

### 3 ROLLING HILLS AND VALLEYS

#### Character Areas

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



#### Key Characteristics

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

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

#### Landscape Character

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

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

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

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

### Physical Influences

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

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

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



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

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

### Human Influences

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



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

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

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

## Character Areas

### 3A

#### Ozleworth Bottom and Lower Kilcote

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

### 3B

#### Stinchcombe and North Nibley



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

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

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

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

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

