited on the verdant lawns fringing linear ponds which lie along the course of brooks draining the syncline. Some relatively significant areas of the forest core are unwooded. Clearings are typically small and often adjacent to or surrounding built developments such as Whitemead Park and Speech House Hotel. In many instances clearings provide grazing land for sheep. Elsewhere, however, they represent former spoil tips or ornamental gardens. Settlement within the forest core is largely absent. Parkend, Edge End and Brierley are notable exceptions. These were largely established to house families working in local industries such as coal mining, tin plating and iron working.

5b Lydbrook and Ruardean Woodside

Similar in many ways to the Ellwood and Bream and Yorkley Fringe character areas, Lydbrook and Ruardean Woodside represents sprawling settlements fringing the edge of the forest core where housing and industry are interspersed with open grazing land, occasional dereliction and woodland. Lydbrook occupies the steep valley of the Great Hough Brook and was at one time alive with various industries but is now largely residential. Beyond the core of the settlement the valley and hillsides are cloaked in a patchwork of small irregular hedged enclosures, isolated dwellings and 'squatter' settlements. These pre-date planning regulations and as such are scattered across the hillsides. Many were located close to small pits, adits and quarries, a number of which were established to extract red and yellow building sand. Their hillside location often provides dramatic views to the hills and agricultural landscapes to the north. However, where settlement occupies the crest of the hill it may be observed on the skyline.

5c Cinderford and Ruspidge

The Cinderford and Ruspidge character area defines the eastern limits of the forest core and the western extent of the Ridges and Valleys landscape type. There is evidence for Roman activity in the Cinderfrod area and it is believed that the towns name relates to a river crossing (ford) close to an area of slag or 'sinders' left behind by the Romans. The settlements recent history dates to the late 19th century when 'encroachment' cottages were built on the edge of the forest. This would have led to a sprawling settlement pattern similar to that elsewhere on the forest fringe. However, the town grew rapidly during the 19th century, primarily as a consequence of local iron working sites and coal mines. Workers cottages, shops, inns, schools and churches were all built in a short period of time as the town expanded. This gives the town a distinctive 'industrial' character, particularly where long terraces of stone cottages traverse the hillsides. However, more recent housing and commercial development has eroded the town's distinctive character.To the west of the main built up area large industrial estates fringe the forest. These are largely comprised of modern light industrial structures although remnants of earlier industrial activity are an important reminder of the areas past. Cinderford Linear Park is an important landscape feature and acts as a 'buffer' between the town, its industrial fringe and the Forest Core.

5d Soudley Brook

The Soudley Brook character area is distinct from other areas within the Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Fringe landscape type in that it represents a linear riverine landscape where clearings allow the nature of the underlying topography to be appreciated.The Brook has cut a deeply incised valley through the underlying geology. Clearings created for sheep pastures on the valley sides allow relatively long distance views up and down the valley and up valley sides to woodlands occupying the skyline. Settlement is sporadic and generally represents isolated 'encroachment' dwellings on gentler valley slopes. The village of Soudley is a notable exception. Here a more significant settlement has grown up beside Soudley Bridge. An interesting feature of the Soudley Brook character area is the Dean Heritage Museum. The museum occupies a former corn mill although a forge and foundry were know to have been sited close by. The site contains a reconstruction of a typical Forester's cottage and garden and a sculpture trail. Above the site is the Soudley earthwork which may be of prehistoric date.

5e Littledean Ridges and Valleys

Two distinct wooded ridgelines either side of the Soudley Ponds Nature Reserve represent the southern extent of a Devonian sandstone ridge running north to Mitcheldean. Although sharing broadly similar geology and landform features with the Ridges and Valleys landscape type the extent of coniferous woodland cover and proximity to the Forest Core, ensures they are perceived as part of the Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Fringe landscape type. Running through the centre of this peaceful wooded landscape is the Soudley Ponds nature reserve. Bordering a series of old fish ponds are some fine stands of mature Douglas Fir. Local woodlands are also noted for exotic species such as North American Red Oak and Japanese Red Cedar. The ponds are noted for their clarity, the water having been filtered through the local sandstone. The banks of the ponds are surrounded by typical wetland species such as alder and willow. Carr woodland which is frequently flooded is particularly valued by breeding birds including Willow Warblers and Chif-chaffs.

5f Ellwood

The south-western fringe of the Forest Core is defined by a narrow band of sprawling settlement and small clearings. The landscape is generally softer than elsewhere on the edge of the central forest core. This is as a result of the area representing a transition into the Limestone Hills and Limestone Plateau landscape types further to the west. In form and layout, the settlements share many characteristics with those in the Lydbrook and Ruardean Woodside character area. Examples of industrial style housing survive although significant areas of post war housing and industrial warehouses along roadsides detract from the historic character of many of settlements. The settlements have no distinct boundaries and tend to coalesce with each other. This is particularly true along the B4432 where Mile End, Broadwell and Coalwell merge into a single settlement which is visible on the horizon in many views towards the forest from the neighbouring Coleford and Christchuch Hills character area. Ellwood by contrast is a small village of loosely clustered houses surrounded by fields and woodland. Despite its proximity to Coalway to the north and Sling to the west, the settlement retains a relatively rural setting. In the vicinity of Gorsty Knoll, significant areas of disturbed ground, redundant quarries and disused pits are evident and testimony to the areas industrial past.

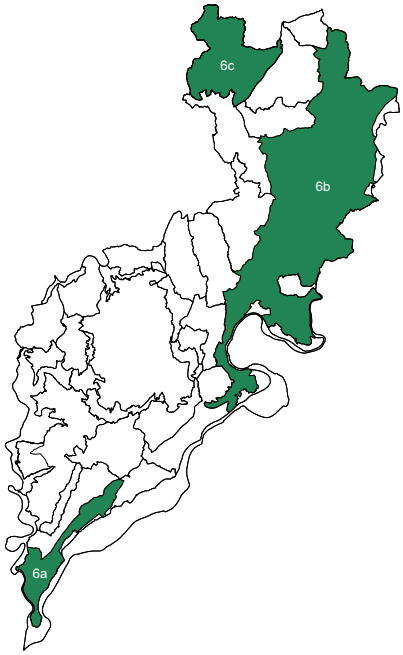
5g Bream and Yorkley Fringe

Defining the southern fringe of the central Forest Core is a band of settlement that stretches between Little Drybrook in the west to Yorkley in the east. Bream is set on a ridge of high ground, falling away on three sides. Development on these slopes is prominent within the surrounding open countryside. The linear settlement of Yorkley also occupies a prominent position on a ridgeline. Typically, the settlements were originally established as a loose cluster of 'encroachment' cottages, and grew rapidly during the industrial and post war eras. Significant areas of woodland and farmland are evident surrounding Bream's Meend and Whitecroft, softening their visual impact.

6 UNWOODED VALE

Character Areas

6a The Severn Vale - Stroat and Sedbury
6b The Severn Vale
6c The Leadon Vale



Key Characteristics

- Soft rolling landscape formed from the districts youngest rocks and thick deposits of drift geology.
- Extensive areas of wet meadow and floodplain.
- Well maintained, and often ancient hedgerows forming an extensive network throughout the vale.
- Numerous mature field and hedgerow oaks and small copses and shelter belts.
- Quiet winding lanes linking numerous isolated farms and hamlets.
- Remnants of medieval moated sites, ridge and furrow and water meadows.
- Distinctive timber clad and half timbered barns associated with many farmsteads.
- Timber and brick are the prevalent building materials used throughout the vale.

Landscape Character

The deeply rural landscapes of the Unwooded Vale landscape type border the Severn for almost the entire length of the district and their overall character is distinctly small scale, intimate and domestic. The soft, undulating landform, formed from Triassic and Devonian rocks and extensive drift deposits, is cloaked in a patchwork of arable and pasture fields. These are predominantly enclosed by a well maintained network of hedgerows which often contain ageing oaks and are valued for their nature conservation value in an otherwise highly managed agricultural landscape.

Woodland cover is minimal and often restricted to small deciduous copses and shelter belts. These are often closely associated with the numerous farmsteads, which are located throughout the landscape, and designed parkland and gardens. Moderately sized woodlands also often occupy the low hills that rise above the vale accentuating their relief features and prominence in the otherwise gentle, rolling landscape.

Tributary streams of the River Severn weave through the vale. These are often only made visible by the occurrence of alder and willow trees which are typical of wetland habitats although softer topography and wet, rushy meadows are also characteristic features. Post and wire fences are also conspicuous in wetter meadows fringing river channels.

The settlement pattern is rural and dispersed. Countless farmsteads are located throughout the vale. These are often of historic importance and indicate a long history of farming and settlement, many occupying the site of a medieval moated site. Villages and hamlets are predominantly small, linear clusters of houses alongside a road, or nucleated at a junction of two or more roads. Surviving churches and buildings and remnant ridge and furrow in the fields surrounding many settlements indicates that many have their origins in the Medieval period or earlier. A number of planned Chartist villages are also conspicuous both in terms of their layout and the style of buildings they contain. Building materials vary. Many older houses, and in one instance a church, use timber as a structural building material. This indicates the absence of suitable building stone in the vale. In more recent times, and for the same reason, brick has been the dominant building material.

Physical Influences

The majority of the Vale is underlain by Triassic rocks. These are the youngest rocks in the district and are responsible for creating soft, gently undulating landform, typically between 10 and 40 m AOD. Occasionally small hillocks rise from the vale such as Limbury Hill and Catsbury Hill. These are often capped by a small copse of trees, emphasising their visual prominence in the landscape. These hillocks are, however, small and an integral part of the vale landscape. Higher hills within the vale have been identified as a separate landscape character type: the Vale Hillocks.

The underlying geology gives rise to Brashy rich clay loams particularly from the Keuper Sandstones, and soils in the vale are well suited to pasture farming although productive arable farming is also evident. Amidst improved pastures are areas of neutral or slightly acidic unimproved and semi-improved grasslands supporting large populations of wild daffodil and green winged orchids. Wet meadows are important for wintering wild fowl such as redshank and curlew. Orchards are also well suited to the vale soils and microclimate and particularly conspicuous in the vicinity of Tibberton, Huntley and Kent's Green. In the Leadon Vale, in the far north west of the district, Silurian Raglan Mudstones predominate. Again, a productive patchwork of pastures, arable fields and orchards is evident. Isolated outcrops of Devonian St Maughan's Group rocks occur to the west of Woolaston. Calcareous soils derived from these rocks are well suited to arable farming resulting in a distinct area of large arable fields.

Hawthorn hedgerows define a patchwork of relatively large fields. These are often well maintained and give the sense of a managed productive agricultural landscape. Many are of great antiquity although notable concentrations of ancient hedgerows exist close to Blaisdon and Westbury. Hedgerow trees, predominantly oaks, are conspicuous and offer valued habitats for a range of birds and insects.

In this long settled landscape there is little woodland. Throughout the vale it is restricted to small copses and shelter belts although orchards, hedgerow trees and isolated field trees add to the sense of it being a well treed landscape. Woodlands are most conspicuous when located on hilltops but also gain visual prominence on gentler terrain where they are often sited alongside

streams and close to farm houses to provide shelter. Many woodlands display evidence of coppicing, both in their names and the form of trees they contain. Larger woodlands also exist, particular example being Highham Woods and Ley Park Wood Coppice, which is ancient semi natural woodland. Older orchards are a significant historic feature and dead wood associated with these are important for invertebrates such as Stag beetle and Noble Chafer.

Between the undulations and hillocks weave a multitude of rivers and streams as they flow towards the Severn. These are often bordered by flatter, gentler landform and wet meadows above thick deposits of alluvium and diamicton. These areas are periodically flooded and pastures here are often wet and rushy. The course of the stream or brook flowing in these meadows is often only visible at crossing points. However, their route can also be traced by the alder and willow trees which often line their banks.

Human Influences

There is little evidence to confirm whether the vale was heavily exploited and settled during the prehistoric period. To the east of the Severn, widespread settlement of the gravel terraces has been established from at least the Neolithic period. However, it may also be possible that poor water logged soils and thick woodland cover west of the river prohibited settlement and farming on a large scale.

With the improved ploughs of the Middle Ages and a rapidly expanding population, pressure grew for settlement of the poorer land to the west of the Severn. Numerous settlements were established, or earlier settlements expanded. Many would have been surrounded by open fields, the ridges and furrows deriving from this are still extant in the vale landscape as at Awre. However, modern ploughing and development have resulted in the loss of vast acres of ridge and furrow.

Moated sites are conspicuous in the vale landscape. These are likely to date from 13th century and rather than representing manorial centres, these sites are likely to have been the homes of wealthy yeoman farmers as moated sites were a symbol of wealth and status during the medieval period. Many of the sites of moated farmsteads are in close proximity to more modern farms, indicating a continuity of settlement within the vale.

Buildings and Settlement

The vale is dotted with numerous nucleated villages. These are dispersed throughout the landscape and linked by numerous winding, narrow lanes bordered by tall hedgerows, wide grass verges and drainage ditches. There is also a distinctive pattern of hamlets and common-edge settlements which are also dispersed throughout the vale. The older centres of these settlements have an abundance of attractive red brick and timber framed buildings. Sandstone is, however, more conspicuous in vale villages in the south of the district such as Awre and Newnham.

The older village properties are typically clustered around the church which are often ancient and imposing stone structures with a prominent spire which may be seen from some distance from the village. Upleadon Church is notable in that timbers were used to construct its tower and may be a further indication that building stone was hard to come by in the vale.

In the rural landscape between these villages are numerous farmsteads. These are often built of brick and are closely associated with their barns and outbuildings. Many older barns are conspicuous in that they are constructed from massive black timber boards.

Two Chartist settlements were established in the Vale at Sniggs End and Lowbands in the mid 19th century. In each of these, small holdings, model cottages (each with a privy and water supply), a school house, and roads and pathways were built to serve the needs of the settlers. The planned nature of these settlements is evident in their layout and the style of the buildings they contain.

Character Areas

6a The Severn Vale - Stroat and Sedbury

The southern extent of the Severn Vale in the district extends from Alvington in the east to the Beachley peninsula in the west. The landscape is typical of the vale and gently undulating landform is cloaked in a patchwork of productive pastures and arable fields defined by well maintained hedges. Saline inundation is evident in pastures adjacent to the lower reaches of the Wye such as at the Pennsylvania Fields SSSI. These areas are notable for nationally scarce plants and is the only. The underlying geology is largely Quaternary gravel terrace deposits and tidal flat deposits of silty clay lying above Triassic mudstones. Alluvium and alluvial fan deposits are also evident. The rich red soils appear to be well suited to dairy farming which is particularly conspicuous in the area. Cattle sheds are typically large modern constructions surrounded by a concrete yard. These often gain visual prominence in an otherwise relatively flat landscape. Their size may be an indication of the intensive nature of dairy farming locally. Arable farming is also conspicuous. An outcrop of St Maughan's Group rocks occur to the west of Woolaston. Calcareous soils derived from these rocks are well suited to arable farming resulting in a distinct area of large arable fields.

Tree cover is typically limited to occasional hedgerow and field trees and small copses close to farm houses. However, larger woods may be found close to Sedbury Park. The park is sited on a hill which terminates abruptly above the Severn as Sedbury Cliffs and it is likely that these woodlands are remnants of parkland planting. Offa's Dyke terminates at Sedbury Cliffs a short distance to the south. The dyke is still visible in this location and forms an impressive landmark.

The Wooded Scarp and Lower Scarp Slopes landscape type borders this character area and forms a distinctive wooded backdrop. The landscape shelves gently from the lower slope of the scarp towards the Severn and Severnside grazing marshes. The close proximity of contrasting landscapes reduces the perceived scale of the vale when compared to the Severn Vale further to the north.

Settlement is largely rural, a number of isolated farm houses and small linear villages being evident throughout the landscape. Large urban centres, however, also exist. Tutshill, Sedbury and an army barracks on the Beachley peninsula exert a strong urbanising influence over a large area of the landscape to the south east.

6b The Severn Vale

The Severn Vale is an extensive landscape stretching from Awre in the south to Lowbands in the north. Triassic mudstones underlie much of the area. However, extensive drift deposits of diamicton, sand and gravel, alluvial clay and alluvium are also evident. The varying geology creates a complex mix of arable and pasture farming. Historically large areas of the vale would have also been cloaked in orchards. In recent times these have been grubbed out and replaced with grazing land or crops. Despite significant losses small orchards survive and neat rows of fruit trees can often be seen in close proximity to farms. Many fields appear to have been left fallow. In these meadows buttercups and other wild flowers have been allowed to grow unchecked resulting in an attractive contrast to the more well maintained arable fields and improved pastures. Wet meadows often containing Flag Iris border the multitude of streams and brooks draining the neighbouring uplands. These wet meadows also often contain alder and willow trees and provide further visual contrast.

Hedgerow trees and field trees, typically oak, are an important landscape feature. These are often mature and contribute to the sense of a well treed landscape. Small copses and shelterbelts are evident in the landscape, and gain further prominence when located on one of the many small hillocks that rise from the vale.

The Severn Vale is deeply rural. Few large settlements exist and the predominant form of settlement is in the form of isolated farm houses, hamlets and small villages. A number of larger villages such as Westbury on Severn, Newnham and Awre contain impressive ancient churches which may often be seen some distance from the village. Older properties are conspicuous clustering around the church at the centre of the village. These are primarily of red brick and often of half timbered construction. The market town of Newent shares many of these characteristics and despite growing into a sizable town, it retains much of its historic character; half timbered houses, impressive church and medieval

pattern of streets are still much in evidence. Isolated farms and villages are linked by a network of narrow lanes. Smaller roads and tracks are closely bordered by tall rambling hedges. More heavily used roads are often lined by wide grass verges, drainage ditches and neatly clipped hawthorn hedges.

The landscape is rich in history. Many modern farms are sited close to moated sites dating to the Medieval period. Indeed historic tithe barns such as that at Hartbury, mills, farm houses and churches are much in evidence.

A particular feature of the vale is the old barns which often lie close to red brick or half timbered farm houses. These are made from massive oak planks and are often topped with corrugated iron roofs. A number of the farm houses are whitewashed, increasing their visibility and prominence in the otherwise rural vale landscape.

Visually the vale retains a consistent and coherent character although the varying landscapes surrounding it help provide orientation. For example in the far north The Malverns remain in views across much of the landscape.

6c The Leadon Vale

The Leadon Vale, despite being underlain by Silurian siltstone and mudstones, retains many of the characteristics of the Triassic vale to the south and represents the southern extent of a fertile, rolling agricultural landscape which stretches far into Herefordshire to the north and west. The eastern boundary of the landscape is strongly defined by the Malvern Hills. These dark wooded hills form an impressive backdrop to the vale landscape and provide a useful point of orientation.

The landscape is typically rural, harmonious and attractive and dominated by a diverse mix of pastures, orchards and arable fields. As is typical of the Unwooded Vale landscape type, neat hedgerows divide the landscape into a patchwork of productive arable and pasture fields. The landscape is particularly colourful; rich red soils exposed in ploughed fields contrasting sharply with the greens of pastures and the many small deciduous copses and shelterbelts.

The vale is drained by the River Leadon which runs through the centre of the landscape towards the Severn. Numerous tributaries, each separated from the other by low hills of Silurian sandstone and limestone, are lined by alders and willow and bordered by wet

meadows and rougher pasture. Historically these areas have been unsettled, with communication routes, farms and hamlets, tending to be located on the low hills that form watersheds between the Leadon's tributaries. The wet meadows were however recognised as an important part of the agricultural landscape. At Kempley for example, remnants of water meadows survive as earthworks beneath the present pasture.

Many of the present farms are closely associated with remnants of Medieval moated farmsteads, again illustrating a continuity of rural settlement in the vale. In many cases, the remains of these Medieval farmsteads are not visible, either as a result of intervening vegetation or due to the earthworks having been eroded, in-filled, or flattened.

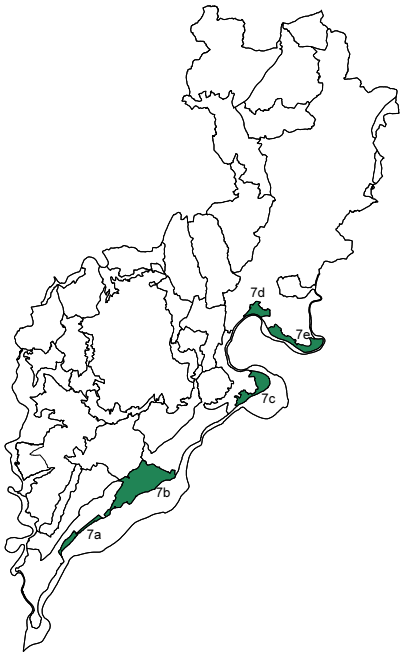
The main road in the area is the B4215. This runs along the course of the Roman road which linked Gloucester to the fort at Stretton Grandison. The route passes through Dymock. This settlement has its origins in the Roman period but is perhaps most well known for its attractive half timbered and brick buildings, church and associations with the Dymock Poets. Indeed much of the character area is criss-crossed with footpaths which are specifically designed to bring visitors into contact with the landscapes that inspired the likes of Rupert Brook and Robert Frost.

As is typical, the settlement pattern is generally in the form of dispersed farmsteads. Many retain the distinctive orchards and timber clad or half timbered barns and that were once more widespread. Churches again have visual prominence in an otherwise flat rural landscape. At Kempley, the church and manor house are all that remains of a thriving village that moved to higher ground nearby.

7 DRAINED RIVERINE FARMLAND AND GRAZED SALT MARSH

Character Areas

7a Pillhouse Drained Farmland
7b Aylburton Newgrounds
7c Awre Drained Farmland
7d Westbury on Severn Drained Farmland
7e Upper and Lower Dumball



Key Characteristics

- Low lying, windsewpt and generally treeless flat landscape of productive improved cattle pastures.
- Distinctive pattern of hedgerows dividing the landscape up into large geometric fields.
- Inundation grasslands and drainage ditches sometimes lined with pollarded willows.
- Remote and largely inaccessible landscape.
- Generally unsettled landscape.
- Potentially rich archaeological resource.
- Numerous 'Pills' and wharves at the outer edge of the drained farmland.
- Modern encroachment by industrial development is evident close to Lydney.
- Riverside extent of the grazing land often marked by a sea wall.

Landscape Character

The Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh landscape is extremely flat, and comprised of deposits of silty clay. The landscape is low lying and sits between the mean high water mark and the 10 m contour. These areas were formerly extensive tidal flats and inlets extending inland and have since been reclaimed and managed as improved pastures for dairy cattle and some arable farming. It is possible that some of these areas have been subject to drainage and farming for many hundreds of years and may cover extensive archaeological remains dating as far back as the Mesolithic. Beyond the drained farmland is often a narrow strip of salt marsh which is typically backed by a sea wall.

Fields are typically large scale and geometric in shape and defined by post and wire fences. A number of manmade ditches and natural streams, often controlled by sluices, drain into the Severn through these areas of farmland. These are also used to define field boundaries and are often capped with a hawthorn hedge and lined with pollarded willows. However, these hedges are poorly maintained and often gappy, with post and wire fencing being the preferred means by which to fill in the gaps. Woodland cover is minimal. However, small geometric coverts and shelter belts are apparent and gain visual prominence in an otherwise flat landscape.

The absence of significant relief features and intervening vegetation allows for extensive views across grazing land to the Severn and beyond. Long distance views are therefore possible to the Vale of Gloucester and the Cotswold escarpment.

Built development is largely absent. Isolated farmhouses can occasionally be found fringing the drained farmland. Historically these areas would have been avoided due to seasonal flooding and waterlogged conditions. Modern light industrial units are, however, prominent in the vicinity of Lydney. Access to these landscapes is limited. Few roads extend to the river's edge. However, footpaths do provide access to the landscape and often may be found bordering the course of the river.

Physical Influences

The drained farmland landscape is underlain by soft Triassic mudstones. However, the solid geology is deeply buried by drift deposits of alluvial clay. These have been laid down gradually by the Severn over thousands of years in a succession of transgression and regression episodes. The soils derived from these deposits are rich and fertile. However, drainage is required to allow these areas to be farmed.

Intensive drainage and farming means there is little semi natural habitat. However the landscape is important to wildlife due to floodplain and inundation grasslands with winter flood regimes and ditch habitats. These are particularly important to a range of duck and wading bird species and saline and riverbank grasslands are home to several nationally rare species of vascular plants.

The floodbank marks the inner boundary of the saltmarsh. Land on the shoreward side is largely reclaimed grassland dominated by perennial rye-grass and is used for stock grazing. The small number of fields that are cultivated are used extensively by visiting wildfowl for feeding or resting. Thousands of birds, such as lesser White-Fronted Geese and Pink Footed Geese, congregate each year in the area and make its of international ornithological importance.

Other habitats include reed beds and some species rich unimproved ridge and furrow fields dating from Saxon and Medieval times. The former support populations of Reed Warbler and Sedge Warbler while the latter provides ideal conditions for ground nesting birds such as Redshank and Snipe. Hedgerows are not a significant feature of the landscape. However, in the vicinity of Awre, many hedges are ancient and represent an important landscape feature.

Human Influences

The landscape is almost entirely a result of drainage and land management from the Medieval period. However, it is likely that incursions by all societies from the Mesolithic onwards hunted or gathered food from these rich estuarine habitats.

By the Roman period marine influence had declined and the flats were sufficiently dry for very large scale and probably military inspired drainage operations. Cycles of erosion and deposition within the Severn Estuary continued throughout the Medieval

period. Indeed in 1234 the residents of Awre, having watched many acres of their land washed across the river to Slimbridge by the Severn, appealed to the courts to have their land restored to them. However, the jury testified that the pasture and arable land had originally belonged to Slimbridge and had been handed to Awre by the Severn as a temporary gift .

Navigable inlets or 'Pills' are frequent along the edge of the drained farmland where streams enter the Severn. These have long been associated with ship building and often served wharfs or harbours. Numerous references are made to ship building in the Forest throughout the Medieval and Tudor periods and it is likely that Forest supplied all the raw materials necessary to build ships and boats from the small trows which ferried passengers and goods up and down the river to naval warships.

Lydney was one such harbour which may have originated in the Roman period. It is thought that the river flowed closer to the town and that the present drained farmland overlies much archaeological evidence for former wharfs and harbour structures.

The silting up of Lydney Pill, which served the harbour and ship building centre, is known to have begun in the 17th century as a report by a master shipwright to the Admiralty attests;

"(Lydney) is not so fit a place now for building a ship as formerly, on account of the growing sands".

Indeed the recommendation was made to move operations to Cone Pill a little further downstream.

Buildings and Settlement

There are few buildings on the drained farmland as the often waterlogged conditions are unsuitable for settlement. However, fringing the landscape is a small number of farms. These tend to consist of a brick farm house surrounded by outbuildings and cattle sheds at the end of a long narrow lane.

A large industrial estate dominates the area to the south of Lydney. This comprises of moderately sized industrial units and tarmac roads interspersed with ornamental planting. Further urbanising influences include street lighting and canalisation of the Lydney Pill.

Character Areas

7a Pillhouse Drained Farmland

This small area of drained farmland is inaccessible by land as no footpaths or roads link it to the nearby A48 (T). However, passengers on the mainline railway between Cardiff and Gloucester have views across the drained pastures and salt marsh. The rail line marks the boundary between drained pasture and the extensive areas of salt marsh that extend into the river.

The area is rich in archaeology. The 'Broadstone' lies close to the Severn 750 m to the south east of Stroat. It stands just inside an ancient land boundary and was respected as a territorial marker into the Medieval period, aerial photographs indicating that ridge and furrow occupied land within the boundary and ran close to but not beyond the stone. The stone is perfectly positioned for a riverside trading point, the adjacent Horse Pill offering a landing or mooring site.

The boundary of Tidenham, first recorded in a charter of AD 956 ends at Horse Pill. This was based on a much earlier boundary, possible dating to the Bronze Age or Neolithic and was defined by a row of stones stretching between Stroat and Madgett. The boundary is preserved as a parish boundary.

7b Ayleburton Newgrounds

The Ayleburton Newgrounds character area is an extensive area of drained farmland. Hawthorn hedges and post and wire fences divide up the landscape into a patchwork of large pasture and arable fields. Extensive views towards the Forest of Dean are possible. However, tall hedges and hedgerow oaks can often interrupt views. Some small mixed copses are also evident. These are coverts and are all located close to Park Farm indicating they were planted to provide cover for game. Willow pollards located along a number of the ditches draining the landscape contribute to the sense of this being a well treed landscape.

The pastures are often rushy, indicating that they are currently under stocked. This, coupled with poorly maintained hedges and areas of disturbed ground, gives the landscape an abandoned character. A number of small Sheepfolds are located at intervals in the landscape to offer shelter to stock in the otherwise open landscape.

The term 'New Grounds' is used to describe the area on 1:25,000 mapping and suggests that the area has been subject to reclamation in recent times. However, this landscape has a long history with some sites such as Lydney Pill and Cone Pill possibly holding evidence of riverside activity as far back as the Roman period. Indeed Lydney may well have been the areas principal harbour in Prehistory.

In recent times the canalised Lydney Pill has been the focus of industrial development, a sewage works and industrial estate all having been established between the town of Lydney and the Severn. These developments have bought buildings, tarmac roads and ornamental planting to an otherwise inaccessible 'rural' landscape and have altered local character significantly. Perhaps the most dramatic urbanising element however is street lighting, the New Grounds typically being unlit 'dark' landscapes.

There is no settlement within the character area except for a single whitewashed cottage located next to the Woolaston level crossing.

7c Awre Drained Farmland

The present landscape is a neat collection of pasture fields extending out to the Severn. The large fields are divided up by a network of dense hawthorn hedges which appear gappy in places. Views are extensive, particularly on higher ground towards the village. Views across the Severn reveal a wide panorama backed by the Cotswold escarpment. Village churches, such as the church at Frampton, are visible in the foreground. There are few strong vertical elements in the otherwise flat landscape, giving Awre church and electricity pylons located close to Northington Farm significant visual dominance.

Historically, as today, this landscape was closely associated with the village of Awre offering its residents fertile pastures and arable land. Indeed during the 13th century local residents complained when much of the land was washed away by the Severn and deposited on the other side of the River. The area was also used to produce salt, the tidal waters being collected and processed to the south of the village. In fields close to the Severn, immediately to the west of the lane that runs from the church to the river, are the remains of a salt collection area. The Domesday survey records that the village had a church and a salt house which may indicate that both had their origins in the Saxon period. The area may also contain remnants of the deserted medieval village of Woodend.

During the later 1st and early 2nd centuries Brims Pill may have had wharfage facilities to serve the Blakeney officials' residence. Flag stones, masses of slag and Roman pottery found in the riverbank at Whitescourt, Awre could indicate the presence of another eroded wharf. Again this indicates that these marginal landscapes were at one time very important and today are highly sensitive to development which may damage the potentially rich archaeological record.

7d Westbury-on-Severn Drained Farmland

The Westbury-on-Severn Drained Farmland is a small area of pasture and arable land situated between the village and the river. The area is divided into a number of large and moderately sized fields, the larger fields apparently used for arable crops. As is typical, gappy hedgerows divide the fields and are supplemented by post and wire fencing. Hedgerow trees are less frequent than elsewhere in the landscape type allowing extensive panoramic views towards the ridges fringing the Forest of Dean and across the Severn to Arlingham.

Westbury-on- Severn church is a prominent landscape feature, its distinctive spire prominent in many views inland. Pylons and telegraph lines also, however, gain visual prominence in the landscape and are often viewed against the skyline.

Severn Mill is the only building in the landscape. This is a distinctive residence situated next to a sluice occupying a much older mill structure. Mill stones and other mill gear survive in close proximity to the house and act as an important reminder of the structure's past. The mill is approached by a narrow lane and linked to the village by numerous footpaths. A rusting barge, which at one time ferried goods up and down the river, has been grounded in pastures fringing the Severn, making an interesting local landscape feature.

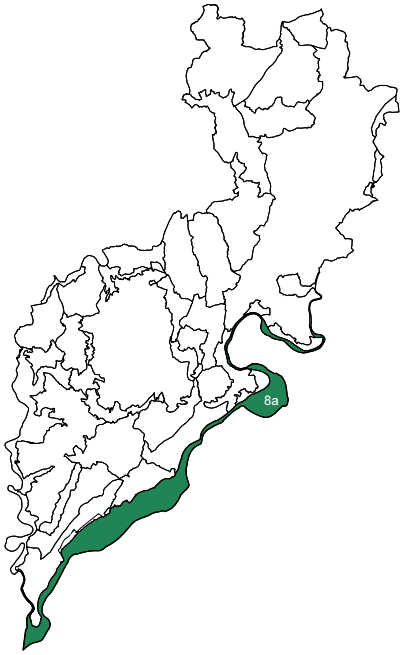
7e Upper and Lower Dumball

The Upper and Lower Dumball character area represents a narrow strip of drained farmland stretching from Gravel Farm to Cowley's Elm. The landscape is divided by a series of drainage ditches and hedgerows into a number of regular geometric plots stretching down to the river's edge. Significant areas to the east are enclosed by a sea wall and other earthworks exist running parallel to field boundaries leading to the river. The flat landscape is largely devoted to dairy pasture although some arable farming in the larger fields to the west is evident. Orchards are also evident and coupled with larger orchards around Rodley, indicate that the area was at one time an important fruit producing area. The area is fringed by numerous brick built farms.

8 LITTORAL SANDS AND ROCK OUTCROPS

Character Areas

8a The Severn Sands



Key Characteristics

- Broad landscape of open water, sandbanks, mudflats and rock outcrops.
- Temporal landscape.
- Open landscape.
- Industrial sites bordering the river are often prominent in views to the east.
- Cliffs and beaches bordering the river along many stretches.
- Riverine and estuarine habitats are rich in wildlife.
- The river is a potentially rich archaeological resource.
- The remains of numerous rusting river craft, wharves and quays line the banks of the river.
- Severn Bore is a well known feature of the river.

Landscape Character

Upstream from Rodley, the river is a fairly constant width and may be viewed as an integral part of the landscape surrounding it. However, downstream from this point it begins to broaden, sandflats and mudflats becoming a continuous feature at low water.

The strong tidal action results in a visually diverse landscape ranging from the exposed mudflats, sandbanks and ragged rock outcrops to the fast flowing estuarine waters of the Severn. These contribute to a temporal landscape which shifts and changes hourly; at high tide, the area is almost entirely covered by water. The waters are generally turbid with a high suspended sediment, creating a mass of grey, brown and yellow water depending on the status of the tide, the light conditions and the weather. However, as the water level drops a shifting landscape of open water, sands and rocks is revealed. The edge of the landscape is characterised by a muddy interface between land and river.

It is an open and windy landscape with long, uninterrupted views across neighbouring landscapes. These views often extend some distance and end abruptly where surrounding hills, ridges and escarpments form a backdrop. Views to industrial areas are also possible, particularly where these are sited on the water's edge as at Lydney Harbour and Sharpness. The Severn Road Bridge is a prominent landscape feature and dominates views along the river to the south.

Moored boats and remnants of wharves and quays are indications of the river's past history as an important transportation and communication route. Small pleasure craft may be seen sailing along the river today and add colour and movement to the landscape.

Physical Influences

The River Severn has a diverse geological setting and a wide range of geomorphological features, especially sediment deposits. The river flows over the soft Triassic rocks which emerge in places as jagged outcrops. These are sometimes extensive such as those at Wellhouse Rock, Guscar Rocks and Chapel Rock off the Beachley peninsula and provide dramatic static features in an otherwise soft and shifting landscape.

The underlying geology also governs the width of the estuary, forming constrictions where these rocks come to the surface. These rock shelves are known locally as benches and were often used as fording points. One such example exists at Newnham where an ancient crossing point linked it to Arlingham. At the time of the Welsh Cattle Drovers, this provided an important crossing point and allowed animals from Abergavenny and beyond to pass on to lucrative markets in London.

A feature particular to the river is the Severn Bore. This is a natural phenomenon caused by a combined effect of the estuary's topography and tides. As the flood tide advances up the estuary, it encounters a rapid constriction in width and depth and is forced upwards. Another cause is a 'step' in the bedrock which is located on the Malvern line where Silurian rocks pass under the river. If the tide is high enough this causes a wave, known as the Bore, to be formed. There can be as many as 260 bores a year and they can exceed three metres in height in mid stream. The main wave forms just upstream of Lydney and can continue as far as the weirs above Gloucester. The bore represents a unique physiographical regime that occurs with the second highest tide in the world, and extreme dynamics.

Over thousands of years the slow, aging river has deposited vast quantities of alluvial clay. These deposits have formed extensive mud and sand flats. The sandbanks are known to change rapidly and although the main channel and the larger sand banks (notably the Noose, Frampton Sand, Saninger Sand, Shepardine Sands and Oldbury Sands) have remained constant for hundreds of years, the peripheries are constantly changing, new sandbanks appearing without warning, often on a single ebb or flow of the tide. This has been the cause of many accidents on the river, particularly when it was a major trading route.

The river has eroded dramatic cliffs in places. The most striking rise above the river at Sedbury, the Garden Cliff south of Westbury-on-Severn, and at Cliff Farm near Lydney and all clearly display the local geological strata. Beneath these cliffs can often be found narrow beaches which are littered with boulders and pebbles that have fallen from the cliff face above. For example, below Sedbury Cliffs the foreshore is strewn with blocks of fossiliferous rocks. This is one of the best hunting grounds for fossil collectors in the whole district. The area also contains 'tufa' deposits which consist of petrified moss, grass, twigs and wood.

The river is rich in wildlife and represents some of the most valued estuarine landscapes in the country. The river channel is almost entirely designated the Severn Estuary and Upper Severn Estuary SSSI which are noted for their internationally important estuarine habitats of mud, sand and rock and large populations of migratory fish such as Atlantic Salmon and Common Eel. The SSSI are also of international importance for wading birds, with total wintering populations averaging about 44,000 birds which feed on the populations of intertidal invertebrates of high biomass. Bird numbers can be considerably higher during severe winters owing to the river's mild climate, with wader populations moving here from the colder coastal regions around Britain. The Severn Estuary is host to internationally important populations of Curlew and Redshank and nationally important populations of Ringed Plover and Grey Plover. The estuary as a whole is the single most important wintering ground of Dunlin in the country. The northern section of the river is more brackish with freshwater influences.

Human Influences

The Severn has an estuary-wide sedimentary sequence. Rising sea levels in the early Holocene are represented by a thick layer of clay (the Wentlooge Formation) which may be dated to the Mesolithic. On the foreshore to the south of the district these clays, once exposed, have revealed footprints of people, animals and birds and it is possible that the Mesolithic peoples whose prints survive were hunting along the foreshore. Peat layers within the bands of clay is also important. They testify to marine regressions and largely date to the Bronze Age and Iron Age. At Chapel Tump and Goldcliff a short distance to the south of the district the peat layers have revealed wooden buildings which may indicate seasonal and specialised wetland exploitation. Similar remains may await discovery beneath the mud along the shoreline within the district.

Because of its great length and the fact that that it is navigable as far inland as Welshpool, the Severn has always been one of the most important rivers in Britain, serving as an artery for trade and communications from the earliest times. Indeed it is possible that Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic communities would have used the river as a route for communications and trade.

For example, a flint core found at Woolaston Grange, identified as being c.10,000 years old, is thought to have been brought into the area by water transport as flint does not occur naturally in Dean, and other flint working sites of this period are situated on tributaries of the Severn. Finds of metal and flint implements and pottery sherds indicate that the Severn continued to be an important route of trade and communication throughout the Bronze Age and Iron Age. It is interesting to note therefore that of the twelve Bronze Age or Iron Age boats and boat fragments found in Britain two were discovered in the Severn Estuary not far from the district boundary.

During the Roman period, at which time iron ore mining had become an industrial concern, maritime activity became increasingly important. Several ports are known to have been established along the river with Gloucester (GLEVM) acting as the main transhipment centre for the distribution of local good and imported products.

The river was also used by armies to transport troops and invading forces. For example, Norse raids are known to have occurred in the area three times between AD 850 -900 and in 1171 Henry II sailed from Newnham with as many as four hundred ships and 5,000 men to invade Ireland.

Throughout the Medieval period the river continued to be an important trade route. Many craft were likely to have been built in the district, given that the Forest yielded timber and iron, two of the principal materials for boat building. Many of the ships built are likely to have been of the Severn Trow variety which was the traditional cargo-carrying craft of the area. During the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, the district's industries all expanded rapidly and the Trows were required to carry increasing quantities of pig iron, iron ore, bark, timber, stone and coal. The 18th century saw a decline in maritime trade as it began to suffer competition from the country's rapidly improving canal and rail networks. The Gloucester and Sharpness canal was a significant blow as it allowed sea-going

ships to bypass the most difficult stretch of the Severn and sail directly to and from Gloucester, so removing the need to tranship cargoes at the ports of Chepstow and Newnham.

During the 20th century the rivers maritime trade all but vanished. However, a number of craft, many rusting and in need of repair, line the river banks and often lie alongside modern fishing boats or small personal craft, grouped together at the remnants of an old quay at the entrance to one of the many Pills. The river is still used for leisure and numerous rowing and sailing clubs exist along its shores.

There can be little doubt that the Severn has a great deal of archaeological potential. Wharfs, ports and quays await discovery and there is potential for finding boat timbers, wrecks or cargoes preserved in the waterlogged conditions along the length of its shoreline.

The river was also an important source of food. Mesolithic communities would have fished in the river and scoured the foreshore for edible plants and animals to supplement their diet; the Mesolithic footprints mentioned earlier may well belong to a group moving along the edge of the river in search of food. In later centuries fishing became an important industry with ever more elaborate methods of catching fish. Strict controls were placed on fishing rights and fishing laws were introduced. For example, numerous Saxon charters mention fishing rights for land bordering the Severn and are always associated with weirs. In this period these were no more than a means of catching fish and applied to basket weirs made from wattled hazel which were placed in the river between rows of stakes. They were probably similar to what were later called 'putts', a group of which is called a 'puttcher'. The main types of fish caught in the Severn were eels, salmon (the 'Silver Darlings' of the Severn) and lamphrey. This latter variety was nicknamed 'Gloucestershire Royal Fish' and was favoured by Norman kings despite Henry I being killed by a 'surfeit of lamphreys' in 1135 AD.

Buildings and Settlement

There are no buildings or settlement associated with the shifting estuarine landscapes of the Severn. However, on many of the rocky outcrops small beacons serve to warn passing ships of the dangers they pose. A number of these outcrops also serve as solid foundations for the Severn Road Bridge which is a dominant feature of the landscape.

On Chapel Rock (or The Isle of St. Tecla), just off Beachley Point, is located the remains of Twrog's Chapel. It is thought that this church dates to the Saxon period and appears to have been sited to exploit a dramatic and perhaps symbolic location as the rock marks the point where the Wye and the Severn meet.

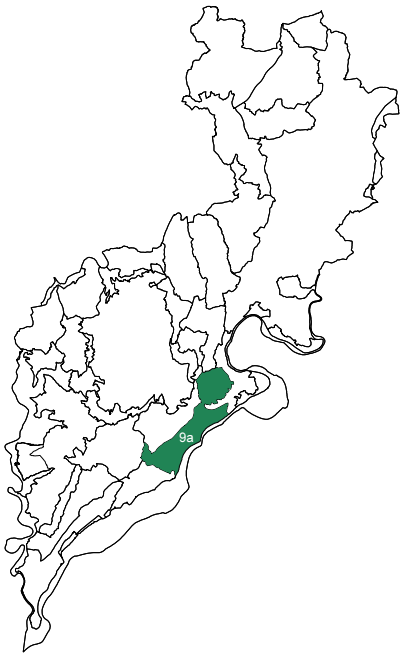
Character Areas

The Severn Sands is the only landscape character area in the Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops landscape character type in the study area. It defines the south western extent of the district and extends into the neighbouring districts of Stroud and South Gloucestershire and the county of Monmouthshire.

9 UNDULATING FARMLAND

Character Areas

9a. Bledisloe Hundred



Key Characteristics

- Convex hills with broad rounded tops and often steep sides.
- Hills are generally orientated south west - north east.
- Strong pattern created by neat, often ancient, hawthorn hedges.
- Deciduous woodlands and copses restricted to narrow, steep sided streams.
- Relatively inaccessible landscape.
- Place names are strongly related to landform.
- Mixed arable and pasture farming are the prominent land uses.
- Sorbus hybrids on river cliffs at Gatcombe.

Landscape Character

The landscape comprises a discrete area of low convex hills with broad rounded tops, small woods and scattered farmsteads and is located in the south east of the district bordering the River Severn.

The landscape is characteristically more undulating and of a higher altitude than the neighbouring vale. The orientation of the hills gives the landscape a distinctive grain. This south west-north east trend is echoed by the line of the ridges to the west and the course of the Severn to the east which define the limits of this landscape. The course of the A48 (T) and a line of pylons marching across the hills further enforce this orientation.

The strong pattern of fields emphasises the undulating landform, with neat, low cut hawthorn hedges traversing the hills. These contain a patchwork of pasture and arable fields, the rich red soils clearly visible where fields have been harvested and ploughed. Woodlands are limited in this agricultural landscape. However, small copses running along the numerous brooks that drain the hills and small coverts on the tops and sides of the hills are conspicuous and combine with numerous hedgerow trees to give the impression of a well treed landscape. The most prominent woodlands are located in the vicinity of the Park at Oaklands and between Gatcombe and Purton where the narrow deciduous copses that follow the brooks and streams may be seen extending to the very edge of the cliffs above the Severn.

Scattered large farmsteads are reached by a network of winding hedged lanes and tracks and are largely sited close to the summit of individual hills, possibly indicating that historically the lower hill slopes and narrow valleys were poorly drained and unsuitable for settlement. These farms therefore gain visual prominence although their impact is softened by many being surrounded by trees or by being sited in a sheltered position below the skyline.

Riverside cliffs are an interesting landscape feature. Elsewhere, and particularly where the Swansea to Gloucester rail line skirts the southernmost edge of the landscape, high retaining walls are conspicuous and indicate that the construction of the railway required significant engineering works in this location.

Physical Influences

The area represents a small part of the narrow band of Silurian rocks that extend from Herefordshire, through the study area into Stroud District. As they pass beneath the river, approximately between Purton and Sharpness, these rocks form a 'step' which is one of the factors that causes the Severn Bore. At Gatcombe significant river cliffs are evident, displaying the composition of the local Silurian rock strata. Rare Sorbus hybrids occur along these cliffs and are an important landscape feature.

Within the Undulating Farmland landscape type, the rocks are primarily Silurian siltstones and mudstones of the Raglan Mudstone formation, the same rocks which may be found forming the Leadon Vale to the north. In this location, however, these rocks have been moulded to form a very different landscape of distinct convex hills.

The hills have a consistent height of around 40 m, the highest point in the landscape rising to 105 m AOD, and have broad rounded tops and frequently steep sides. It is likely that the hills were created as a result of the erosive action of streams draining the nearby ridges moving through the area towards the Severn. Deposition has also played its part; the numerous brooks and streams are floored with thick alluvial deposits, in particular the Bideford Brook that runs through Blakeney. Alluvial fans are also evident where tributaries of the Bideford Brook have deposited a mass of material at the point where they emerge from a narrow valley at the foot of hills and debouche onto a plain.

Farmland is generally mixed pasture and arable contained by well maintained hedgerows, many of which are ancient. Neutral and acidic grasslands do, however, occur on some steeper slopes and often with hedgerow and scrub associations such as at Clarkes Pool Meadow SSSI.

Human Influences

It is likely that these hills have been farmed and settled for hundreds of years. However, the strongest available evidence points to occupation from the Saxon period. During the 7th century the Saxons began to establish their settlements in Dean and south Herefordshire. Most would have been a small homestead in a clearing on the edge of the forest and perhaps utilised existing Romano British field systems. The settlements rapidly grew in number and their location is often betrayed in existing place names. The 'Hlaw' element is highly conspicuous in the Undulating Farmland landscape type and refers to settlement associated with a hill. It survives in the many place names in this landscape containing 'loe' or 'low' such as Bledisloe, Etloe, Lowfield and Hagloe.

The 'Hlaw' element may also refer to a burial mound, and a number of field names in this area either contain the word “Barrow” or a possible derivative.

The irregular hedged enclosures are conspicuous. These cloak the entire landscape and divide the hillsides up into neatly farmed units punctuated only by small copses, wooded brooks and isolated hedgerow trees. These are likely to date to the enclosures of the Parliamentary Acts although the pattern of fields suggests that in this area, enclosure of former unenclosed cultivation patterns was taking place. It is possible that hawthorns were particularly prominent throughout the landscape’s history. Hagloe and Hawfield are both names from the area and contain references to hawthorns; 'Haw' is another name for Hawthorn, 'Haga' is the old English version of the word and is identical to the word for hedge.

The line of a disused railway passes through a small area of the landscape. Its route passes through hilly terrain and required Victorian engineers to construct a tunnel and significant cuttings. The line continued over the Severn across the old Severn Railway Bridge (built in 1874) which spanned the river just to the south of Purton. Little is left of the bridge although the cuttings which are either side of the tunnel remain as striking landscape features.

Buildings and Settlement

The landscape is rural and the main settlement is the village of Blakeney which is located on the alluvial flats bordering the Bideford Brook. Smaller hamlets, usually no more than a few houses dispersed alongside a narrow winding lane, are also evident. Beyond these, settlement is restricted to a small number of large farmsteads. These are typically sited on the top of a hill and at the end of a long winding lane and consist of a whitewashed stone cottage surrounded by barns and outbuildings. The names of these farms also often refer to their hill top location.

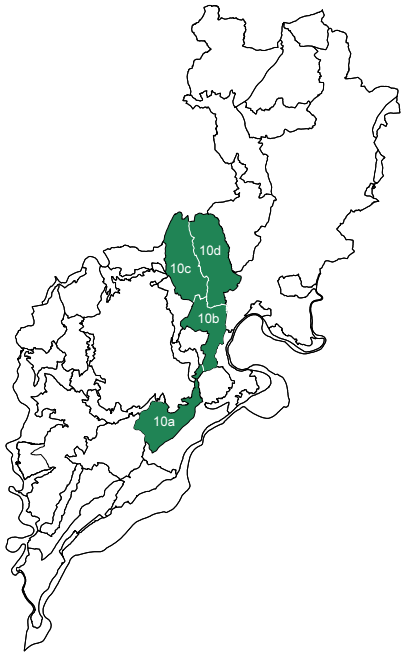
Character Areas

Bledisloe Hundred is the only landscape character area in the district in the Undulating Farmland landscape type.

10 RIDGES AND VALLEYS

Character Areas

10a. Allaston Ridge
10b. Littledean Ridge
10c. Edge Hill
10d. Breakheart Hill



Key Characteristics

- Distinctive rounded ridge profiles rising above the neighbouring vale landscapes and bordering the wooded syncline.
- The ridges are orientated north south which is emphasised by the orientation of hedgerow patterns and small woodland copses clinging to steeper slopes.
- Mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland cloaks the ridges.
- Extensive coniferous plantations are evident on the ridges.
- Distinctive 'squatter' settlements on the upper ridge slopes close to existing woodland and the line of the Crease Limestone.
- Extensive views over the surrounding lowlands are possible from exposed ridge top locations.
- A number of redundant quarries are located throughout the landscape.
- Numerous transportation routes follow valleys created by streams and brooks as they weave through the ridges.
- Range of species rich grassland habitats, heath and bog, old orchards and ancient semi natural woodlands.

Landscape Character

The Devonian Sandstone ridges are a prominent feature of the district and their distinctive profiles set them apart from the adjacent lowland agricultural landscapes and densely forested syncline. Wooded ridge sides, which rise sometimes dramatically from the vale below are visible for many miles around and provide a convenient orientation point when viewed from the surrounding lowlands.

The ridges rise up to 279 m AOD and represent some of the most elevated landscapes in the district and offer long distance views across wide areas. The sides of the ridges are steep, particularly where streams have cut deeply incised valleys through them. On many of the steeper slopes, rock outcrops are visible through the thin covering of soil.

The ridges themselves support a mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland which provides a textural backdrop to the surrounding lowlands. However, differing patterns of land use and variations in geology ensure that landscape character on one ridge may be very different from the character on the other, despite their close proximity.

Ridge tops and steeper ridge slopes are typically forested. Coniferous plantations are the predominant woodland type. However, there are some significant areas of deciduous and mixed woodland across the ridges, many being small copses running along narrow streams and valleys. Many of the coniferous plantations are owned by the Forestry Commission and are similar in character to those within the Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Margin landscape type.

Running through the north-south orientated ridges are a number of narrow, often settled, valleys. These either share the north south orientation of the ridges or pass through them east west. The valleys are typically wooded, intimate and settled and therefore offer stark contrast to the more exposed landscapes of the ridges. The valleys are also more intensively farmed and field patterns that climb the valley sides offer a textural contrast to the ridges above. The predominant farm type is pasture, many of the valley and ridge slopes being too steep for cultivation. Fields tend to be small, and defined by well maintained hedges, many of which contain hedgerow trees. Linear woods along streams and brooks and orchards contribute to the valleys' wooded character.

Physical Influences

The ridges define the eastern limits of the Forest of Dean Syncline and are formed from rocks from various geological periods; Carboniferous, Devonian and Silurian. These ridges rise dramatically from the surrounding landscape to elevations of between 200 and 280 m AOD. The ridges themselves were formed during the Hercynian orogeny (approximately 280 million years BP) during which the various rock strata, whether hard or soft, were pushed relentlessly and forced into folds and ridges due to the influence of resistant ridges in the underlying rock strata.

Carboniferous rocks form the westernmost and highest of the two ridges. These rocks dip steeply beneath the Coal Measures of the Forest of Dean syncline and re-emerge as a much wider outcrop to the east of the Wye valley where they form the Limestone Plateau and Limestone Hills landscape types. The Crease Limestone band, which contains seams of iron ore, outcrop in the vicinity of Mitcheldean and extends along the ridge as far as Edge Hill. Significant gravel deposits are evident overlying the summit of ridgelines of Carboniferous rocks.

The eastern ridge is lower and is formed from Devonian Brownstones, with the lower slopes formed from rocks of the Devonian St Maughan's formation and Silurian geology. Similar to the Carboniferous rocks, the Devonian sandstones that emerge as a narrow band in the ridge dip below the Dean syncline and emerge far to the west in the Wye Valley.

Devonian rocks are clearly evident at the Wilderness Quarry on Breakheart Hill where they have been heaved up to an angle of 60 degrees by the incredible forces that created the ridges. Quarries exporting stone for paving slabs and building stone are still active in the area. The rocks are red as they contain red iron oxide or haematite. However, local variations exist; grey green mottling is evident in some rocks where chemical changes have given rise to ferrous oxide.

The solid geology outcrops in places but is largely overlain by a thin layer of soil. Therefore, local variations in geology may only be identified in the stone used in local buildings and in the numerous active and disused quarries situated throughout the landscape such as the Wilderness Quarry and Plump Hill Quarry.

Drift deposits are largely confined to the streams draining the ridges. Here silty clays and alluvium form narrow floodplains and pastures at the base of steeply incised valleys. Elsewhere significant gravel deposits may be found capping the highest ridges.

Intensive arable and pasture farming practices and commercial forestry limit the nature conservation value of the area. However, SSSI have been designated in a number of the former quarry workings such as the Wigpool Ironstone Mine, Westbury Brook Ironstone Mine and Puddlebrook Quarry. Elsewhere unimproved, semi improved and acidic grasslands, often associated with steep slopes, scrub, hedgerows and woodland edge habitats are regarded as of significant nature conservation value. A number of the woodlands are ancient semi natural woods and replanted ancient woods with some being of significant historic context, such as Flaxley, Welshbury and Chestnuts. Some of these are thought to represent remnants of native woodland cover of the Dean.

Other habitats include heathland and bog habitats at Wigpool Common, which are associated with notable plant species, and old orchards on steep slopes which are notable for deadwood invertebrates.

Human Influences

The ridges represent a strong physical barrier between the vale landscapes to the east and the wooded syncline to the west and would have offered excellent strategic and defensible locations from where to observe activity in the neighbouring lowlands.

Evidence from the Neolithic, in the form of stone and flint axes, has been found at Longhope, Mitcheldean and Viney Hill; Bronze Age finds in the form of metal workings have been discovered at Mitcheldean, Steam Mills and Viney Hill. Collectively, these finds indicate that the ridges were not outside the realm of settlement in these periods and that further excavation and field work may reveal a number of prehistoric sites, and evidence of early occupation. Perhaps the most well known site however, is the Iron Age hillfort at Welshbury. Despite never having been excavated, the site is recognised as having multiple ramparts and a convoluted entrance design. It is possible that the site was important as it overlooked an ancient route through the ridges. The site has yielded an iron spear-head, similar to those used by the Roman Military, and a rare pre-Roman electrum coin has been found in the vicinity.

Flaxley Abbey is a further important feature of the landscapes history. The site occupies the lower slopes of the ridge where the Westbury Brook emerges from its steeply incised valley to enter the vale. The valley may well represent an ancient route through the ridges thus giving the site both strategic and symbolic importance. The abbey originated in the mid 12th century when Henry, Duke of Normandy (later King Henry II) granted lands to the Cistercians. The charter also gives the monks rights to work an iron forge and use two oaks each week for fuel. This apparently led to a rapid decline in the local woodlands and a second charter was drawn up in 1281 replacing the grant of oaks with a tract of woodland. The tract of land, located between Ruspidge and Cinderford is interestingly still known as Abbots Wood.

During the 1530's the abbey became a mansion due to the dissolution of the monasteries and the gateway chapel became a church. Part of the Medieval deer park, remnants of which cover approximately 50 hectares, was converted to ornamental gardens; the site being recognised on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Commercial forestry and quarrying have both had a significant impact on the landscape in recent times. More recently the relative height of the ridges has, attracted communication masts.

Buildings and Settlement

The largest settlements in the landscape type are Mitcheldean and Drybrook. Both settlements have a historic core although they have been subject to much expansion. Interestingly, Mitcheldean appears to have been founded on or close to the Crease Limestone band on the lower slopes of the Carboniferous ridge although post war expansion eastwards has taken the towns industrial park onto the neighbouring Devonian Ridge. Drybrook has also historically undergone much expansion, the town growing as the local resources of coal and stone were worked more intensively. The settlement developed southwards into the area known as Harrow Hill. The distinctive pattern of small houses and enclosures are still evident on the side of the ridge below the line of more recent coniferous plantations.

Smaller settlements such as the villages of Littledean and Longhope tend to occupy gentler topography in sheltered valley locations. These villages are of great antiquity, Littledean for

example being the site of a Saxon church dedicated to the murdered Prince Athelbert. These settlements are generally linear compact clusters, the nature of the surrounding landform restricting sideways expansion. They contain a core of historic houses around the central church which are principally built of stone and often reflect the nature of the underlying geology. For example, in the vicinity of Longhope, the local geology is formed from hard bands of massive red sandstones belonging to the Devonian Brownstone.

As is typical of the edge of the Forest of Dean, 'squatter' settlements may be identified fringing the woodlands. These represent encroachments on the fringes of former early woodland and wastes and are likely to have been first inhabited by people moving to the area to find work in the local coal and iron industries. The distinctive pattern of small hedged enclosures persists and may be identified clinging precariously to steep upper ridge slopes at Blakeney Hill and Viney Hill or surrounded by woodland as at Edge Hill. The distinctive dispersed character of these settlements is best appreciated when they are sited on visible ridge slopes. However, this also makes them highly sensitive to infill development and erosion of the pattern of small fields and enclosures. Again, the local geology can often be interpreted from the building stone used in the construction of the 'squatter cottages' where these have not been rendered and whitewashed.

Character Areas

10a. Allaston Ridge

A prominent ridge that forms the south eastern boundary of the Forest of Dean syncline separating the forested core from the Undulating Farmland at Bledisloe. The ridge is open and panoramic views across the Severn towards the Cotswolds are possible from the top of the ridge.

Field patterns tend to reflect regular enclosure of former common pastures and waste. These are predominantly of moderate size and defined by a network of often overgrown hedgerows, many containing numerous hedgerow oaks. Fields are generally given over to sheep and cattle pasture, the steepness of the landform limiting arable farming. Despite this, arable fields are evident. These tend to occupy gentler landform on lower elevations on St Maughan's formation geology and offer contrasting textures and colours to the smooth, verdant pastures. Woodlands in these agricultural landscapes are generally very small and tend to be linear copses running along streams such as Tingley Wood.

Along the top of the ridge line is a string of 'squatter settlements'. These are sited on the fringes of the woodland that constitutes the Forest Core character area and originally would have been encroachments into early woodland or wastes. Indeed in many views, the tops of trees in the Forest can be seen above the houses. The pattern of small, hedged enclosures is clearly visible on the hillside at Blakeney where numerous small cottages cling to the hillside and are reached by a network of narrow winding lanes. When viewed from the surrounding lowlands the hedgerows that define the numerous small enclosures and planting associated with gardens give the impression of a well wooded landscape. Viney Hill and Blakeney Hill border a break in the ridge that carries the winding road between Blakeney and Parkend. This also once also carried a railway line and was an important route linking the forest core to the Severn.

10b. Littledean Ridge

A farmed and wooded ridge stretches between Morse's Grove in the north to Hale Grove in the south. The ridge rises steeply from the vale above Newnham and the Severn and forms an important buffer between the urban sprawl of Cinderford and the rural landscapes to the east. The productive farmland is punctuated by a strong pattern of hedgerows and deciduous woodlands which provides a textural backdrop in views from the surrounding lowlands. The upper slopes are on Brownstones and are generally pasture for cattle. The lower slopes on St Maughan's formation geology are generally given over to arable production. Field patterns are generally aligned along the contours of the ridge and emphasise landform. Deciduous woodlands tend to be located on the steepest slopes and combine with the hedgerow pattern to give the landscape a strong north-south grain.

The village of Littledean is a major feature of the ridge. It is largely hidden from views from the lowlands as it occupies a strike valley although from the higher ground surrounding it, extensive panoramic views are possible. There is some evidence for Roman activity in the area, and although the current hall, as with many buildings in the village, dates to the 17th century, may have been constructed on earlier foundations.

Littledean Camp is an earthwork high on the ridge next to the village and the site's defensive earthworks can still be traced in the landscape. The site affords extensive panoramic views over the Severn and the Cotswolds and it is thought to be the site of the 'old castle of Dene' from which some believe the Forest takes its name. However, the site is probably a Norman defensive enclosure dating to the civil war that arose between King Stephen and his cousin Matilda in the 12th century as they struggled for the crown of England. The powerbase of Matilda's half-brother, Robert of Gloucester was in the West Country and the site may have been established by Stephen to monitor traffic on the Severn and warn of attacks on his lands upstream.

10c. Edge Hill

The Carboniferous mudstone and sandstone forms a prominent rounded ridge which borders the Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Fringe landscape type to the west and the Breakheart Hill ridge to the east. It is distinguished from other ridges within the landscape type by its extensive woodland cover and height which reaches at its maximum 279 m AOD. It forms a setting for the town of Mitcheldean, within which new housing development may be identified climbing up the slopes of the ridge.

Extensive woodland cover, particularly in coniferous plantations, is a feature of the landscape. These are managed by the Forestry Commission and cloak vast areas of the upper portions of the ridge, particularly areas underlain by the extensive gravel deposits that sit above the Carboniferous geology. Small clearings, many in linear clusters and associated with small quarries, may be identified within the woodlands in a line around Wigpool Common to Edge Hill. It is likely that this 'ring' of development represents squatter occupation of lands in the vicinity of the Crease Limestone Band that runs along the slopes of the ridge, with occupants exploiting quarries in the Lower Dolomite rocks and iron mines..

The ridge provides an ideal location for communication masts. A number of these may be identified in the Edgehills Plantation. The tallest structure is the Fire Watch Tower and can be seen standing out against the skyline in a number of views to the ridge.

10d. Breakheart Hill

Breakheart Hill, rising to 219 m AOD, represents the highest point on the Brownstone ridge that extends from Chestnuts Hill in the south, northwards into Herefordshire. The ridge is predominantly agricultural, a strong pattern of hedged fields dividing up the landscape into a neat patchwork of pasture and arable fields. Similar to the Littledean Ridge character area, field patterns are generally aligned along the contours of the ridge and small linear deciduous copses cling to the steeper slopes, emphasising landform.

In the south of the character area, extensive coniferous plantations have been established. These cloak the landscape and provide a wooded backdrop to agricultural landscapes on the lower ridge slopes.

Beyond the small farms that are located throughout the landscape, there are few settlements. Longhope is the largest village and occupies the narrow valley of the Longhope Brook which itself has exploited the line of weakness where Silurian and Devonian geology meet. This linear settlement is constrained by landform and new development may be seen extending up and down the valley from the core of the village next to the church. On the lower slopes of Chestnuts Hill is the small village of Pope's Hill. This represents squatter settlement and encroaches onto the fringes of early woodland and waste. The distinctive pattern of small cottages, linked by winding narrow lanes, and a patchwork of small enclosure is still evident in the landscape.

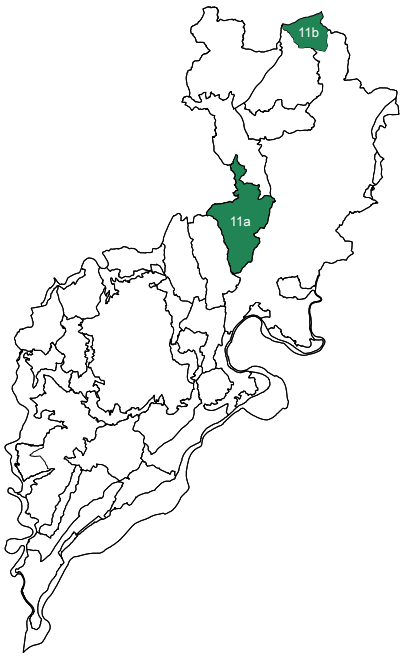
On the western slopes of the ridge a large industrial estate and post war housing development may be seen extending up the slope. The industrial area contains numerous large factory units including Rank Xerox which is the largest employer in the area.

The ridge is encircled by roads that cling to the gentler, lower slopes. Access across the ridge is via the A4136 which at one time was the main route through the district to Monmouth. This runs along the valley cut through the ridge by a tributary of the Longhope Brook. The massive Wilderness Quarry, where the steeply sloping strata of the Devonian Brownstones may be clearly observed, is sited to the north of the road and is clearly visible from it.

11 WOODED HILLS

Character Areas

11a. May Hill and Outliers
11b. The South Malvern Foothills



Key Characteristics

- Varied, often steeply sloping, hilly landform rising above the neighbouring vale landscapes.
- Individual hills form distinctive and recognisable silhouettes when viewed from the neighbouring lowlands.
- Wide views over surrounding farmland.
- Wooded valleys contain quick flowing streams.
- Large, often interconnecting, areas of deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations.
- Assarted hedged fields form interlocking pattern with broadleaf woodlands.
- Areas of rough unimproved and semi improved grassland and scrub evident, particularly on steeper slopes.
- Dispersed pattern of buildings with occasional clusters associated with assarting or squatter settlements.

Landscape Character

The Wooded Hills are an upstanding, wooded landscape with sloping and often steep and undulating landform. The intrinsic character of the landscape is derived from the pronounced relief and the dominant, flowing woodland cover.

It is a landscape of large, irregularly shaped woodlands and wooded streams typically forming an interlocking pattern with surrounding hedged fields, many of which represent ancient assarts. This results in a strong sense of unity and visual integration. Where woodland cover is less extensive the impression of a well wooded landscape is retained by the pattern of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which when viewed from lower elevations, merge together and combine with small copses.

The nature of the sloping landform, particularly the steepness of slopes, has inhibited clearance for agricultural use in the past and large areas have therefore retained a significant cover of ancient, semi natural woodland. Into this often only slight clearances have taken place. These are usually of an assarted nature although squatter incursions may also be identified on May Hill. Where more significant areas are open and farmed, the presence of strong hedge lines, with good representation of hedgerow tree cover, contributes to the visual cohesion of the landscape.

Where the steepness of slopes is less severe there has been a more limited constraint on agriculture and large fields have been established. These are primarily located on the lower slopes of the hills and merge with agricultural landscapes in the neighbouring vale. In these transitional landscapes, hedgerows, hedgerow trees, orchard trees and streamside copses are important in providing visual unity, linking farmland blocks and integrating them with areas of woodland.

These are very visible landscapes and tend to form a backdrop to many views in the surrounding lowlands. The distinctive profile of the hills makes them instantly recognisable and can therefore act as useful orientation points. Their visibility makes these landscapes particularly sensitive to development such as coniferous plantations in geometric blocks that do not respect landform.

Physical Influences

The Wooded Hills are upstanding features on the Malvern Axial Line, a line of upheaval and weakness that dates to around 600 million years ago which formed in a pavement of ancient crystalline rocks at a time when Britain was part of a land mass stretching from Canada to Europe.

This structural line of weakness has reasserted itself numerous times throughout the ages when it controlled the folding of strata that formed the ridges to the east of the Forest of Dean and the syncline of the Forest itself. May Hill and the Malverns are features of upheaval episodes along this line of folding, and in particular the Hercynian Orogeny.

May Hill is formed from Silurian rocks. These were laid down approximately 440 million years ago, prior to the period of great uplift when the Malverns overlooked a sub tropical sea. Numerous layers of limestone and shale were laid down on top of ancient and hard sandstone which is pebbly along its eastern edge marking the line of the ancient shore. The period of uplift forced the strata to buckle and form an anticline, bringing older rocks, those of the Huntley Hill Sandstone formation, to the surface. It is usual to find an upfold adjacent to a downfold and the May Hill anticline is complementary to the Dean syncline. May Hill rises to 296 m AOD although lower hills surrounding it, such as Huntley Hill and Nottwood Hill, reach up to between 150 and 200 m AOD.

The Malverns are similar to May Hill in that they represent part of an anticline structure, although much older rocks are exposed and they contain more complex geology. The folding occurred during the Hercynian and took place against pre-existing earth blocks, thrusting up the 700 million year old Pre-Cambrian rocks as well as younger Ordovician and Silurian strata. Much of the overlying rocks were eroded away to leave the oldest rocks exposed at the surface in the form of a prominent series of hills.

Exposures of Pre-Cambrian rocks largely exist outside the district. However, a small area of granite enters the district at Chase End Street. This is notable as a steep wooded slope, the thin acidic soils derived from this being ill suited to cultivation. Remnants of Ordovician and Silurian geology survive as the mudstones and sandstones on the upper slopes of hills.

Following the period of uplift, Carboniferous, Permian and Triassic periods saw deposits of breccia, sandstone and mudstone. Much of these have been eroded away from above the contorted rocks beneath although remnants survive on the foothills. Triassic rocks are particularly extensive and represent deposits laid down in a dessert which was overlooked by the Malverns.

The lower slopes of the hills, particularly where slopes are gentle, are well suited to arable farming although on steeper slopes and where soils are thinnest, grazing for cattle and sheep and woodland predominates. On particularly steep slopes, unimproved and semi improved neutral to acid grasslands are prevalent. These are often found in close association with woodland edges, hedgerows and orchards. The Wooded Hills are also notable as being part of wild daffodil country.

Woodlands are a particularly important feature and a number are ancient semi natural woodlands, or are planted ancient woodlands, some with Silurian limestone influence.

Human Influences

Finds from the Mesolithic indicate that the hills have been a focus of human activity from the earliest times. For example in the parish of Taynton, on the lower slopes of May Hill alongside a stream, flint implements, cores and flakes indicate the presence of a flint processing centre. Some time later, soon after 6000 BC and possibly as a result of flooding, the processing centre moved to Irelands Hill 750 m to the south west.

The Malverns are also rich in evidence of prehistoric activity, and it is thought that the hills were an upland grazing area during later prehistory. Indeed the name Malverns may derive from the Celtic words 'Moel', (bare) and 'bryn' (hill).

The hills were important routes throughout prehistory and offered travellers a course through the landscape that avoided the marshy and forested lowlands. They also provided defensible locations with vantage points over wide areas on which to establish forts: earthworks in Castle Hill Wood on May Hill, and the massive Iron Age fort on Midsummer Hill in The Malverns, a short distance to the north of the district boundary, are testimony to this.

The hills are sparsely settled and it is possible that since prehistoric times, these upland landscapes have been marginal to intensive

settlement and farming activity in the lowlands. Evidence suggests that the hillsides were managed as a source of timber and as common pasturage and waste on which to graze stock. Indeed amidst the hills significant areas have been identified as once being common pasture/ waste and existing woodlands are thought to be areas that were wooded prior to the 19th century.

Enclosure patterns are important indications of how the landscape was utilised since the Norman Conquest. Irregular enclosures on the southern foothills of The Malverns indicate that the landscape was already open and cultivated prior to the establishment of the present hedged field patterns. By contrast smaller fields on May Hill indicate that many of the areas between existing blocks of woodland date to 12th and 13th century assarts and post medieval squatter settlement and that, prior to clearance, the landscape was thickly wooded.

Buildings and Settlement

These landscapes are thinly settled, indicating their marginal nature. However, on May Hill, a small number of squatter settlements may be identified. These appear to have originated during the 18th and 19th century and were populated by people moving to the area in search of work. As is typical of squatter settlements, a sporadic, low density settlement pattern and small hedged enclosures may be identified across hillsides, as at Gardener's Green and Little London.

Elsewhere across the wooded hills landscape type, settlement is restricted to isolated farmsteads and cottages. These are often constructed from local stone and are a good indication of the underlying geology. On May Hill for example stone buildings tend to be built of Carboniferous sandstones in the west with the local variant, Gorsley Limestone, a golden buff stone, evident in buildings in the north and west of the area. Brick and timber are also widely used in house construction indicating these hilly landscapes have a strong relationship to the vale where these materials are prevalent.

Character Areas

11a. May Hill and Outliers

May Hill is a prominent landmark, its capping of trees believed to have been planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee, giving the hill a distinctive and instantly recognisable profile when viewed from the surrounding lowlands. May Hill and its outlying foothills are cloaked by large blocks of coniferous plantations and deciduous woodlands. These generally sit well within the undulating topography and occupy areas that were wooded prior to the 19th century. Hedgerows link these woodlands giving the landscape a strong sense of unity and cohesion.

Assarting appears to have been significant on May Hill, as does, squatter encroachment. Assarting was prevalent during the 12th and 13th centuries and involved the clearing of woodland to establish farmland. Assarted fields are numerous in the west of the character area between Pitmans Farm and Blakemore Farm and are discernable by a distinctive pattern of small irregular shaped fields between areas of woodland. Acid grassland and former heathland habitats are particularly noteworthy in the May Hill SSSI.

The lower slopes fringing the wooded uplands share many characteristics with the surrounding vale below. Orchards are a particular feature of these transitional landscapes between Blaisdon Wood and Huntley Hill.

11b. The South Malvern Foothills

These low hills represent an important transitional landscape between the Severn Vale and the main body of the Malvern Hills AONB to the north and therefore share characteristics with both.

Woodlands tend to be small on the lower slopes and may be found clinging to the sides of brooks and streams draining through the hills and on steeper landform. A number of woodlands are also associated with the wider parkland setting of Bromsberrow Place. The wooded character is enhanced by these woodlands coalescing, with hedgerows, hedgerow trees and isolated field trees visually linking isolated blocks of woodland to give the impression of a well wooded landscape. Significant woodlands on the higher hills to the north are prevalent in many views and further enhance the sense of a wooded landscape.

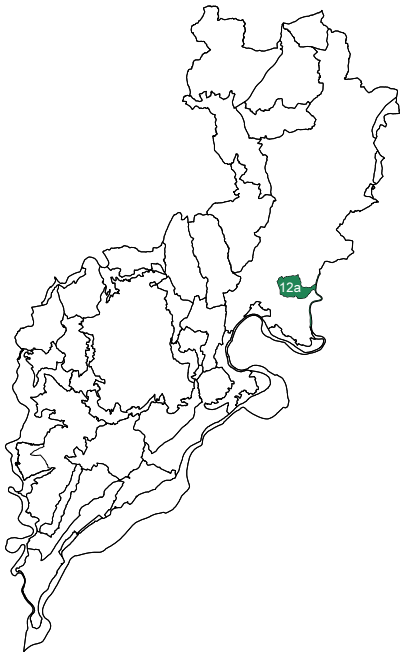
Farmland on gentle landform is predominantly arable, the rich red soils derived from underlying Permian geology clearly visible in newly ploughed fields. Steeper slopes tend to be improved grassland for cattle although semi improved grassland and areas of scrub encroachment are evident on some of the steeper slopes, particularly on Chase End Hill which rises to 191 m AOD above the lower hills and woodlands that surround it.

Bromsberrow Place is one of a number of historic parklands in The Malverns AONB that are sited to take advantage of dramatic relief and extensive views over the surrounding landscape. Woodland belts and remnants of former parkland form a distinctive part of the landscape. The influence of the garden designer may be found well beyond the formal gardens close to the house.

12 FLOODPLAIN FARMLAND

Character Areas

12a. Walmore Common



Key Characteristics

- Flat floodplains subject to annual winter flooding.
- Steep landform defines the outer edge of the floodplain.
- Range of habitats including unimproved grassland, improved neutral grassland and inundation grassland.
- Floodplain features such as drainage ditches and areas of standing water.
- Mature spreading trees are a distinctive element of the floodplain.
- Pastures overlie the most significant area of peat in the county.
- Roads and settlement occupier higher ground surrounding the floodplain.

Landscape Character

These broad flat open floodplain landscapes are extensive bordering the Severn although they are limited in area within the district. The floodplains are subject to winter flooding and their rich alluvial drift deposits support fertile grazing land for cattle, and although they are perceived as part of the much wider Unwooded Vale landscape type, they have distinctive landscape patterns and land use pressures.

The floodplains are characterised by large flat pasture fields. These are often enclosed by thick, well maintained hawthorn hedges that follow the course of deep drainage ditches. Mature spreading oaks are characteristic features of the landscape and provide shelter for cattle in these otherwise open landscapes. These gain visual prominence as they are the only significant vertical elements in the landscape.

The flat floodplain farmland is fringed by the undulating landscapes of the vale which appears to form a natural 'amphitheatre' of higher ground around it.

Physical Influences

Walmore Common is part of the extensive alluvial flats that border the Severn, upstream of Rodley. These low lying areas, generally below the 10 m contour, are flooded annually by the Severn. During these winter floods, fresh alluvium is deposited by the river, replenishing the nutrient levels of the soil.

It is distinct from other floodplains in Gloucestershire in that the character area overlies the only significant area of peat in the County. Peat forms in waterlogged environments and indicates that the area has been subject to flooding for many hundreds of years.

The area is a productive area of grassland pasture and managed accordingly. Drainage ditches divide up the landscape and ensure waterlogging does not occur. These ditches are also important to a number of species of nationally scarce plants. A number of fields have been improved although extensive areas are unimproved and are classified as inundation grassland. Neat hawthorn hedges border drainage ditches and divide the landscape into a number of large fields. These hedges contain mature hedgerow oaks and provide shelter for grazing animals.

Unimproved tussocky grassland occurs in the eastern part of the area and is dominated by wavy hair grass. Other species include marsh foxtail, soft rush and silverweed. Marsh grassland occurs in the north of the area and supports a range of rush and sedge species. The open rhymes or ditches are of particular botanical interest and represent a habitat that is now restricted nationally. In winter the site is an internationally important refuge and feeding area for wildfowl such as Bewick's Swans and regionally important for other wintering wildfowl and waders such as Wigeon, Gadwall and Shoveler.

Woodlands are not a notable landscape feature although old orchards, sited on steeper slopes at the edge of the flood basin are important for a range of invertebrates including Noble Chafer.

Human Influences

Walmore Common displays little evidence of past land use beyond the pattern of fields which may be seen in the landscape today. Investigation of these field patterns suggests that the present irregular pattern of enclosure took place on what was unenclosed land and reinforces the belief that the area was, prior to enclosure, open common land.

The presence of peat is significant in terms of understanding human interaction with the local landscape as the waterlogged, anaerobic conditions that peat provides is well suited to preserving organic material such as plant macrofossils and insect remains. This 'fossil record' may yield important information about the vegetation sequence in the area and in particular may give clues as to how humans have influenced the local environment by indicating episodes of clearance and regeneration.

It is not unreasonable to presume that the waterlogged conditions may also yield organic remains such as bone and wood which survive well in peat. It is possible that within the peat layers, wooden structures such as causeways linking areas of higher ground may survive. In the Somerset Levels, the Sweet Track was found preserved in peat. This important find represented a sophisticated raised walkway across areas of open water linking drier, higher areas of land. Elsewhere in the country, peat areas have also yielded 'bog bodies' and votive offerings.

Buildings and Settlement

There is no settlement on the Floodplain Farmland landscape type. A number of brick farm houses encircle the landscape. These overlook the drained farmland from higher ground where they are sited to avoid winter flooding. In character and form, these buildings are similar to other brick farms across the vale.

Character Areas

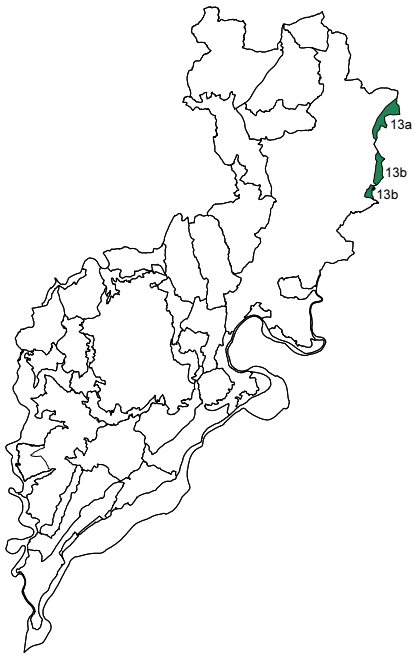
12a. Walmore Common

Despite being extensive to the east of the Severn, the Floodplain Farmland landscape type only occurs in one location in the study area.

13 VALE HILLOCKS

Character Areas

13a. Corse Wood Hill
13b. Woolridge



Key Characteristics

- Distinct limestone hills and ridges rising above the surrounding landscape.
- Mosaic of pasture, scrub and covers the hillocks.
- Extensive area of former common or waste land enclosed to form patchwork of regular geometric fields.
- Historic associations with sheep farming, cider production and pear orchards.
- Main roads border the lower slopes of the hills.
- Long distance views over the surrounding lowlands are possible from footpaths and roads crossing the hills.

Landscape Character

The Vale Hillocks is a diverse, small scale landscape of distinctive rolling hills, scrub and broadleaved woodland. The hills are in the north east of the study area and define the boundary with Tewkesbury Borough. Indeed, only the western face of a much larger complex of hills lies within the Forest of Dean district. They rise from the gently undulating vale and floodplains bordering the Severn to form a wooded backdrop which in places rises to 87 m AOD. This is comparatively low when compared to the Wooded Hills landscape type which borders the vale elsewhere. However, their distinctive profiles set them apart from the adjacent lowland agricultural landscapes. Despite their relatively low relief, extensive views are possible over the surrounding vale.

Much of the land is semi-improved and rough grazing, which on particularly steep slopes, tends to revert to scrub woodland. Broadleaved woodland is conspicuous on some of the steeper slopes, which rise sometimes dramatically from the farmed plains. Elsewhere the hills support a mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland which provides a textural backdrop to the surrounding vale.

Roads fringe the base of the hills and provide a distinct boundary between them and the vale landscapes beyond. The hills are largely unsettled although a small number of houses and farms are conspicuous, backing onto the hills and fronting onto the roads.

Physical Influences

The topography of the area is dominated by the broad, low lying vale that borders the Severn, the greater part of which is formed from soft Triassic mudstones although within this are occasional beds of Jurassic limestone. The latter, being more resistant to erosion, form distinctive hills, which in places rise more than 50 metres above the level of the surrounding countryside. These hills form the only significant areas of raised relief in an otherwise gently rolling plain.

Sloping landform and poor soils limit arable farming, and by far the most dominant land use on the Vale Hillocks is pasture for cattle. On particularly steep slopes which are unable to be grazed by cows, scrub invasion is evident. These areas of scrub blend seamlessly with areas of established broadleaved woodlands.

Elsewhere, and typically on gentler hillsides, well maintained hedges, often containing tall hedgerow trees divide up the landscape into moderately sized pastures, similar in appearance to those of the neighbouring vale.

Farming practices limit the nature conservation value of the landscape although the areas of scrub and small deciduous woodlands associated with steeper slopes are important for their wildlife value.

Human Influences

The existing pattern of hedged fields indicates that, prior to enclosure, the hills were common land and were likely to have been used by local people to graze their animals. It is notable that the hills, of which the Vale Hillocks form only a small part, represent the largest area outside the Cotswolds of regular enclosure of former common pasture and waste identified in the Gloucestershire historic landscape character assessment.

Place-name evidence may indicate how the landscape was utilised in the past. For example the name Woolridge, may show that sheep were particularly important locally and the name Hartpury, the principal settlement within the Vale Hillocks, may be derived from 'Hardepiry' which is thought to refer to the hard pear tree, that is the one with fruit similar to perry-pears. Despite this reference dating to the middle of the 12th century, the area is still well known for producing cider and perry-pears.

Enclosure often led to the re-planning of local lanes and tracks and it is possible that the route of the Over Old Road that runs along the top of Woolridge dates to the time of the Enclosures. This Turnpike route which extended from Lechlade to Gloucester was one of only five or so main routes through the county and would have been administered by trustees who levied tolls on travellers to ensure the road could be maintained. The road runs across the ridge and avoids the lower lying landscape of the vale which must have been impassable in wet conditions. A milestone indicating that 'Gloster' is four miles away has been relocated to a position alongside the A417 from its original position on the old turnpike road on the Woolridge. This new stretch of road dates to 1822 and replaced to turnpike road.

Buildings and Settlement

Hartpury is the only significant settlement in the Vale Hillocks. This is largely a collection of brick and half timbered properties, typical of the neighbouring vale, with more modern infill development. Elsewhere settlement is mainly restricted to isolated farm houses which tend to fringe the main roads that run along the base of the hills.

Character Areas

13a. Corse Wood Hill

Corse Wood Hill is a prominent lowland ridge that extends into Tewkesbury District where it borders the extensive Severn floodplain. The steep landform rises abruptly from the gently undulating vale and reaches a maximum height of 87 m AOD and as such affords extensive views north and west over the surrounding vale. Many of the steepest slopes are cloaked in narrow bands of broadleaved woodland. The lower, gentler slopes are grazed by cattle although where gradients are too steep, scrub encroachment is extensive.

The landscape is sparsely inhabited. Settlement is largely restricted to roadside cottages and isolated farm houses.

Of particular local significance and perhaps an indication of the low returns derived from these hilly pastures, the steep slopes below Corner House Farm are used as a motocross track. This has left significant scars on the hillside, made more prominent where they have cut through areas of scrub leaving it in isolated geometric blocks.

13b. Woolridge

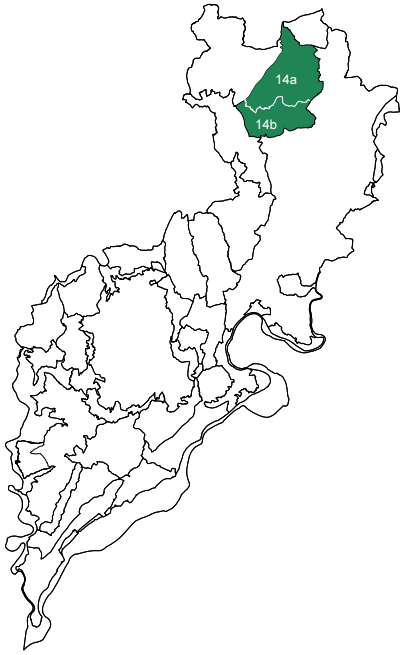
The Woolridge character area encompasses the Woolridge and Longridge Hills which themselves are part of a much larger range of low hills that extend westwards to the Severn and southwards to Lassington Hill. In contrast to Corse Hill, softer gradients have allowed the area to be more intensively farmed and settled. The gentle slopes are covered in moderately sized hedged pastures, a number of which are given over to horse paddocks. The hedgerows are on the whole well maintained and help emphasise the hilly landform although in a number of places gaps have been in-filled with post and wire fencing.

The Over Old Road runs along the top of Woolridge and the village of Hartpury is located on the gentler lower slopes of Longridge. Houses in the village are dispersed along numerous roads which converge at the foot of the hill. This has resulted in a number of 'ends' and has caused the village to be referred to as a "village with five ends and no middle".

14 LOW HILLS AND ORCHARDS

Character Areas

14a. Bromsberrow Heath
14b. Botloe's Green



Key Characteristics

- Underlying soft sandstone geology has been eroded to form a discrete domed unit of low, convex, interlocking hills.
- Wide views over farmland possible from the hills on the periphery of the landscape.
- Fertile sandy soils are prevalent and used primarily for market gardening and orchards.
- Unimproved and semi improved neutral grasslands.
- Regular pattern of large hedged fields.
- Extensive areas covered in glasshouses, vineyards and poly tunnels.
- Distinctive architectural features (Dutch Style houses).
- Commercial coniferous plantations and large woodlands are evident. Elsewhere woodlands tend to be small coverts and shelter belts around farms.
- Dispersed pattern of isolated farmsteads and scattered wayside dwellings.
- The winding and deeply incised course of the River Leadon is a distinctive landscape feature.

Landscape Character

This distinctive and sparsely settled landscape type is characterised by a discrete 'domed' unit of land that has been eroded to form a series of interlocking convex hills. The regular hillocks are between 25 m and 50 m high with often steep sides and broad rounded tops. Landscapes in the heart of the area are intimate and secretive with views restricted by landform and vegetation. However, long views are possible from sloping hillsides over the surrounding lowlands.

Pasture predominates in some areas although large arable fields, orchards, vineyards and horticulture are also prevalent on areas where landform is gentler. Indeed the extensive glasshouses and orchards are a distinctive feature of this landscape and distinguish it from other rural areas in the district. On steeper hillsides, scrub encroachment amongst pastures is evident giving the landscape a slightly neglected appearance. Fields are bounded by clipped hedges which rise up over the hillocks accentuating their landform. The regular pattern of fields is indicative of relatively late enclosure of former unenclosed cultivated areas although field patterns that reflect assarting of early woodland are also evident. The post war Land Settlement Scheme had a profound impact on a significant area of the landscape and remnants of this scheme survive, although a number of characteristic features are being lost as a result of farm amalgamation and diversification.

Tree cover comprises discrete, usually small, plantations and shelterbelts although significant areas of deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations are also evident. When combined with often extensive orchards, the area has the appearance of a well treed landscape.

The River Leadon has cut a steep sided valley through the hills. This is bordered by a narrow, fertile alluvial floodplain and steep wooded valley sides and is therefore very different in character to its course through vale landscapes either side of the Low Hills and Orchards landscape type.

Physical Influences

The area comprises a discreet unit of Triassic Bromsgrove Formation Sandstones rising above the surrounding vale. These soft, deep red sandstones, found nowhere else in the district, have been moulded over thousands of years by the action of water draining through the rocks to form a complex landscape of dry valleys separated by distinctive interlocking convex hills. Areas of flatter elevated land survive in the north and may indicate the remnants of the former plateau through which ancient streams flowed.

The underlying solid geology is rarely exposed and is only evident in the deep cuttings occupied by many of the sunken lanes rising up hillsides and the large quarry at Bromsberrow Heath. However, the rich red soils derived from the underlying bedrock may be seen wherever the surface vegetation has been cleared. This ensures dirt tracks, recently ploughed land, and even 'scrapes' created by cattle and sheep, gain visual prominence in the landscape.

The soils deriving from the Bromsgrove sandstones are well suited to agriculture, much of the landscape being classified as Grade 1 or 2 agricultural land. Land use reflects the high soil fertility, with large arable fields and horticultural units (evident in the vast acres of poly-tunnels and glasshouses) being prevalent on gentler landform. However, the free draining soils require substantial irrigation. This has forced many larger farms to sink bore holes. Interestingly, the Bromsgrove Formation is the second most important drinking water aquifer in the UK.

Where steep hill slopes preclude arable cultivation, pasture is prevalent. In these areas, verdant hillsides are divided by hedgerows into a neat pattern of fields although, gorse and scrub encroachment are evident on many of the steeper slopes giving the appearance of a neglected landscape in places. Elsewhere, steeper landform has retained extensive areas of woodland. These are largely broadleaved woodlands although coniferous plantations are also prevalent. Vineyards and orchards are also evident, often on hillsides. Here, neat rows of dwarf trees and vines tend to follow contours and emphasise sloping landform. Unimproved and semi improved neutral grasslands are particularly prevalent in older orchards, and coupled with dead wood habitats make these areas particularly important nature conservation sites.

The River Leadon has cut a dramatic steep sided valley through these hills and as a result the river adopts a much different character to that which it possesses further up and down stream where it flows sluggishly through the undulating vale. Here the river is bordered by steep, often wooded valley sides and a narrow floodplain underlain by deep alluvial deposits and is known to be inhabited by otters. The productive pastures bordering the river are often grazed by cattle and fields tend to be divided by post and wire fences. The course of the river is often marked by alder and other wetland species, but is difficult to access due to a small number of crossing points. Significantly at each of the crossing points is situated a mill and weir reflecting historic exploitation of the river in this location.

Human Influences

Despite a Neolithic polished stone axe having been found at Oxenhall, there is little evidence yet discovered of prehistoric settlement in the area. The first trace of human interaction with the landscape is Roman, the old road linking Gloucester to Roman towns and forts along the Welsh border still being visible in the line of the modern B4215. A Saxon Moot Hill and Norman motte-and-bailey castle at Castletump indicate that the road was in at least partial use for a thousand years after its construction as they are sited adjacent to it. Elsewhere the landscape is criss-crossed by winding, narrow lanes. In many instances these occupy deep cuttings and may indicate that they are of great antiquity.

Field patterns suggest that the majority of the landscape was, prior to formal enclosure, unenclosed cultivated land. By contrast, significant areas were wooded and within these forested areas, assart fields were established. This is likely to have occurred in the 12th and 13th centuries although much earlier clearings were being made; the name of the only true village in the landscape, Redmarley D'Abitot, is partly derived from the Old English and refers to 'woodland clearing with a reedy pond'. The 'D'Abitot' portion is much later and refers to a manorial affix from the French D'Abitot family who were granted lands here by the Norman ruling class.

The area contains a short stretch of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal. The route was first surveyed in 1790 although it was not completed until 1845. However, even when the

route was complete the canal was not profitable and it was finally leased to the Great Western Railway Company in 1862 who subsequently built the Gloucester to Ledbury line along much of it. The canal has all but disappeared but survives between Holder's Farm and Newent where it has undergone some restoration. The portals of the Oxenhall Tunnel, lock cottage and an original bridge are important remnants of canal history.

During the 1930s the area was subject to a Government experiment in Land Settlement. The scheme provided small holdings for the unemployed. Each scheme was laid out on a grid pattern, leading to an identifiable Land Settlement Scheme landscape. Small brick cottages, typically in the 'Dutch style' and vast acres of glasshouses were built and the area was farmed by families that had moved to the area. The scheme, despite being a success, was wound up in the 1980s and smallholders were forced to either buy their lease or leave. This had the effect of wealthy individuals purchasing numerous smallholdings to create much larger and more commercially viable operations and resulted in many of the characteristic Dutch style Land Settlement cottages to be extended, converted or demolished. Only one of these cottages is known to have survived in its original state.

Buildings and Settlement

The settlement pattern is primarily dispersed, with isolated farmsteads and strings of wayside dwellings bordering the many deeply incised and hedged lanes that weave through the landscape. Redmarley D'Abitot, the only true village in the landscape, is a dispersed linear settlement lining Red Ditch Lane and is notable for the many attractive stone, brick and half timbered buildings it contains.

The predominant building material is brick, although numerous cottages and farm houses are rendered and painted white. These are often visible across great distances, particularly when they are sited on prominent hilltops. Their visibility and exposure is, however, tempered by many of them occupying sheltered locations and being surrounded by coniferous shelterbelts and copses.

Other prominent and characteristic structures are the many glasshouses and poly-tunnels that are located throughout the landscape. These are often extensive and add visual diversity and interest to the landscape.

Character Areas

14a. Bromsberrow Heath

This area of hills occurs to the south of the Malvern foothills in the north of the district. The landscape consists of regular hillocks which tend to be heavily wooded, or cloaked in gorse when particularly steep, giving the landscape a rough appearance. However, over much of the landscape, neat hedgerows divide the landscape into a patchwork of arable fields, orchards, and verdant pastures. Orchards are often flanked by Lombardy poplar shelterbelts. However, in the north of the area these distinctive landscape features survive in or adjacent to arable fields, indicating that orchards have been grubbed out in favour of more profitable arable crops.

Despite an overriding rural character, the agricultural landscape displays many modern features. For example, the M50 which cuts a dramatic swathe through the landscape, the large sand quarry at Bromsberrow Heath, and the telecommunications mast at Pfera Hall are prominent in many views, and indicate the sensitivity of the landscape to change. Equally prominent perhaps are the extensive fields of poly-tunnels which cover the high plateau north of Ever Hill Coppice.

The River Leadon has cut a steep sided valley through the domed unit of Bromsgrove Sandstone creating an intimate, sheltered and secretive landscape which contrasts strongly to the open, landscapes on the neighbouring hills where extensive views over the surrounding countryside are often possible. The river is lined with alder and flanked by rushy meadows. These are generally extensive although post and wire fences may often be found dividing them up into smaller fields. Three sets of mills and weirs are located on this short stretch of the Leadon at Ketford, Durbridge and Playford Bridge, indicating that the river in this location is more powerful than where it flows through the vale.

In the landscape immediately bordering the river, ancient tributary streams have eroded deeply incised valleys. The course of these is now indicated by the many dry valleys that weave between the hills. The steep sided interlocking hills are generally too steep to cultivate and are grazed by sheep, although at Herridge's Orchards, the hillside has been covered in neat rows of vines that follow the contours of the hillside.

14b. Botloe's Green

The Low Hills and Orchards along the northern fringes of Newent are softer when compared to the Bromsberrow Heath character area, and may indicate that the area is formed from slightly different geology. Hills are gentler and slopes less steep, ensuring the landscape supports more arable farming although sheep and cattle pasture continues to be evident on areas of steeper landform. Arable fields are typically large and are enclosed by clipped hawthorn hedges. However, these appear gappy in places, boundaries having to be defined by post and wire fences where gaps are particularly extensive.

Orchards and vineyards are also prevalent and are particularly extensive around Castletump and on the hills south of Compton Green. Neat rows of fruit trees and poly tunnels are characteristic features and give the landscape a well ordered appearance.

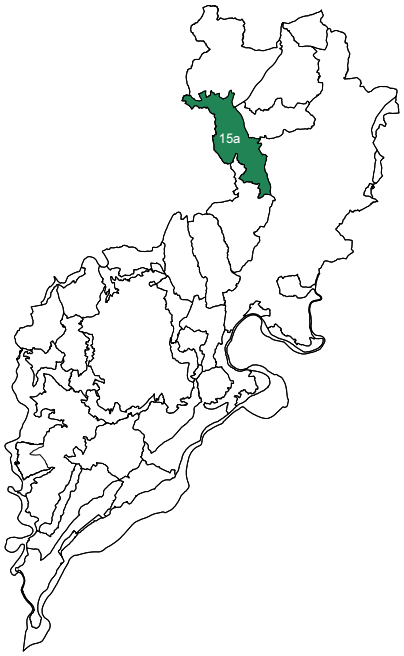
At The Scarr, numerous narrow winding lanes converge. This area contains the remnants of the Land Settlement Scheme and extensive areas of glasshouses and poly-tunnels are conspicuous. The landscape was once covered in numerous small holdings, each containing a small brick cottage in the Dutch style. However, in the 1980's the scheme ended and forced tenants to either purchase their lease or leave. This resulted in the sale of many small holdings. A number were amalgamated into larger farming units and the majority of the distinctive Land Settlement cottages demolished and modern, larger houses constructed in their place. Others were extended, obliterating all traces of their original form. Only one of the Land Settlement Scheme cottages is known to have survived.

Collinpark Wood, designated as a SSSI, is a particular feature of the area and is recognised as an outstanding example of damp calcifuge lime woodland in Western Britain. Small-leaved lime dominates the woodland although sessile oak and ash are well represented.

15 UNDULATING HILL FARMLAND

Character Areas

15a. Kilcot and Gorsley Farmland



Key Characteristics

- Transitional landscape between the Wooded Hills and Unwooded Vale landscape types.
- Varied landform, extensive views and sense of exposure on some hillsides.
- Landform and landscape features have a consistent south west - north east orientation.
- Small semi natural woodlands along valley sides and larger deciduous woodlands integrated by a strong hedgerow network.
- Large areas of deciduous woodland.
- Productive arable and pasture farmland.
- Wild daffodils in Dymock Wood.
- Isolated brick farmhouses, cottages and short lines of buildings are on hilltop locations.

Landscape Character

Bordering the sparsely populated Wooded Hills landscape type and rising from the productive farmland of the Unwooded Vale are transitional enclosed landscapes on a series of low hills and spurs of land. The landscape occurs generally above the 45 m contour and continues up to the 100 m contour beyond which the landform is more dramatic and elevated. Within the Undulating Hill Farmland, there is a great diversity of landform, colour and texture. Broad rounded hilltops and gently sloping foothills contrast with verdant pastures that border the many streams that drain north west into the vale. The consistent orientation of these streams gives the landscape a uniform grain and creates a series of spurs of land which are often capped with farms. The south west - north east orientation of the landscape may also be identified in the narrow winding lanes that link the hills to the lowland vale.

The hillier landscapes are characterised by a rolling landform of cattle pastures and arable fields and are divided by overgrown and well treed hedgerows. Where watercourses weave through a narrow plain, well maintained and neatly clipped hawthorn hedges divide the landscape into much larger fields of improved pasture. These hedgerows are often gappy and strengthened with post and wire fencing.

This is a well wooded landscape and large, irregularly shaped woodlands and wooded streams typically form an interlocking pattern with that created by overgrown hedges. This results in a strong sense of unity and visual integration across the landscape and a gradual, transition between the Wooded Hills and the Unwooded Vale.

Where landform and land cover allow, extensive views over the surrounding lowlands are possible. Indeed, in views from Chiber's Hill, the Malvern Hills are visible. By contrast, between the hills are intimate, sheltered landscapes with limited views.

Isolated brick farmsteads are often prominent on hill tops and many are reached by dead-end lanes. There are also sparse linear settlements, particularly along the winding roads.

Physical Influences

The Undulating Hill Farmland landscape is almost entirely underlain by rocks of the Silurian Raglan Mudstone Formation although thin bands of sandstone and limestone are also present. These harder rocks have resisted the erosive action of streams and form the watersheds that separate the many valleys draining the hills.

The solid geology is overlain by soils whose thickness varies according to elevation and landform; the gentler, more sheltered slopes and valley bottoms have a thicker covering of soils than the steeper slopes and broad rounded hilltops and spurs. The soils in the proximity of Dymock Wood are generally base rich as they are derived from Old Red Sandstone. Streams running through the area have cut down into the Silurian geology giving rise to base-rich soils along the streams.

This landscape type occupies the intermediate ground fringing the lowland landscapes of the vale and the higher hills surrounding the May Hill group. They have an elevation of between 45 m and 100 m AOD, individual hills tending to have a consistent height of around 25 to 30 m.

Much of the agricultural landscape has undergone improvement and the hillsides are cloaked in verdant pastures and arable fields. Particularly fertile, flatter pastures may be identified on the floodplains bordering streams. Here it appears that field boundaries have been removed to create larger fields. Species rich unimproved and semi-improved neutral grasslands are, however, often associated with woodland edge, hedgerow and orchard habitats. Many of these are cloaked in wild daffodils in the Spring.

Woodlands are located throughout the landscape, the majority being small linear broadleaved woods adjacent to streams and occupying sloping landform. However, in the north of the landscape, extensive broadleaved woodlands, Hay Wood and Dymock Wood in particular, cloak the hillsides. Dymock Wood is of particular significance. It is designated as a SSSI on account of it containing the best areas of mature sessile oak plantation that survives in the larger area of woodland known as Dymock Forest, itself ancient semi-natural woodland and containing remnant areas of heathland vegetation and important invertebrate populations and in particular, woodland butterflies and moths. Old orchards are also a characteristic feature, particularly in the south close to the Gwen and Veras Fields KWS.

The wild daffodils which carpet the woodland floor are a feature of Dymock Woods and were a particular inspiration to the Dymock Poets who walked extensively in the area.

Human Influences

An early Bronze Age metalwork find in Kilcot Wood indicates that the area may have been settled in the Prehistoric period although few other traces of early occupation or exploitation of the hills have so far been found.

Evidence of more recent land use and settlement can be interpreted from field patterns and place names. The name of Hay Wood is thought to derive from the Saxon 'Haga' and possibly indicates that the area once contained an enclosure for keeping deer prior to hunting. Other place names such as Gorsley and Kempley may indicate that Saxons settled on the hills and cleared woodland to make way for their fields and houses, the 'ley' element possibly being derived from the Saxon 'leigh' which refers to a clearing in woodland. However, surviving field patterns indicate that the landscape has a similar enclosure history to that of the Unwooded Vale below, hedged boundaries being interpreted as representing irregular enclosure of former unenclosed cultivated areas.

Local variations do, however, exist and on the higher hills enclosure patterns reflect assarting or squatter settlement encroaching on the fringes of former early woodland. This is more common in the Wooded Hills landscape type and is a further indication that the Undulating Hill Farmland landscape is a transitional one between the lowland vale and the upland hills.

By observing 1st edition Ordnance Survey maps for the area, it is clear that during the 19th century these hills were covered in orchards. However, many have since been grubbed out in favour of arable crops and pasture. Only small orchards survive. These are often located on hillsides and in close proximity to farms and villages.

Perhaps the most significant man made feature of the landscape is the M50. This cuts a direct route through the landscape. However, it is almost entirely bordered by dense deciduous woodland which significantly reduces its impact.

Buildings and Settlement

Settlement is sparse and few clusters occur. The majority of dwellings are brick farms and isolated houses located alongside winding lanes fringed with tall rambling hedges. A number of farms, particularly those on the tops of hills, are only accessible along dead-end lanes that run at right angles to the main road.

Character Areas

15a. Kilcot and Gorsley Farmland

Kilcot and Gorsley Farmland is the only character area within the Undulating Hill Farmland Landscape Type. It is located to the north east of May Hill and borders the boundary between the Forest of Dean District and Herefordshire, into which the landscape may be found to extend.

Forest of Dean District Landscape Character Assessment

District Landscape Character Types and Areas

- Forest of Dean District Boundary
- 1, Wooded Valleys
  - a: The Wye Valley - Common Grove to The Slaughter
  - b: The Wye Valley - Redbrook to Brockweir
  - c: The Wye Valley - Brockweir to Tutshill
- 2, Limestone Hills
  - a: The Bicknor Hills
  - b: Highmeadow Woods and Staunton Hills
  - c: Coleford and Christchurch Hills
  - d: Newland Hills
  - e: Ruardean Hills
- 3, Limestone Plateau
  - a: Tidenham Chase
  - b: St Briavels Common
- 4, Wooded Scarp and Lower Scarp Slopes
  - a: Lydney Park
  - b: Netherend Farmed Slopes
  - c: Woolaston Scarp
- 5, Wooded Syncline and Settled Forest Margin
  - a: Forest Core
  - b: Lynbrook and Ruardean Woodside
  - c: Clinderford and Ruspidge
  - d: Soudley Brook
  - e: Littledean Ridges and Valleys
  - f: Ellwood
  - g: Bream and Yorkley Fringe
- 6, Unwooded Vale
  - a: Severn Vale - Stroat and Sedbury
  - b: The Severn Vale
  - c: The Leadon Vale
- 7, Drained Riverine Farmland and Grazed Salt Marsh
  - a: Pilhouse Drained Farmland
  - b: Aylburton Newgrounds
  - c: Awre Drained Farmland
  - d: Westbury on Severn Drained Farmland
  - e: Upper and Lower Dumball
- 8, Littoral Sands and Rock Outcrops
  - a: The Severn Sands
- 9, Undulating Farmland
  - a: Bledisloe Hundred
- 10, Ridges and Valleys
  - a: Allaston Ridge
  - b: Littledean Ridge
  - c: Edge Hill
  - d: Breakheart Hill
- 11, Wooded Hills
  - a: May Hill and Outliers
  - b: The South Malvern Foothills
- 12, Floodplain Farmland
  - a: Walmore Common
- 13, Vale Hillocks
  - a: Corse Wood Hill
  - b: Woolridge
- 14, Low Hills and Orchards
  - a: Bromsberrow Heath
  - b: Botloe's Green
- 15, Undulating Hill Farmland
  - a: Kilcot and Gorsley Farmed Slopes

North

0 1 2 4 6 8 10 Km

Figure 6

LANDSCAPE DESIGN ASSOCIATES

CHKD. SJD APP. IH DATE November 2002

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5.1 Key Landscape Character Assessment Terms

Analysis - the process of dividing up the landscape into its component parts to gain a better understanding of it.

Approach - the step-wise process by which landscape assessment is undertaken.

Assessment - term to describe all the various ways of looking at, analysing, evaluating and describing the landscape.

Character - a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.

Characteristics - elements or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to distinctive character.

Characterisation - the process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying and mapping them and describing their character.

Elements - individual components which make up the landscape, such as trees and hedges.

Features - particularly prominent or eye catching elements, such as tree clumps, church towers, or wooded skylines.

Land cover - combination of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

Landform - combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.

Landscape - primarily the visual appearance of the land including its shape, form and colours. However, landscape is note purely a visual phenomenon. The landscape relies on a range of other dimensions including geology, landform, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.

Objective - method of assessment in which personal feelings and opinions do not influence characterisation.

Subjective - method of assessment in which personal views and reactions are used in the characterisation process.

5.2 Other Technical Terms

Adit Mining - method of mining used by many Freeminers where the Coal Measures dip gently enough to be entered through mines driven into the hillside.

Alluvium - sedimentary deposits resulting from the action of rivers, including those laid down in river channels, floodplains, estuaries and lakes.

Alluvial Fan - a fan or cone shaped mass of material deposited by a stream where it emerges from the constriction of a narrow valley at the foot of hills and debouches on to a plain.

Ancient woodland - land continuously wooded since AD 1600. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, usually with a high diversity of flora and fauna.

Anticline - an arched fold or up fold in the strata of the earth's crust. Because denudation generally attacks the arches of folded structures faster than it does the down folds, it is common for these to become the location of valleys which in time expose the core of the anticline.

Assarting - the process of clearing woodland or waste land for cultivation, associated particularly with the 12th and 13th centuries.

Biogeography - the study of areas with a distinctive flora and fauna.

Breccia - an Italian term used to describe rock composed of cemented angular clastic fragments possibly derived from material deposited during a volcanic eruption.

Bronze Age - a cultural phase in humankind's evolution when alloying of copper and tin was perfected. Metalworking technology and new types of flint tool and pottery design were introduced at the start of this period. Changes in society were reflected in the emergence of new burial techniques, particularly round barrows. In the Middle Bronze Age cremation replaced inhumations and in the late Bronze Age social and economic changes led to the abandonment of old funerary rights in favour of less traceable rites.

Calcifuge - refers to plants which prefer acidic soils and cannot exist on chalky or alkali soils.

Carboniferous - period of the Palaeozoic era following that of the Devonian and preceding that of the Permian. It ranged from about 345 million years to about 280 million years BP. Economically the Carboniferous is the most important of the systems as it contains most of the world's coal reserves and other deposits such as oil and iron ore.

Carr - woodland in waterlogged terrain. Characteristic species include alder, willow and sallow.

Chartism - a movement established and controlled by working men in 1836 to achieve parliamentary democracy as a step towards social and economic reform. The 'Charter' made six political demands but the organisation was Utopian and naive in the belief that constitutional reform would automatically provide socio-economic betterment.

Chert - a hard siliceous rock that occurs as bands or layers in sedimentary rocks. Flint is a variety of chert.

Clastic - detrital materials consisting of fragments of broken rocks that have been eroded, transported and re-deposited at a different site.

Coppicing - the traditional method of woodland management in which trees are cut down near to the ground to encourage the production of long, straight shoots that can be harvested.

Denudation - general term to denote the action of laying bare by the washing away of surface materials. In geomorphology the term is used to include all processes which cause degradation of the earth's surface.

Devonian - the fourth geological period of the Palaeozoic era, extending from 395 to 345 million years. It comprises both marine and continental deposits, the latter being referred to as the Old Red Sandstone.

Diamicton - the unlithified equivalent of a diamictite, itself a lithified, conglomeratic, siliciclastic rock which is unsorted, with sand and/or coarser particles dispersed through a mud matrix.

Domesday Book - conceived by William the Conqueror at Christmas 1085 in Gloucester, the survey was the most comprehensive and detailed record compiled anywhere in Europe in the Middle Ages. The survey's primary purpose was to provide maximum yield from land tax. The name arose in the 12th century to signify, like the day of judgement, there could be no appeal from its verdict.

Drift Deposits - geologically recent material overlying solid geology and including glacial and fluvo-glacial deposits remaining after the retreat of ice sheets and glaciers, material deposited by rivers, including river terrace deposits and peat.

Estover - ancient right to collect brushwood in the forest.

Fluvo-glacial - processes and landforms related to the action of glacial meltwater.

Forester - this term applies to people born within the Hundred of St. Briavels (effectively anywhere in the forest). Foresters are granted certain rights which date to Norman times including the right to turn their sheep out to graze freely in the woodlands. Rights also allow Foresters to turn their pigs out into the forest in the autumn months to feed on the acorns. Sheep keepers are known locally as Sheep Badgers.

Fossiliferous - term used to describe rocks rich in fossils, the remains of living organisms preserved by natural causes in crustal rocks.

Freeminer - anyone born in the Forest of Dean within the Hundred of St. Briavels, and who has worked in a mine for a year and a day, may open up his own coal mine. Freeminers rights date back several hundred years and were enshrined in Law by various Acts of Parliament between 1819 and 1906. It is thought that Freeminers were granted their rights as a reward for services during Medieval wars when they acted as Sappers, soldiers who tunnelled beneath enemy positions.

Fulling - mechanical means of processing wool cloth. After woollen cloth has been woven, its fibres are loose, airy and unmeshed. The cloth also contains a significant amount of oil and grease which inhibit the binding action of dyes. Fulling involves pounding the cloth to mat the fibres together and cleansing to remove natural oils and greases. Originally cloth was beaten manually. However in the 12th century fulling mills, consisting of huge water powered hammers, were introduced to Britain.

Geomorphology - the scientific study of the origin of landforms.

Geology - the study of the origin, structure, composition and history of the Earth together with the processes that have led to its present state.

Gale - term used to describe the right to mine an area. The principal officer of the Forest, whose duty it is to grant the Gales, is the Gaveller. The tract of land granted is said to be galed and the grantee is called the Galee.

Glacial - term used to describe a cold phase during an ice age.

Hercynian - mountain building episode of Carboniferous/ Permian times.

Hillfort - any hilltop fortress although term usually applied to defensive sites of the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age. Some hillforts may have been permanent settlements, but many were temporary refuges.

Iron Age - a cultural phase of humankind's evolution when technical improvements in iron-working enabled iron tools and weapons to replace those of the preceding Bronze Age. Population growth led to competition for land and the development of a more territorial society. Improved farming technology and scarcity of land brought about the cultivation of heavier and poorer soils.

Karst - a term used to describe terrain created by limestone solution and characterised by a virtual absence of surface drainage. Clints and grikes together make up a limestone pavement, a feature of karst scenery.

Mesolithic - an archaeological term meaning 'middle stone' age and used to describe the culture achieved during the early Post Glacial when mankind had moved from herd- hunting practices of the upper Palaeolithic, but had not yet discovered or adopted the use of agriculture.

Metallurgy - science of extracting and working metals.

Moot Hill - Anglo Saxon term to describe a public assembly to decide legal and administrative issues. Inhabitants of an area had a duty to attend their local Moot. Prominent hills were often the sites of such meetings.

Motte-and-Bailey Castle - the earliest form of Norman castle. These were established along key communication routes after the conquest. An inner courtyard was protected by simple earth and wooden defences.

Neolithic - an archaeological term used to describe the 'new stone' age. This applies to the culture achieved during the middle Post Glacial when mankind had begun to polish and grind stone artefacts (a technological advance from the bashing and flaking of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic). The Neolithic also saw the introduction of agriculture.

Open Field System - well established means of land management during the medieval period and was widespread across much of lowland England. The unit of cultivation was the strip which varied in length and width depending on local conditions. The strips were grouped together into furlongs and a number of furlongs formed the field. The up and down ploughing of the strips threw soil into the centre of the strip and over time created the distinctive ridge and furrow landform which may be used to identify remnants of open fields in the landscape today.

Ordovician - the second geological period of the Palaeozoic that includes rocks that were formed between about 525 million and 440 million years ago.

Orogeny - a major period of fold-mountain formation, during which the process of orogenesis occurs. Such a process includes folding, faulting and thrusting often as a result of plate tectonics.

Outcrop - the area where a particular rock appears at the surface.

Palaeolithic - an archaeological term used to describe the earliest form of human culture. The earliest toolmakers lived during the Pleistocene in Britain after the main glacial periods had passed.

Pannage - ancient right to graze pigs in the forest.

Peat - unconsolidated black or dark-brown soil material consisting largely of slightly decomposed or un decomposed fibrous vegetable matter that has accumulated in a waterlogged environment.

Pedology - the scientific study of soils.

Permian - the final geological period of the Palaeozoic era extending from about 280 million years ago to 240 million years ago. It succeeded the Carboniferous and preceded the Triassic.

Perry - fermented drink made from pears. The name derives from 'prige', the Saxon for pear although the first reference to making a fermented drink from pears was by Pliny.

Pleistocene - the first epoch of the Quaternary which loosely corresponds to the Ice Age.

Pericline - a crustal fold structure in the form of a dome or basin in which beds dip inwards around a central point or outwards in the case of a dome.

Quaternary - the younger of the two geological periods of the Cainzoic. This was the era which saw the appearance of mankind.

Ramsar - Ramsar sites are areas of land listed as Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention 1973).

Riparian - riverbank habitats.

Scowles - term used to describe the site of surface iron ore extraction dating from the Iron Age to the early post-medieval period. These features range from shallow, often interconnected pits to deeper, irregular treches with exposed rock faces. Over the years these have been colonised by scrub and woodland and are often hard to discern in the landscape.

Scree - an accumulation of fragmented rock waste below a cliff or rock face formed as a result of weathering of a rock exposure.

Semi-natural vegetation - any type of vegetation that has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.

Siliceous - rocks that contain an abundance of silica.

Silurian - the third of the periods of the Palaeozoic succeeding the Ordovician and preceding the Devonian and lasting from 440 million years ago to about 395 million years ago.

Slade - local term used to describe a deeply incised valley.

Squatter Settlement - a concentration of makeshift dwellings on public or private land which is neither owned nor rented by the builders/ occupants. It is a feature of the period of population pressure in England in the 16th and 17th centuries when extensive encroachment on manorial wastes occurred. It was a commonly held belief that a cottage erected on wastes overnight entitled its builder to undisputed possession and rights to land as far as an axe could be thrown.

Stratigraphy - the structure produced when sediments are laid down in horizontal layers (stratum). The term may be used to describe the stratification of solid geology, drift and soils.

Strike valley - a valley which has been eroded along structural lines that lie parallel with the regional strike of an area.

Syncline - a downfold or basin-shaped fold of crustal rocks in which the strata dip inwards towards a central axis.

Topography - term used to describe the surface features of the earth's surface.

Tufa - sedimentary deposit formed around a spring of calcareous groundwater. It is generally found in limestone regions where it infill cavities.

Turnpike - a gate across a highway preventing passage until a toll has been paid. Turnpike roads were administered by turnpike trusts which were authorised by a private act of parliament in 1663 to levy tolls for maintenance of the highway. This replaced the parochial maintenance system and substantially improved communications in England.

Triassic - the first geological period of the Mesozoic era, extending from about 240 million years ago to about 195 million years ago. It succeeded the Permian and preceded the Jurassic. In Britain it consists mainly of shales, red dessert sandstones, marls and pebble beds. This period witnessed the evolution of the reptiles and the earliest known dinosaurs.

Vernacular - built in the local style, from local materials.

Veteran Tree - a tree which is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of its age, size or condition.

Water Meadow - water meadows are provided with channels to carry water on to the pasture and then to drain it off again with the intention of keeping a trickle of water flowing through the roots of the spring growth to warm them and protect from frosts. The result is faster grass growth and an earlier first bite - several weeks earlier if the spring is cold. For over 300 years water meadows supplied early grazing and the first, most valuable hay crop. They have almost all ceased operation due to the cost of the labour required to maintain them and the difficulty of working them with machinery. In many instances all that remains of water meadows is the banks and ditches that controlled the water. These often only survive where pasture has endured and protected the earthworks from ploughing or development.

5.3 Abbreviations

AOD - Above Ordnance Datum

ASNW - Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

AW - Ancient Woodland

AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

BP - Before Present

BAP - Biodiversity Action Plan

cSAC - Candidate Special Area of Conservation

GIS - Geographical Information System

KWS - Key Wildlife Site

pSAC - Provisional Special Area of Conservation

SAC - Special Area of Conservation

SPA - Special Protection Area

SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest

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Andrew Sweetman	Gloucestershire County Council
Sue Wallis	Centre for Ecology and Hydrology

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The team members named above have been in close contact with Landscape Design Associates throughout the life of the study. However, LDA would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the many groups and individuals that make up the By Definition team.

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