

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

2D

Cooper's Hill to Winchcombe

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

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



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

2E

Winchcombe to Dover's Hill

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

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